

Dear chairman and members of the House of Representatives' Committee on Kingdom Relations,

In addition to your recent visit to St. Eustatius (Statia), we would like to make a few comments with a view to focusing on the further processing of your information about our beautiful island.

As of 7 February, the administrative situation on Statia has changed drastically. This is not immediately visible in daily life but - as stated - administratively of course it is. According to recent history, Statia has never sailed its own course: during the era of "the Netherlands Antilles" 'everything' came from Curaçao and as of 10-10-10 the island of Bonaire, 900 km away, has taken over that paternalistic position. This seems to be caused by the (perhaps not explicitly expressed) desire of the European Netherlands to have only one (1) point of contact for the BES islands. That is a pity, a direct communication from every BES island with The Hague is probably more effective and in any case more satisfactory. For the record: this view is that of the citizen who lives here. Perhaps formal, administrative relations are slightly different (whether or not more or less complex).

From this point of view, it may not be realistic to expect that the administrative culture in Statia will become mature overnight. The comparison with raising children seems to me to be applicable: a good example to follow. I would like to mention three well-known, not too complicated or high-flown principles of good governance:

1. Deming's quality circle, consisting of the steps: Plan, Do, Check and Act;
2. Transparency in management actions (no backroom politics);
3. Achieve desired behavior through encouragement, reward, reprimand and punishment.

In my opinion, it would be good if these three principles were consistently applied so that at some point they would become part of the administrative culture of the island, regardless of who or which party is 'at the controls' at a certain point in time.

The involvement of the two appointed gentlemen in life on the island is, in our opinion, absolutely excellent. And the feeling that they are doing good things is also absolutely present. However, it still hangs on to this good feeling. You should bear in mind that objective news coverage (partly based on good journalistic principles such as 'hearing both sides of the argument') on the island is actually out of the question: many of the things one knows come from what one has heard from others or from what others publish on Facebook. Facts and opinions then easily flow into each other and any misunderstandings can easily escalate.

I would like to illustrate this thought with an example. In conversation with Messrs Franco and Stegers it was once mentioned (by them) that about fifty projects have been started, all aimed at a better functioning of the island. However, I think that no one can mention more than five or ten of these projects in a random survey of island residents. Of course, everyone has an image and sound when improving the roads, and the upgrade of the internet can hardly fail to be noticed: in various places on the island, connection points are created that will be connected to the point where the internet 'comes ashore' by means of fibre-optics. This building and digging must have been seen by everyone driving across the island.

But are postcodes also 'served' on the island? Will all inhabitants be given a citizen service number? How does improved financial management actually take shape? How will it be ensured that the civil service acts with goals in mind, without fear of intimidation? How can poverty be combated? Many people have an answer or vision to these (and other) question points, but it does not get any further than that individual answer or opinion. However, there is no clear plan in which all projects are identified (with objectives to be achieved, the resources required, interactions to be taken into account with other projects and the schedule drawn up over time [answering questions such as who is going to do what and when]). And if this statement is a little too harsh (because such an overview would exist), then it is safe to say that this overview has not been made widely known.

With regard to the pursuit of the desired behaviour (of our directors), I am thinking, among other things, of the following. In the recent past all kinds of things have gone wrong, as various parties have established. This includes incorrect financial management and reprehensible behaviour (intimidation and nepotism) on the part of or on behalf of local directors. However, no one seems to be formally investigating these issues, no guilty parties are rightly pointed out or punished and no lessons seem to have been learned. Surely it is not the case

that enough has gone wrong that an intervention has been considered and implemented, but that on closer inspection nothing has actually gone wrong? Is there not the saying 'soft healers make stinking wounds'?

I would like to see your Commission request the Cabinet (for this: the responsible State Secretary) to bring about more transparency and exemplary behaviour (with reprimand and punishment where necessary). A clear overview of approximately fifty (sub)projects, each with its own project plan(s), does not seem to me to be too much to ask. This overview must, of course, be kept up to date: a (bi-)weekly update does not seem to me to be too much to ask either. Communication about this can take place via the local government's website, but of course a paper overview (to be updated on a weekly basis) on a publication board with underlying documents for inspection in - for example - the library, is also possible. In this respect, it can easily be argued that if it turns out that a published schedule has not been met, this will (could) lead to a lot of criticism. However, it seems to me that if you can explain well why a plan is not being met (and the plan therefore has to be updated), everyone can be content with it. Furthermore, we would like to see those who have misbehaved in the recent past (in terms of financial management or in terms of intimidation or nepotism) being held accountable for this (and punished where applicable).

Yours sincerely,

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