

Going global is exciting

It is also where a lot of stores quietly bleed money

This checklist will not make international expansion easy; nothing will. What it does is make sure you are not surprised by the things that are entirely predictable. The legal stuff, the translation traps, the payment methods nobody warned you about.

Failing is always an option. But there is a lot you can do to set yourself up for success, and that is exactly what this list is for. Work through it before you launch into a new market, or use it to audit something you already started. Either way, it is better to find the gaps on a checklist than in your revenue reports.

This checklist accompanies the talk "How not to fail when expanding globally" by Wendie Huis in 't Veld at WordCamp Europe 2026.

ONE MORE THING

You can absolutely start by just translating your store and seeing what happens. That is a valid strategy. Watch the data, adjust fast, and do not give up after two months.

Be patient. Persevere. Stay consistent.

Clonable helps organisations manage international websites from one central source, keeping content, structure and updates synchronised across markets. Request a free demo at clonable.net.

Do your homework (first)

The rule: Start way earlier than you think and start here. Plug expanding globally into your normal workload, it is not a side project, it is a business decision.

Understand where you stand

- Dig into your analytics: where is traffic already coming from outside your home market?
- Identify your new target markets based on data, not gut feeling
- Research whether there is actual demand there (competitors, keyword research, search volume, import rules)

Make a plan that holds up

- Write down specific goals: not "grow internationally" but "sell 50 orders in Germany by Q3"
- Build a basic business case: expected costs vs expected revenue
- Learn how people in your target market shop: payment habits, trusted platforms, return expectations

Embed it in your workflow

- Assign a clear owner -- who is responsible for driving this forward?
- Block time for it in your regular planning cycles, not just at launch
- Make sure your team knows this is happening and what is expected of them

Translation is the easy part

The rule: Internationalisation is not just translating text. It is rethinking your whole store experience for a different context.

What actually needs translating?

- Storefront pages, product content, logged-in account area and order history
- System messages, error texts, notifications, transactional emails, order confirmation, shipping updates, invoices, etc
- Customer support and FAQs

The details that trip people up

- Currency and payment methods vary a lot by country, for example: iDEAL, Sofort, Klarna, local cards
- Sizes and measurements: clothing, shoes, kg vs lbs, cm vs inches
- Address and name fields: not every country uses first/last in the same order or has a state field

Do not skip the human layer

- Train your AI: use context, glossaries, style guides, brand names and translation rules
- Brief your translator on brand voice and tone.
- Flag all humor, idioms, and cultural references for local review: they rarely survive automated translation

The unsexy practicalities

The rule: None of this is exciting. All of it is expensive if you ignore it. If possible, get local expert help.

Legal & compliance

- Terms and conditions reviewed and adapted for the target country
- GDPR and local data protection laws checked
- Business insurance coverage verified for cross-border sales

Tax & money

- VAT and import tax rules understood for each target market
- Tax registration requirements checked: thresholds vary by country

Shipping & returns

- Shipping options, costs, and delivery times confirmed
- Return process tested end-to-end from the customer's perspective
- Return and refund policy adapted: EU consumer rights rules are strict