

THE ICELANDIC  FEDERATION OF TRADE

We represent SMEs,
free trade and free competition

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FÉLAG  ATVINNUREKENDA

What is the IFT?

- A business organisation, founded in 1928
- A private, non-profit organisation with the goal of making the running of a business easier for our members
- The core of the organisation: Established import/wholesale companies
- In recent years we have broadened the membership; advertising agencies, independent fish processing plants, an oil company, an airline, a TV station, a telecoms company, companies in the travel business ...
- The great majority are SMEs, many are family run

What is the IFT?

- We are not a part of Business Iceland, the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, but a smaller „competitor“ in servicing and supporting companies and safeguarding their interests.
- We are often the choice of the challengers in the market, who do not want to belong to an organisation where the incumbents call the shots
- Our membership fees are relative to turnover, but each company has one vote
- Around 180 member companies total

Our services

- Collective wage agreements – we act as chief negotiator on behalf of our members in negotiations with office and shop staff, printers and designers, electricians, pharmacists
- Legal expertise – human resources, contracts, dealings with administrative institutions
- Further education for staff and managers
- Meetings, seminars, conferences
- We safeguard our members' interests and endeavor to influence the political sphere

Trade councils and partner organisations

- The IFT runs three trade councils for Asian countries
 - Icelandic-Chinese Trade Council since 1995
 - Icelandic-Indian Trade Council since 2005
 - Icelandic-Thai Trade council since 2016
- Association of Fish Producers and Exporters (SFÚ)
- Society of Icelandic Advertising Agencies (SÍA)

Issues

- Cutting red tape
 - Is the government following up on its policies of making doing business easier?
 - How are EU directives and regulations implemented?
- Abolishing tariffs and excise taxes
 - Iceland has abolished excise taxes and most tariffs
 - Still extremely high tariffs on many agricultural products, although we've managed to drill some holes in the tariff walls
- Lowering corporate taxes
 - Social security contribution
 - Real estate tax on companies

Issues

- More efficient public procurement
 - We pushed the state to procure airfares for officials
 - More efficient complaint process and control of public procurement
 - The rules should be extended to include local government, threshold should be lowered
- Encourage government to increase competition
 - We follow up on the rulings and recommendations of the competition authorities, e.g. in fisheries, agriculture, air transport
 - We criticise the state competing with private enterprises
 - the National Mail Service expanding into many other sectors, the Duty Free Store being a market leader in sweets and lingerie

Issues

- A rationalisation of monitoring and service fees
 - Should reflect the real cost of monitoring each individual companies and not be levied as a tax / percentage of turnover
 - Should be firmly based in law and supported by cost estimates
- Putting the spotlight on unresolved foreign currency loans
 - The banks and authorities seem to think the problem has been solved
 - The fact is that incredibly many companies still have unresolved issues with the banks because of foreign currency loans, 8 years after the financial crisis and some 200 superior and district court rulings later

Can a small business organisation get attention in the public debate?

- With a clear policy and good internal processes for policy making, it is easy to step into the debate and gain attention
- PR on the web and on social media is of primary importance
- Building connections with the media, politics and administration is important
- You can achieve a lot with a focused approach. The number of news stories where the IFT was mentioned rose by 282% between 2013 and 2015.



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