

Information about merger discussions

between Aldan, Samstaða and Verslunarmannafélag Skagafjarðar

The leaders of Samstaða, Aldan and the Verslunarmannafélag Skagafjarðar have worked together to look into whether it would be a good idea to merge the three unions. This has been done with the full knowledge and approval of the boards of each union.

The starting point for the talks was this: if the unions merge, the new union should be stronger in its struggle on behalf of members, be stronger financially, and be able to provide more and better services than the three unions can provide separately.

For example, the plan has been that no offices would be closed, and all current staff would keep their jobs. Naturally, some tasks and responsibilities might need to be rearranged.

The aim is that most members should feel the benefits of a merger, not feel that they are losing something. Members should have access to a wider range of holiday options, grants and even better service.

A new union on old foundations

All three unions have long histories. Aldan and Samstaða have both already gone through successful mergers before.

Larger unions are stronger and have a stronger voice. This is true of the large, strong trade unions around Iceland that were created through mergers.

If the merger is approved, a new union with several sections will be created. It will cover Húnavatnssýslur, Skagafjörður and Bæjarhreppur.

The union will have the following sections:

- General section
- Commercial workers 'section
- Seafarers 'section
- Tradespeople's section
- State and municipal employees 'section

The union would have about 5,000 members. Offices would be in Blönduós, Sauðárkrókur and Hvammstangi. There are no plans to reduce the number of offices or staff. Instead, there has been discussion about how a larger union would be better able to strengthen its team.

Summer houses

If the merger goes ahead, members will have access to four apartments in Reykjavík, two holiday houses at Illugastaðir in Fnjóskadalur, holiday houses in Varmahlíð, Borg in Grímsnes, Ölfusborgir, and partial access to an apartment in Spain.

Camping cards and fishing cards will also be available, as well as subsidised accommodation within Iceland.

Sickness benefits fund

One of the biggest parts of looking at the pros and cons of a merger was reviewing the finances and rules of the unions.

An actuary was asked to assess the strength of the funds. The general conclusion was that a merged fund should be well able to meet its obligations. One reason is that a larger number of contributors spreads the risk and reduces the danger of financial shocks.

The review concluded that this would still be the case even if grants were levelled upwards — in other words, brought up to the best level currently offered by the three funds.

Education fund

In a merged union, each member would have access to an education fund through their own collective agreement, just as they do today.

The funds are:

- Starfsmennt
- Landsmennt
- Sveitamennt
- Ríkismennt
- Sjómennt
- Iðan

In addition to members' access to education funds through their collective agreements, there is also an interest in increasing direct education and training offered by the new union.

This would include courses targeting the needs of members in the area.

Next steps

Although the unions already have permission to look into the pros and cons of a merger, we — the leaders of Samstaða, Aldan and Verslunarmannafélag Skagafjarðar — believe it is right to ask members whether they want this work to continue.

The next step would be to draft rules and regulations for a new merged union. The result of that work would then be put to members for approval or rejection, according to the rules of each union.

It has been decided to hold an online vote in each union separately. If a majority in at least two of the unions supports continuing the talks, those two unions will continue the talks. If a majority supports continuing in all three unions, all three will continue. If a majority in two of the unions is against continuing, there will be no further talks.

The vote will take place on each union's website from 21 to 28 May. To take part, members must log in using electronic ID.

Information in English is available on the unions' websites:

Aldan Stéttarfélag — www.aldan.is

Stéttarfélagið Samstaða — www.samstada.is

Verslunarmannafélag Skagafjarðar — www.vmf.is