

Swedish biz

New Med branch of Swedish Chamber

In December last year the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in France (CCSF) inaugurated its south of France branch, to much positive response from the estimated 10,000 Swedish residents living here and the hundred-odd companies operating here. Initially servicing mainly PACA, the Var and into the Languedoc/Roussillon regions this initiative is aimed at expanding Swedish businesses here and French businesses in Sweden by developing a valuable business networking system among members.

The Riviera Times met branch manager Roger Thodenius and administrator and press officer Kerstin Snellen to understand how the CCSF South operates.

How did a south of France branch come about?

In April 2007 a Swedish boat, the Götheborg, a replica of a former East Indian cruising ship, was en route from Asia to Sweden as part of its two

year world tour and moored in Nice. Members of the CCSF head office in Paris took advantage of the occasion to visit here and meet with



Roger Thodenius (right) and Kerstin Snellen

various groups and French officials and politicians to discuss the possibility of opening a branch here. We began re-

searching the need and found that there is a huge presence of 'active' Swedes living and working here and setting up businesses in the south.

What is your mission?

To strengthen the financial and economic cooperation between Sweden and France by developing a strong network of business people. Members - we already have 40 - benefit from a quarterly publication with up-to-date information, free participation in our meetings and they have access to the directory list of members.

How much is membership?

We have four categories to accommodate different sized

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companies; membership fees range from €150 to €2,500 for big companies like IKEA, which includes use of the Paris office facilities. The south of France branch doesn't have a physical office yet. At the moment our team of five voluntary members who contribute their time and we have been offered the use of the premises of the Swedish Film Institute in Cannes. This is where we held our inauguration ceremony.

Contact with the French CCI?

Yes and Dominique Estève, President of the Chamber of Commerce (CCI) came to our inauguration. He has also offered our members use of the CCI's Nice resource centre.

Program of 2008 events?

We have a busy schedule lined up for 2008. Our next event is March 26th, which is a cocktail speed dating event for businesses for members to meet the maximum number of contacts. Our Lyon branch has already done this successfully.

Will IKEA join?

IKEA is already a member in Paris, our main branch and their Toulon and Marseille stores are automatically members of our Mediterranean branch. They can certainly bring great contacts to the network pool. In terms of us helping them with a location for their new Riviera site they don't need us; they already have resources behind them. Members can add value to events by giving a talk or inviting along a useful contact. For information please contact Roger on Tel: 06 10 90 04 00 or check www.ccsf.fr

Paula Farquharson