

## New network aims to retain foreigners in country

By Jeff Rose

**Expatriates likes what they see at a sneak peak meeting of a networking group that aims to make them feel more at home in Denmark**

**T**HE DANISH Chamber of Commerce (Dansk Erhverv) has created a new web-based network aimed at retaining foreign workers. It's called Expat in Denmark, and while its official launch is 2 October, the first of what will become regular meetings took place last week at the old Copenhagen Stock Exchange. About 50 people attended.

Director Katia Østergaard said the main goal of Expat in Denmark is to socialise expatriates residing here. She hopes the network will be the best place for foreigners to have questions answered, meet others, find work - generally, a place to help make Denmark feel like home.

'There have been studies, and while we're actually better at attracting foreign workers now, we see we're not so good at keeping those expats here,' she said.

'Either the family, the spouse, or the expat himself

doesn't feel integrated, and they end up leaving after not so long.'

Østergaard said the network would target not only the expats, but also their current and future employers in Denmark. She said about 20 large companies are now part of the network.

In addition, the project will employ a host of 'expat experts'.

'We want them to be better able to find jobs, but also just to have very simple questions answered, like "Where can I find a dentist?"' she said.

The meeting focused on settling in Denmark, with presentations and workshops on cross-cultural understanding, coping with change, and rebuilding your network.

The crowd was a mixture of human resource professionals, expats, and foreign spouses. Tiny Maerschalk came from Belgium 11 years ago. She now works in the human resource department for Erhverv Århus.

'I'm quite sure it will be helpful,' she said.

Sirkku Huuska and Sari Rasmussen came from Finland three months ago with their Danish spouses. They described themselves a 'love refugees.'

'People think you'll be fine moving here if you're from Europe, Rasmussen said. 'Finland isn't far, but even we have



Helle Granhøj, one of Expat in Denmark's 'expat experts', leads a workshop on rebuilding networks at an early meeting of the new network

difficulty.'

'(Expat in Denmark) concentrates on the same problems I've been facing,' Huuska said. 'There's a big cultur-

al change,' Dagmar Fink, from Germany, interrupted.

'And I feel I'm getting rules everywhere,' she said.

'So many are unspoken, and

people are always telling you you're doing things wrong. I hope this will help people understand the Danish culture. It's a funny one.'

*Expat in Denmark is online at <http://expatindenmark.dk>. The official launching will involve a job fair.*