

Mathilde and Filipe started <http://www.fresh.land/> in Denmark in 2015..

But what to be aware of as an entrepreneur?



Photo: Penny D. Photo.
Venue: Restaurant Vækst.

Why did you chose Denmark as the place to start your business?

Three factors were important:

Focused on sustainability (we are a cleantech company) - Denmark is a forerunner for organic sales (around 15% of all groceries) and circular economy (like Wefood circulating food waste).

Demanding market where customers value high quality and demand a buying experience (like Meny offers in grocery shopping and Noma in fine dining) - which is our focus with Fresh.Land.

Sourcing high-caliber talent for our team. We have found very strong profiles at CBS and IT University for business and technology positions – however, the downside is the pay, which is more than twice the salary in Eastern or Southern Europe.



How did you handle starting a business in Denmark? Did you get help?

We started out refining our ideas for Fresh.Land at Det Grønne Iværksætterhus (DGIH), which is unfortunately closing down due to public budget cuts. There we found a very interesting environment with other entrepreneurs working on 3D printing, new coating materials for tubes among others. Together with one of the Mentors, we defined the initial ideas and business model.

The major leap came with our participation with the Green Tech Challenge in November 2015, where we had a good platform to meet investors and get high-value feedback from mentors on our business model. We ended up winning 3/3 prizes at the grand finale in the Confederation of Danish Industry (Industriens Hus).



Was starting your business in Denmark easier or harder than expected?

The bureaucracies (e.g. registering CVR, CPR, VAT) were easy, but it was hard to get the cashflows to pay the high office rents and first employee salaries due to the high living standards in Denmark.

The Copenhagen Airport is a hub, well connected to the rest of Europe, which makes it easy and affordable to travel.

Language was no problem at all - everyone speaks English. However, to be part of the "small talking", it's still worthwhile to learn Danish.



Was anything in particular unexpected?

We were impressed how bikes dominate the streets and is actually the most efficient means of transportation in the city of Copenhagen.



What was your biggest mistake?

As a startup you do a lot of mistakes and you learn from them. One of our early mistakes was to give credit to a buyer, who in the end didn't pay. We had to write off 25,000 DKK, unless we would take him in court. This was tough learning money, but has made us much more aware of whom we do business with.



Would you have done anything differently in hindsight?

Yes, we could have started our companies earlier when having less risk, such as testing the ideas and business model,

while still being students – it's a big step to quit a job in McKinsey and in Coloplast.



Are you happy with having your business in Denmark?

Generally yes. There is a thriving startup community here. For example, last month we had Techbbq, a major event where all players in the startup ecosystem gather (second only to the Web Summit).



How would you advice an international wanting to start a business in Denmark?

One thing we are doing is to outsource our development team. We currently have a lead developer based in Denmark and a remote team of developers. There are companies that help with the entire process overseas, even though we used our network to set up a team working in Portugal for less than half what it costed us in Denmark.



THANKS SO MUCH,
MATHILDE & FILIPE!