norden

Nordic Council of Ministers

Ved Stranden 18
DK-1061 Copenhagen K

www.norden.org

NORDISKE ARBEJDSPAPIRER

N O R D I C W O R K I N G P A P E R S

Roadshow Svanen in Nordic small communities

Anna Sigurveig Ragnarsdóttir and Guðrún Lilja Kristinsdóttir

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/NA2016-904>
NA2016:904
ISSN 2311-0562

This working paper has been published with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. However, the contents of this working paper do not necessarily reflect the views, policies or recommendations of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Roadshow Final report

Anna Sigurveig Ragnarsdóttir (anna.ragnarsdottir@umhverfisstofnun.is)
Guðrún Lilja Kristinsdóttir (g.lilja.kristinsdottir@umhverfisstofnun.is)

Introduction

The Nordic Ecolabel was established in 1989 and has since then had much success in the Nordic countries as well as in a global context. The Nordic Ecolabel has become an extremely well-known brand and frequently selected by producers and consumers in the four large Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. A fast growth has also been witnessed in Iceland in the past few years where the number of Nordic Ecolabelled licensholders has grown from only four companies in 2008 to twenty nine in 2015. The Nordic Ecolabel is not only for big businesses, many success stories can be found in the less densely populated communities in the Nordic countries, where companies have used the Nordic Ecolabel to thrive and proved that it can be an intelligent step for small companies in remote areas to become certified by the Nordic Ecolabel.

Small isolated societies face different challenges than larger and more densely populated areas. These challenges are often related to low population density and a heavy dependence on import. In a report published by the Nordic Council (2013) “Svanen i småsamfund - Hur kan man stödja utvecklingen?” recommendations are made for national authorities to initiate information campaigns on environmental issues, green procurement and ecolabelling. This led to the start of a project called Roadshow, which was commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ working group for small communities (Små samfundsgruppen), which is a subset of the council’s working group on sustainable consumption and production (the SCP-group). The Roadshow project, which commenced late 2014, focused on enhancing knowledge and visibility of the Nordic Ecolabel in the Åland Islands, Faroe Islands and Greenland with meetings in each of the three countries on the subject of ecolabelling and green procurement. Representatives from the Nordic Ecolabel in Finland, Iceland and Sweden took part as Ecolabel ambassadors aiming to increase public knowledge of the Nordic Ecolabel and spark interest within different sectors in aforementioned countries. In small societies, the manufacturing sector is usually not very extensive, but the service sector is often fairly strong and therefore there is a certain potential for increasing certified companies within the service sector.

Goal

The goal of the Roadshow project was to increase knowledge of the Nordic Ecolabel in the three countries of the Åland Islands, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. These countries do not have national Nordic Ecolabelling secretariats but presentations were conducted by representatives from Finland, Iceland and Sweden. The goal was to spark interest in ecolabelling with producers and service companies as well as to introduce green purchasing among public institutions and private companies in order to create a demand for ecolabelled products and services. By offering personal meetings with stakeholders, insight and overview of the current interest in the relevant country was gained. The interested parties could be guided further in the right direction and assisted in how to take the next steps. Different information campaigns were needed in the three countries. In the Åland Islands, the primary target groups were companies that could potentially apply for the Nordic Ecolabel. In the Faroe Islands and Greenland, a greater focus was on increasing awareness among public and private consumers.

Results

The Åland Islands

Nordic Ecolabel representatives:

Karin Bergbom, Ecolabelling Finland

Nancy Holm, Ecolabelling, Sweden

Åland Islands is an archipelago in the Baltic Sea and is an autonomous region of Finland with a population of about 29.000 inhabitants (<http://www.asub.ax/start.con?iLan=2>). Åland Islands has the smallest population of the three countries partaking in the project and has close ties with Sweden and Finland, both geographically and politically.

Åland Islands do not have national legislation regarding ecolabels, but the islands are thought to have been successful in introducing the Nordic Ecolabel on the local market. It is a general opinion with license holders in the Åland Islands that there would be more certified companies on the islands if more emphasis would be put on marketing of the Nordic Ecolabel.

Because of the emphasis on local companies as potential applicants it was thought beneficial to the project that representatives from the national secretariats in Stockholm and Helsinki acted as ambassadors in the Roadshow project in the Åland Islands. The meetings were announced in two of the local newspapers, Nya Åland and Ålands tidningen (see figure 1)

The event and its schedule was also advertised on the website of Ålands landskapsregering and relevant branch organizations sent out emails to their associates; Visit Åland, Ålands näringsliv and Företagarna på Åland. The event also got coverage on the news when the representative from Sweden did a radio interview before the events (<http://www.radiotv.ax/gomorrn/svanen-vill-ha-fler-miljomarkta-alandska-produkter>).

Today there are companies four service companies that certified by the Nordic Ecolabel in the Åland Islands; one hotel, two printing companies and a car wash. According to a Nordic report, *Svanen i mindre samhällen – hur kan man stödja utvecklingen*, the companies in the Åland Islands are in general satisfied with the cooperation with the secretariat in Stockholm and Helsinki. Companies are free to select which secretariat they want to cooperate with and for many it is a more logical choice to cooperate with the secretariat in Sweden because the national language is Swedish. There is also genuine interest among the general public and small companies but that interest needs to be kept alive and acted upon.

Figure 1: advertisement for the event in Ålands tidningen

Licensing, marketing, criteria in focus

During the two days in Åland, three meetings were conducted with representatives from hotels, cleaning services and grocery stores (see figure 2). In all, ten people from these sectors participated in the meetings. There were also representatives from Ålands Högskola with focus on hotel education and the Åland business network.

The schedule was as following:

Wednesday, 15th of April

kl. 09:00 - Cleaning and textile services

kl. 13:00 - Hotel, restaurants and conference

Thursday, 16th of April

kl. 09:00 - Grocery shops

kl. 13:00 - Meeting with small companies

Figure 2: Meetings with cleaning companies and textile, grocery stores and hotels and restaurants.

The agenda for these meetings was a presentation of what the Nordic Ecolabel is, how known the brand is in the Nordic market, how satisfied our customers are (both of these areas were documented by the market surveys that the Nordic Ecolabel conducted in September, 2014 and January, 2015). Another area that was covered was the environmental platform that the Nordic Ecolabel uses, how criteria is chosen and worked with in the product development process. After this the participants got a short presentation of what it means to have a Nordic Ecolabel license and the criteria that must be fulfilled for hotels/restaurants/conferences, cleaning services, and grocery stores. Participants also got to view short films, which are currently available on www.svanen.se. These films, which are specially produced for employees within hotel/restaurants/conferences,

cleaning services, and grocery stores, are inspirational films to help employees understand the Nordic Ecolabel and the advantages of working in a Nordic Ecolabelled workplace.

After the meetings, the presentations were sent to all the participants and several expressed interest in applying for a Nordic Ecolabel license. At the moment the cleaning service company was in the middle of applying for an ISO declaration but is interested even in a Nordic Ecolabel as soon as time permits. Hotel Pommery's owner already has a Nordic Ecolabel for his Hotel Savoy, and will begin applying for the Nordic Ecolabel.

The general experience was that attendees appreciated the time given to meet with them, and the meetings gave an informal possibility for discussions about pricing/fees (several surprised by the low cost), marketing opportunities, and the ongoing development of criteria. Several potential attendees called in at the last moment and were not able to attend, which was disappointing but these also received a copy of the presentations. The presenters believe that there is a market for Nordic Ecolabel services in Åland Islands and will continue to have contact with the attendees and guide those interested through the application process.

Faroe Islands

Nordic Ecolabel representatives:

Anna Sigurveig Ragnarsdóttir, Iceland

Guðrún Lilja Kristinsdóttir, Iceland

The Faroe Islands is an archipelago in the North Atlantic Ocean and has been a self-governing society within the realm of Denmark since 1948. It is a small society of 48.724 inhabitants where 12. 647 live in the capital, Tórshavn (Hagstovan, <http://www.hagstova.fo/en>).

Prior to the trip the local status of the Nordic Ecolabel was investigated to maximize the result of the visit. There are two companies certified by the Nordic Ecolabel in the Faroe Islands, both are printing companies (Føroyaprent and Estra/Vasti) which were certified through the Danish Ecolabel secretariat. There seems to be large potential for certification within different service sectors in the islands and, equally important, a potential for increasing consumer demand for ecolabelled products.

Two meetings were set up, the first was an open meeting for private consumers as well as procurement personnel from either the public or the private sector with the topic: *“The environment and purchasing – how can eco-labels simplify your purchase”*. The second meeting was an informational meeting for different branches such as cleaning services, restaurants and hotels with the topic: *“Criteria, cost and communication with certifying agents”*.

The representatives from the Icelandic Ecolabelling office organized the meetings in cooperation with Umhvørvisstovan in the Faroe Islands. Different sectors were targeted beforehand and an email sent out to potentially interested parties. The meetings were also advertised in the local newspaper Sosialurin (see figure 3) and on the website at Umhvørvisstovan (<http://us.fo/Default.aspx?ID=13805&Action=1&NewsId=5769¤tPage=5&M=NewsV2&PID=31403>).

Figure 3: Advertisements in Faroese newspapers for the two meetings.

An interview with Jon Hestoy, the CEO of the ecolabelled printing company Føroyaprent, was published at a local newspaper in the same week to increase public awareness of the event. To further advertise the event, a radio interview was conducted on a morning show at Kringvarp Føroya (KVF), a local radio station, with representatives from Iceland and Umhvørvisstovan. The goal of the campaign was discussed and interested parties encouraged to take part in the advertised meeting (the interview can be found here: <http://kvf.fo/netvarp/uv/2015/03/19/hvat-skjal-til-fyri-fa-svanamerki#.VqCtBfnJxhE>).

An Icelandic brochure was translated to Faroese, printed at an Ecolabelled printing company in the Faroe Islands and distributed at both meetings, extra copies will be available at Umhvørvisstovan for interested companies (see figure 4).

Figure 4: The front page of the translated brochure.

There was good participation in both meetings, about 15 participants attended the open meeting on ecolabelling and green procurement from various corners of the society; the government, fishing industry, printing companies, grocery shops and local companies (see figure 5).

In the branch meeting there were also about 15 participants from various service sectors, producing companies, a hospital, the government, laundry companies, consultant companies and cleaning products producer (see figure 5). This meeting was more focused on different sectors and the participants were introduced to the criteria of the Nordic Ecolabel in different categories. Some actors stayed after the presentation to get a thorough individual guidance through the criteria and some were interested in looking into application for the Nordic Ecolabel.

Figure 5: Meetings with public, purchasers and different branch sectors.

Participants registered their name, company name and email and the presentation was sent out to all participant after the meetings. They also got the contact information for the representatives from the Icelandic Ecolabelling secretariat and were encouraged to seek information if interested.

In the past years there has been an increase in tourism in the Faroe Islands which will lead to increased demand from consumers on companies within the tourism service sector to minimize the impact on the environment, which is especially important in the context of the unspoiled nature in the Faroe Islands. Ecolabelling of service companies is often less complex than for example certification of different products and is therefore more attractive for small companies in the region. The Nordic Ecolabel has not been marketed specifically in the Faroe Islands but the label is nevertheless visible on the Danish television stations and there is a variety of ecolabelled products

in the Faroese shops. To increase local interest, and demand, the government has an opportunity to set an example by introducing green public procurement. The Nordic Ecolabel has not been formalized as an official ecolabel in the Faroe Islands and therefore little has been done to meet existing potential market demand. Nevertheless there is an ongoing development with the Ministry of Finance to develop a set of rules for public procurement in the Faroe Islands, which will hopefully help with this development (Svanen i mindre samhällen: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:701092/FULLTEXT01.pdf>).

Greenland

Nordic Ecolabel representatives:

Anna Sigurveig Ragnarsdóttir, Iceland

Guðrún Lilja Kristinsdóttir, Iceland

Greenland is an autonomous country within Denmark with just over 56,000 inhabitants in the country and close to 17.000 inhabitants living in Nuuk the capital (Statistics Greenland, 2014 (<http://www.stat.gl>)).

The campaign trip was originally planned for April 2015 but was delayed to September same year due to unforeseen factors. The local status of the Nordic Ecolabel was investigated to maximize the result of the visit. There are no companies in Greenland certified by the Nordic Ecolabel but a fair amount of products available despite a lack of awareness on the ecolabel. Therefore the main focus was on informing the general public as well as introducing the concepts of green procurement and ecolabelling for companies and institutions.

An open meeting was held at the University's auditorium at the Ilisimatusarfik in Nuuk the 8th of September 2015 and was advertised in the local newspaper, Nuuk Ugeavis (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Advertisement published in Greenlandic and Danish at the local newspaper, Nuuk Ugeavis.

A translator was involved from the beginning of the project making sure that the information was accessible for the attendees and the event was advertised in public spaces as well as in the local newspaper in Greenlandic and Danish. The material introduced at the open meeting was in Greenlandic, English and Danish and a translator was present to translate the presentations. The Minister of the Environment, Mr. Mala Høy Kúko opened the meeting with an inspiring opening speech. Representatives from two local shops Pisiffik and Brugsen attended the meeting and brought products to showcase the availability of ecolabelled products in Nuuk (see figure 7).

Figure 7: products from Pisiffik and Brugseni at the open meeting.

The open meeting focused on introducing the concept of ecolabels, what labels are trustworthy and the importance of selecting environmentally friendly options when shopping. At the open meeting there were about 15 participants from different sectors. There seemed to be high interest in the room for increased measures, especially within the ministries.

Due to lack of participation from service companies at the open meeting the representatives from the Nordic Ecolabel visited different service companies and handed out brochures as well as the criteria for that particular service sector to become Nordic Ecolabelled (see figure 8). There seems to be large potential for certification within different service sectors in the country as well as a potential for increasing demand for ecolabelled products. The team is positive that there will be applications coming from Greenlandic service sectors, especially with increased tourism in the country. A Greenlandic company producing soaps has already shown itself to be interested and been in contact with the local government after the meetings.

Figure 8: The front pages of the translated brochures.

Discussion

The Roadshow campaign has proven very important to increase interest in ecolabelling in small societies in the Nordic. These societies all have in common, that the Nordic Ecolabel has not been an area of focus for the local governments and therefore there are few if any licensholders. The level of brand recognition and general knowledge about the Nordic Ecolabel differs greatly within the three project countries. Because of this, the focus points for the campaign was different for each country. In the Åland Islands the primary focus was on different service branches and companies interested in becoming certified, since the general knowlegde of the ecolabel was percieved to be fairly high. In the Faroe Islands and Greenland the emphasis was to raise interest for public procurement as well as the knowledge of the general public. In order to enhance the visibility of Nordic Ecolabelled products in Greenland and Faroe Islands the project group printed shelf-labels (in figure 9) easily recognized by local shoppers. The local companies also had the opportunity to learn more about the Ecolabel, in a smaller setting, focusing more on individual discussions.

Figure 9: Shelf-labels distributed in Faroe islands and Greenland

Choosing environmentally friendly products and focusing on green procurement is a great way for businesses and companies to limit their impact on the environment. Small societies have an advantage over larger ones that can benefit the implementation of new practices. News travel fast, communication pathways are short and big changes can be made in an amazingly brief amount of time. The simple information on ecolables, what they stand for and how simple their use is in procurement could easilly bring about a a great environmental improvement.

Overall the group is content with the result of trip and positive regarding the future of the Nordic Ecolabel in small societies in the Nordic. The representatives from Iceland were able to give valuable insight into how the Nordic Ecolabel works within small societies and for small scale business, tapping into their knowledge of working to increase the market share of Ecolabelled products in Iceland. The representatives from Finland and Sweden were able to give relevant information for interested companies in Aland Islands, with the prime focus on presenting the benefits and procedures of applying for the Nordic Ecolabel. However, although a small campaign project as the Roadshow project might spark interest within local entities, it is in its nature a temporary project and lacks continuation. If the goal is to get more companies and products certified and to continue the marketing campaign of the Nordic Ecolabel it is vital that a representative is located on site in every country or community from the Nordic Ecolabel to work on marketing and to give interested companies the support they need to take the first steps. Such local support, backed up by a transfer of know-how from the larger Nordic countries, would undoubtedly result in a successful growth of the Nordic Ecolabel in the Nordic small societies.