

MAPIC 2007 maintains 20-plus percent growth rate

by David Friday

• For the second year running, MAPIC attendance levels registered momentous gains on the preceding year.

This year's annual retail property fair, held as usual in mid-November in Cannes's Palais des Festivals, drew a record 10,640 participants, an increase of 22 percent over last year, which itself was up 21 percent from 2005.

Organisers Reed MIDEM are pleased with the high turnout at the 13th annual trade fair, which included retail 2,456 participants, 1,018 investors, 541 participants from local and regional authorities and 175 journalists, from a total of 71 countries.

Spread among the stands and over 11,500sqm of exhibition space, 1056 companies exhibited, up from 899 last year.

At the time of press, Reed MIDEM reported that some trends were immediately obvious, with CEE taking centre stage. "There was a 79 percent increase in the number of companies from Russia, bringing the total to 292, placing it fourth in MAPIC's country ranking after France, Italy and the UK," says Audrey Hajiaaj, Reed MIDEM Press Attaché.

Poland also posted a respectable 53 percent rise in terms of company attendance.

Also noteworthy was a strong increase from the

Czech Republic, with 18 companies registered, up 50 percent from last year.

Milan Stratesky of Business Network, an official representative of Reed MIDEM, confirms the growing interest in Mapic from both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. "There were 127 people from CR as opposed to 85 last year, and 32 from Slovakia, up from 24 last year, which in percentage terms shows a significant growth in interest," he says.

As usual the fair's opening cocktail party and awards night mixers were fundamental networking opportunities.

In the fair itself, the inclusion of the Penthouse Riviera space added a further 1,500sqm of exhibition space.

Another difference this year was the introduction of "speed matching." Based loosely on the popular concept of speed dating, it allows for short presentations followed by a networking opportunity designed to enable shopping centre developers and retailers to meet with a targeted audience and promote their new projects and concepts.

This year's roster of conferences included a panel discussion hosted by Jonathan Hallett, director of Cushman & Wakefield in Prague, on the somewhat contentious topic of the state and future of retail development in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Others touched on similarly hot topics, such as why retailers are going green.

General sentiment among participants was positive. Renata Kuszniarska, Regional Director, Retail Agency Central Europe, DTZ, told Estates News that this year's fair brought more achievements than expected. "Apart from scheduled meetings we had many spontaneous, unplanned get-togethers at our stand. We established contacts and held

talks with numerous tenants looking for new alternatives and possibilities to develop in Poland, including the Sfera chain from the El Corte Ingles group," she said. "Business contacts established at Mapic will surely yield fruit in the future and can be the first step on the road towards bringing new market players into Poland."

"I found it to be one of the best MAPIC's ever, and all the other offices of NAI found the show to be very worthwhile. I was particularly interested to see the huge influx of companies visiting from Eastern Europe, notably from Russia and Ukraine," says Nigel Young of NAI MIPA in Prague. "We're currently advising an investment company in Russia and it was great to have everyone at the table at the same time, developers, investors, architects and retailers. As always, everybody had a fantastic time and enjoyed the ambience you can only find in Cannes."

Claudio Zaniboni, from Italy-based developer B Consulting was also bullish on the fair's efficacy. "It's our fourth MAPIC and I think this year was better than the previous ones. There are more direct retailers, with their own stands, which is more specific. It may be because of our JV with Lehman but the number of visitors coming to our stand increased incredibly, and the quality went up as well. We were approached by banks, financial institutions, retailers and open funds - everyone is interested in B Consulting! Next year we plan to double our exhibition space at MIP-IM, and also the number of projects we present," he said during the fair's third day.

Plans are already underway for the organisers' next event in Cannes, MIP-IM, when a new 1,700sqm hall on the other side of the harbour will be included in the fair's venues, says Hajiaaj.

