

ADDING CLOUT THROUGH TRADE COUNCIL

According to business development agency Vinnuframí, the Faroese have one ally they could work closer with to build international contacts and promote their exports—Denmark's Trade Council, with 90 offices around the world.

SAY YOU consider Denmark a very small country in a global context. What then to make of the Faroe Islands? With a total population of under 50,000—barely one percent of Denmark's five million—how can this underpopulated archipelago in the North Atlantic bear the name of a nation in its own right?

Well, it does. Read this publication and you get the idea.

So the Faroe Islands is part of the Kingdom of Denmark, along with Greenland and Denmark. When it comes to foreign affairs, Denmark holds the steering wheel, for obvious reasons. Setting up a worldwide network of representation offices, embassies and consulates would put too much strain on the financial resources of micro economies.

Now, the Faroese have a tradition of independence in business. Ever since the official—that is, Royal Danish—trade monopoly was abolished in the Faroe Islands in 1856, the Faroese have found seafood buyers, first in Scandinavia, Britain, Spain and a few other places,

then later in other countries across the world.

Yet introducing new products and services to diversify and reduce dependence on a single product is proving all the more difficult. Which is where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark or, more precisely, its agency the Trade Council can come in handy, according to Vinnuframí, a domestic business development fund tasked with helping Faroese entrepreneurs grow their businesses in the international marketplace.

“In today's tough markets you have to be well researched and well connected,” said Vinnuframí chairman Regin W. Dalsgaard. “You need contacts that can help you gain quick access to key markets, and you may need some expert advice from people who are trusted and have relevant knowledge. The good news for Faroese businesses is that they can get all the assistance that Danish companies get from the Trade Council, and that is a lot.”

For example, the Faroese can take part in Danish trade delegations to foreign markets, which can prove vital in gaining foothold in uncharted territory.

“It's a huge advantage that we can be part of Danish trade delegations,” Mr. Dalsgaard said. “And of course, such initiatives can be great opportunities for Faroese businesses to collaborate to get the most possible out of their promotional efforts. Going it alone is certainly not the answer when it comes to international marketing.”



Vinnuframí chairman Regin W. Dalsgaard; Faroese delegation at Aberdeen trade show (opposite).

Not too many Faroese entrepreneurs, however, seem to be aware of the resources available for them through the Trade Council.

MARKET KNOWLEDGE: “The Trade Council can help open doors almost anywhere,” Mr. Dalsgaard said. “They have the right connections for almost any business and are in a very good position to help research markets prior to product launch.”

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Trade Council operates 90 offices around the world, hosted by Royal Danish Embas-

sies, Consulates-General and trade commissions.

“The opportunity of using such a network is invaluable,” Mr. Dalsgaard said.

“There is no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to marketing and sales promotion. Working together with other local businesses to generate a stronger message can bring many advantages, in particular if you also work with the Trade Council to make sure your project gets off the ground with the right amount of expertise and connections on board. We already have a number of success stories to prove the point.”

Partnerships and long-term planning are among the most important aspects that Vinnuframí looks at before committing financially to any project.

“We have supported a number of projects financially and some of them nonetheless have a hard time growing beyond the one-person enterprise level,” Mr. Dalsgaard said. “Our vision is to see more successful, larger enterprises. By working with the Trade Council we are able to offer serious networking and promotion in many markets.

“Much as we want to continue in our supporting role, it has to be on a continuous basis—with a long term perspective.”

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Vinnuframí is a Faroese business development agency under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, charged with helping Faroese entrepreneurs grow their businesses in the international marketplace.

Vinnuframí also works with Denmark's Trade Council to offer networking and promotion in markets around the world.

Funding is provided for startups, shipyards and other businesses under various programs, including e.g.:

- Product Development
- Information Technology
- Tourism
- Pioneering Projects (for example, biotech, high value products from marine resources)
- Trade Exhibitions
- Promotional Activities
- Creative Business
- Research Projects
- Patent Applications
- Cleantech

Sparring between different projects is one way of generating synergies, Mr. Dalsgaard added.

“The real currency here is market knowledge, in other words expertise and experience from multiple projects. So we try to put the right people into contact with the right entrepreneurs to help enable cross-project pollination. With the Trade Council, this is possible on a whole different level, whereas without their help it will simply become too expensive for startups. Once you get connected with people who have good market knowledge, you will be able to move forward much more quickly.”

