



**PRESS RELEASE**

**BSEC GRANTED 'PARTICIPATIVE STATUS' IN THE CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

We are delighted to report that the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has been granted 'Participative Status' with the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA). The CoE's Cultural Routes are a series of theme-based journeys through the countries of Europe and beyond that demonstrate a shared and vibrant historical and cultural heritage.

The granting of 'Participative Status' by Julien Vuilleumier, Chair, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, means that the Governing Board of the EPA will now be inviting BSEC to its meetings on an ad hoc basis when agenda items would be of interest. The Governing Board will also be inviting BSEC to its events such as the Annual Advisory Forum and the Training Academy.

In his appearance before the EPA Governing Board at the end of April, BSEC PERMIS Secretary General Ambassador Michael B Christides said that 'Participative Status' would allow BSEC "to fully capitalize on the potential for enhancing cultural tourism in and among our Member States with the expert support and involvement of the EPA." He said that it would assist BSEC in promoting "home grown" Cultural Routes such as the 'Cultural Route of Byzantium', 'Ottoman Heritage - Hamam Routes' or a 'Black Sea Coastal Cuisine Cultural Route' through the region. He hoped that 'Participative Status' would also attract more BSEC Member States to actively participate in existing Cultural Routes such as the 'European Cultural Route of Saints Cyril and Methodius' and the 'European Routes of Historic Gardens' among many others.

Commenting on the granting of 'Participative Status' by the EPA, Ambassador Christides said: "The trust in BSEC thus expressed confirms that BSEC's hard work has not gone unnoticed at the international arena; our Organization is considered a reliable and active partner in pursuing joint efforts with the EPA in the field of cultural heritage, promotion of diversity and intercultural dialogue as a basis for mutual understanding in the Black Sea region and beyond. In this framework, the BSEC PERMIS will continue to engage vigorously in activities and projects of common interest with the EPA and will do its utmost to establish more Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in the Black Sea region, in order to fully capitalize on the potential for enhancing cultural tourism in and among the BSEC Member States".