

## Three new members join the European Travel Commission

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At its October 3 general meeting held on the Mediterranean island of Malta the European Travel Commission (ETC) welcomed three new nations to its ranks - Serbia, Montenegro and San Marino - thus bringing its membership to thirty-seven.

Contacts between Serbia, Montenegro, San Marino and ETC were initiated in 2004, and the three countries participated in an ETC General Meeting as observer for the first time last October.

ETC joins together the continent's national tourism organisations (NTOs) to market 'Destination Europe' globally.

Representing Serbia at the accession ceremony was Mr Miodrag Popovic, director of the country's national tourism office. Mr Nejbosa Popovic vice minister for tourism, signed on behalf of Montenegro, and Mr. Mauro Maiani, advisor to the minister of tourism, represented San Marino.

Speaking during the ceremony, ETC President Arthur Oberascher hailed the initiative to extend membership to the entire continent as 'worthy of our organisation, which has been a trailblazer of European integration'. He added that the new members included 'one of Europe's oldest states and one of her newest, but all have an appeal that is part of the lure of the 'never-ending journey', which attracts guests from around the world'. Oberascher highlighted tourism's role 'as the greatest force for peace and understanding'.

Membership brings advantages both to the new members and ETC: the three countries are potent tourism brands that enrich ETC's portfolio of destinations. The three countries will benefit from a boost in visibility through a presence in the company of Europe's major destinations on the ETC's new internet portal, [visiteurope.com](http://visiteurope.com). In addition, ETC's activities in the fields of IT, market intelligence and operational excellence - key issues for the success of Europe's tourism industry in a competitive global environment - represent a valuable resource for NTOs in terms of enhancing their effectiveness.

Participating as observers for the first time at the meeting were representatives of the tourism authorities of Georgia, Russia and the Republic of Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

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