

**SIK Congress 2025**  
**Summary of the main board's report**  
**for the election period 2021-25**

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## **(1) Introduction**

The main board elected at the 2021 congress consists of: Chairman Jea G. Berthelsen, Vice-Chairman Jokum Zeeb, board members Else Jonna Lange, Sofie Svendsen, Ludvig Larsen, Nuunu Johansen Jerimiassen, Qulutanguaq Berthelsen, Peter B. Mølgaard and Pele-Knud Mathiessen.

This report first deals with organizational matters, including the union, members, the associations, the foundations and the work of the secretariat. In addition, the report deals with social matters that directly or indirectly affect the living conditions of SIK members: Society's economy, education, business conditions and, not least, the exploitation of the country's raw materials.

## **(2) What is a strong union going forward?**

The term "local branches" was abolished at the 2021 congress and replaced with "associations". And the question is whether it has been useful or not. The number of members has actually decreased since then.

We are otherwise competitive compared to other trade unions – in terms of personnel, financial management, holiday funds, legal services, member services, social funds and, not least, offices in the larger cities that members can contact, etc.

We need to discuss our strengths and our weaknesses. How can SIK show its responsibility towards society? Establishment of service units on the coast? A changed system for using associations? How can we attract young people to professional work?

## **(3) Members and associations**

[1 table showing the development of membership from 2021 to 2024 and users of the half-contingent scheme]

[2 tables showing the responses of some associations to questions about contingent categories and member relocation]

*Declining membership numbers:* The main board's goal of 300 more members during the election period is far from being achieved.

*Membership contingent:* The advantage of paying membership fees via PBS is that the system is independent of moving residential addresses, but the association contingent must be adjusted when moving, as association contingent differ. A number of companies have

agreed to deduct membership contingent from the salary after agreement with the employee.

*Challenges in getting new members to start paying:* Over the course of a year, around 1,600 have registered as members, but only 160 had started paying their quota. Part of the explanation – but not the whole explanation – is that the bank is withholding payment with valid reasons.

*Half contingents:* The board has requested an assessment of the extent of the use of half dues. Based on the limited number of responses from the associations that have been received, 9 percent of members pay half contingents. This is relatively high, and it costs half a million kroner to SIK's finances.

#### **(4) How do we make the membership younger?**

A clear effort is needed to attract more young people as members. In a ten-year period up to 2024, the union has had significantly fewer young members.

There are two important questions to answer: Has the membership become younger since SIK Youth was established? If not, what should we do?

#### **(5) SIK Youth**

The main board recommends that SIK Ungdom, which was established in 2013 as a department, be closed down.

Although there has been a generational change in the local boards, the establishment of a youth department has unfortunately not resulted in more young members. Instead of an actual youth department, the aim should be to focus on target group-oriented initiatives in the youth area.

#### **(6) We need more members**

In 2023, the main board set out a larger number of points for promotion for more members.

These promotions concern regular communication with members, establishment of specific member benefits, PR initiatives and the possible establishment of a hotline for service for members and potential members. Some of the points are being realized.

### **(7) SIK's secretariat**

The 13 employees in the union secretariat receive ongoing training in good manners when servicing members.

There are many different types of people who contact the union. And there must be room for everyone. Thus, the following basic attitude is applied: Regardless of the nature of the contact, one must show kindness, honesty, willingness to dialogue and proper understanding.

### **(8) SIK's funds**

*Social Fund:* There is a rapid development in the number of users of the social fund. At the same time, there is a large increase in the fund's expenses, also because there are significant increases in ticket prices in the travel area. In the upcoming collective agreement negotiations, it will therefore be appropriate to have employers' contributions to the social funds regulated upwards.

As something new in the social fund's area of activity, the possibility of assistance for travel tickets has been introduced, so that a co-parent and children under the age of 18 can attend the birth when the birth is to take place in a city other than the home city.

*Information and Education Fund:* In addition to the regular program of courses for union representatives, courses have been held for SIK consultants as trainers, and courses have been held for boards in a number of local associations. Citizen meetings and company visits have been held in connection with the local board courses. The fund has good finances.

*Holiday Fund:* In addition to the well-known scheme with lottery trips, holiday fund trips have been introduced by collective agreement every two years for certain professional groups. These are the professional groups HK, child and social workers, health workers, support persons and interpreters. The professional group technicians in Greenland has also been given a scheme with such a holiday fund trip every year. The holiday fund has good finances.

*Pension Fund SISA:* The pension fund's finances are developing well. Its board has decided that there will be no early payment of pension savings for foreign pension recipients who return home after working in Greenland. Such a scheme is also not practiced in the Nordic countries, according to information from NFS.

## **(9) Collective agreements**

*Greenland Self-Government:* Negotiations on 20 different collective agreements for 6,900 employees concluded on 3 September 2023 with an 8% salary increase and improvements within the right to leave in the event of serious illness of relatives, etc. As something new, holiday fund trips for certain professional groups were achieved, mentioned in (7), Holiday Fund.

*Royal Greenland:* Agreement concluded as of 1 January 2023, valid for three years. 12.59% salary increase. Maternity and adoption leave with pay achieved.

*Trawler crews in Royal Greenland:* It has been difficult to renew the collective agreement, as the system is based on turnover-based percentage income for the crews. For contract employees, the scheme is called "2:2", i.e. two months of work on board and two months of free period. As regards pension savings, the percentage is 1% higher than usual, namely 9% in 2024, 10 per cent in 2025 and 11 per cent in 2026.

*The passenger ship Sarfaq Ittuk / Royal Arctic Line:* The situation is that RAL also has a collective agreement with Danish labor unions, namely 3F and Dansk Metal, on both the Atlantic navigation and the rural supply in Greenland. The company is therefore awaiting the outcome of negotiations with the two labor unions before negotiating with SIK. The question is whether SIK's collective agreement results should always depend on the agreements reached with the Danish labor unions. They place emphasis on other matters than SIK does - for example, regarding payment of travel in connection with the death of close relatives, free holiday travel and the social fund, which have a high priority in SIK.

*The technicians:* The Danish National Technical Union has transferred its negotiating rights to SIK regarding technicians in Greenland. The first collective agreement negotiations after the transfer were concluded in October 2024 with good results.

## **(10) The main board's initiatives**

During the first months of its term, the main board has set ten specific objectives, both in terms of internal organizational matters and societal matters that affect the living conditions of SIK members. The main boards report provides a brief status of the objectives, indicating the development and status in the individual areas.

## **(11) The desire for cooperation with other unions**

SIK has long cherished a desire for real cooperation at various levels between the labor unions. SIK has therefore taken the initiative for a number of meetings with proposals for

cooperation topics. The discussions were so concrete that the healthcare cartel PPK even received an offer for office facilities in the SIK building. However, they have chosen to share offices with a law firm elsewhere.

**(12) NFS – the labor union cooperation in the Nordic region**

During his participation in the NFS meeting in April 2025 in Sweden, the SIK chairman was asked to tell a little about the mood after President Trump's statements about Greenland. A representative of the joint organization of labor unions in the USA, AFL-CIO, Cathy Feingold, was present via video. The SIK chairman stated that we do not want to be annexed by the USA, nor do we want to be Americans.

**(13) Workplaces, employment, unemployment**

According to Statistics Greenland, the number of job seekers has increased significantly in three places compared to last year, namely in Nuuk, Ilulissat and Tasiilaq. This is worrying. Also because fewer construction projects are reported in Sisimiut, and it has been announced at GE's general meeting that there are no longer any new projects in Ilulissat.

There is a clear trend that smaller businesses on the coast are moving to Nuuk and establishing their work areas here.

**(14) Job seekers**

[1 table from June 2024 on job seekers by age and gender]

[1 table showing a graph on the development in the number of job seekers]

In June 2024, a total of 1,314 job seekers were registered. Compared to the previous year, there is an increase of 146. Statistics Greenland points out that the increase may be related to the improved job search services.

**(15) Labor from abroad**

The fact that more and more workers are coming from outside, especially from the Philippines and Thailand, can be seen in the cases that SIK has come to deal with as a labor union.

After the Fast Track scheme, the recruitment of workers from the East has increased noticeably. This is also due to the fact that the spouse of a recruited worker can get a job

fairly easily. However, the authorities are aware of this. And a change in legislation can be expected in the near future.

**(16) Maternity fund**

SIK will ask its representatives on the board of the Maternity Fund, which has been established by law with a focus on private companies, to provide better information about the existence of the fund and the opportunities it offers.

A quick inquiry to the coast indicates that very few people apply to the fund. SIK has written to Arctic Law Greenland, which administers the fund – with a copy to the Greenland Self-Government – about the need for better information.

**(17) Price increases**

[1 table with information on the price development of airline tickets on the listed routes]

When the construction of new airports was decided, SIK warned of significant price increases on internal flight routes in Greenland. Unfortunately, the concern has come to be true.

As a trade union, we must work for better conditions for our members and their families. Ticket prices also have a major impact here. In SIK, we will also feel the price increases significantly, as the Education and Training Fund, which arranges courses, the Holiday Fund and the Social Funds rely on a lot of travel activity.

**(18) Cancellations of mutual support obligations in public pensions**

It is gratifying that the mutual support obligation for public pensions has been abolished – which means that a spouse's income is no longer offset against the public pension. Congratulations, public pensioners! After that, the goal for all of us is to provide more in the public pension and to raise the limit for additional income.

**(19) The desire for more welfare in society**

[1 table indicating the level of education in the population divided into extended primary school, upper secondary education at the highest level and higher education]

The desire for more welfare in society is naturally associated with good schooling and education. The statistics also show a slow but steady increase in the level of education in

Greenland. In 2002, people with higher education made up 8 percent. In 2022, this has increased to 13 percent.

Another factor in the desire for more welfare is whether we exploit the mineral resources found underground. However, limits have been set by law for such exploitation, which could otherwise boost the country's economy, so that healthcare, education, etc. could be better afforded. We will then have to resort to fishing for a long time to come.

## **(20) Housing construction**

For a number of years there has been a lot of activity in Nuuk with the construction of housing etc. A forest of construction cranes characterized the city.

Now it is suddenly quiet from day to day. This is of course a cause for concern – also because many of our compatriots were employed in all the many new construction projects. Virtually everyone who wanted to work in the construction got their job. If there are no plans for new construction, there can be fears of a sudden increase in unemployment. In Nuuk, the focus is currently on construction of dormitory for students. We do not know what other major construction projects there are.

## **(21) Airports and the airport in Kangerlussuaq**

From the governments side, we have always been told that Kangerlussuaq's existence as an airport for large aircraft is coming to an end, as it will be far too expensive to renovate it.

Since then, the construction of two large and one smaller airport has begun elsewhere, and it is not believed that it will be profitable to continue operating Kangerlussuaq as an international airport at the same time. Now, aircraft are landing to exchange passengers with cruise ships. And the question is when the airport in Kangerlussuaq will no longer hinder the profitability of Greenland Airports Mittarfeqarfiit A/S.

## **(22) Trade and job creation**

The Greenland Economic Council has determined that the war in Ukraine has so far had the least impact on Greenland's economy because the oil price here is fixed, because there are good fish prices and because the Danish state provides a fixed block subsidy. However, the council predicts increased prices in the coming time due to the pressure from oil and gas prices. And if we do not find new income, we will be in a deficit of 1 billion kroner annually. The council therefore believes that no more people should be employed in public institutions.

This is very much something that is of interest to SIK's members. Many institutions are short of manpower – children's institutions, retirement homes/nursing homes. When there is to be a hiring freeze, SIK's remaining members will have to work hard. Therefore, it is simply necessary to open up other sources of income than fishing resources.

**(23) The country's export economy**

[1 table of the relationship between exports and imports in 2023]

[1 table of countries from which Greenland imports in 2023]

[1 table of countries to which Greenland exports in 2023]

The majority of our imports come from Denmark, namely 66 percent. We also import some from Sweden (13.2 percent), just as we import from Germany and China.

The majority of exports (85.8 percent) also go to Denmark. According to Statistics Greenland, there are no exports to England and China, although we are generally aware that Royal Greenland, Polar Seafood and other fishing companies mostly sell their products to the countries mentioned. It would be interesting to get a more detailed explanation here.

**(24) The need to add value to fish**

SIK has naturally had a great interest in the creation of the new Fisheries law, and has contributed a lot to the debate about it – it is about how and in what way the country's natural resources are exploited and administered, with a great influence on society, including the workers and their daily lives.

After the new Fisheries law has come into force, it is now time to focus on and work for increasing the value of the fish products that are landed, so that more employment is created in the land facilities – in Paamiut and in other towns. There has been only a slight increase in the wages of factory workers, while there has been a huge increase in the income of fishermen. In the election campaign this year, there has been a lot of talk about the fishermen, but not about the workers, who create added value on the fish that is purchased.

**(25) Mining**

Since we know that uranium is present in the entire subsoil of our country to a greater or lesser extent, the SIK congress in 2021 expressed support for initiating the exploitation of mineral deposits, regardless of whether the minerals contain uranium or do not contain uranium as a by-product.

In Kuannersuit in South Greenland, the mineral deposits contain 0.03 grams of uranium. With a majority of only one member, the Greenlandic parliament has decided that there must be a maximum of 0.01 grams of uranium in a mineral deposit if mining is to be permitted on it.

There is thus a need for public information - we at SIK can take the initiative for this ourselves. We can do this in collaboration with, for example, the Technical University of Denmark and with the Canadians, who have experience with mining on uranium-containing raw materials. As it is today, one senses that voters are taking a position based on emotions, not on knowledge and facts.

**(26) Smaller population in 2050**

[1 table with population projection to the year 2049]

[1 graph with projection of breadwinners aged 18-66, 1979-2050]

According to Statistics Greenland, the population in 2024 is 56,389 – with the current development, it is calculated to be 45,988 in the year 2050.

On a national level, the development will have a severe impact on SIK members. Since the older part of the population is growing proportionally, SIK employees will have to work hard due to a shortage of labor. Therefore, it is necessary for SIK people to engage in the debate on this.

**(27) Should we return to 17 municipalities?**

A majority of the main board will not support the municipalities being divided again. The union members should also take a position on this. What will it mean in practice for the members and for society as a whole to return to the old municipal division?

**(28) The Elections**

This year there have been elections to the parliament and to the municipal councils. And it has been noted that three from the SIK main board, each ran for parliament on their own party list – namely Ludvig Larsen, Qulutanguaq Berthelsen and Jess G. Berthelsen.

This is in accordance with the SIK chairman's previous encouragements that the members promote the interests of the workers across political lines. But none of the three entered parliament. The working population obviously has no further desire for their working comrades to enter parliament.

This year's election can also be described as a pronounced election between those who say yes to the USA and those who say no to the USA.

**(29) Independence or Free Association**

Regarding Greenland's future constitutional status, SIK has previously expressed support in principle for independence in its political goals. A model for independence, Free Association, has been presented in the debate, which is practiced among the former colonies in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The upcoming main board should examine the model more closely. One thing is certain, however: In order to become independent, we must have support from and cooperate with other countries, not just with Denmark. With only 56,000 inhabitants, we cannot achieve meaningful independence – we cannot even today achieve our own healthcare sector ourselves.

**(30) Conclusion: Need for Unity More Than Ever**

At present, there is great international interest in our country, not least in terms of defense policy. Therefore, the question of independence must be treated carefully – we must not vote for independence under pressure.

If we vote for independence without having secured the necessary income, it could severely affect the daily living conditions of our members. In independence, we must necessarily cooperate with the outside world – not by resorting only to America, not by resorting only to Denmark. There is a need in our society for unity more than ever before.