

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

With a view to the forthcoming procedural meeting (24 April next), I would like to inform you of the following with regard to developments on St. Eustatius.

The local government has recently drawn up a press statement (*see appendix 1*). This statement can be found on the website of Statia Government. The message it conveys "it's going well!". The basis of this view must be found in an overview of projects with an amount of money behind them (*Appendix 2*). It is unclear whether this is the budget budgeted for the project, whether it is the amount that has actually been realized and whether it will be multiannual or just the part in 2019: I do not know and it does not seem to me to be inferred from the document either.

Now I don't want to zoom in too much on (just) the numbers. Much more interesting, of course, is what is foreseen in the various projects in terms of objectives and activities (which lead to the realization of these objectives). However, these are not to be found. In my opinion, the extent to which these activities relate to their planning would be informative. As far as I am concerned, it would also be informative whether the actual realization is in reasonable line with the financial realization. After all, a comparison of the planned and actual project progress gives a reasonable picture of how things are going. A recommendation based on my experience at a previous employer (the NL central government): if the physical and financial realization more or less keep pace AND this realization is according to plan => mark it green (it's going well); other yellow or red to mark depending on the criteria set for it.

Then I try to make a match between the previously mentioned project overview (in a financial sense) on the one hand and the list of projects that the State Secretary announced on 14 November 2018 on the other hand (*appendix 3*). Appendixes 2 and 3 do contain a number of similarities, but a conclusive one-to-one match is difficult to detect. And also a match with the list of "twelve projects" in relation to the decision to be taken later this year on whether or not to hold elections. This list was defined in the progress report of - also - 14 November 2018; *see page 9 of appendix 4*. This picture does not seem to me to be inferred from the information that is made available to the public (i.e. Annex 2). In my opinion, a periodic and interactive town hall meetings (once every two or four weeks, for example; in analogy with the Prime Minister's weekly press conference in the Netherlands), based on a well-readable project overview, would be more informative than the information that has been provided to date.

I have already informed you about the lack of transparency in planning and decision-making. This picture concerns not only the non-communication of the government commissioners, but also that of the civil service and - more specifically - of the advisers who come from the European Netherlands. A specific example - among other similar experiences - concerns a resident's question about '*when will it be my house's turn*' in the context of the 'repair of houses after Hurricane Irma' (project 002046 in the financial project overview with a 'valuation' of EUR 3.7 million). In several mails and apps, this question has been asked by the resident referred to, but there is no reaction at all. This case has now been submitted to the National Ombudsman.

Another point of attention concerns the Digid. A desk has recently been opened at the tax office on Bonaire. Why not organize something like this on Saba and St. Eustatius at the same time? After all, the tax authorities are also organized on a decentralized basis with offices on these small windward islands. If the idea is that the Digid desk on Bonaire also serves Saba and St. Eustatius, this has never been communicated, and moreover this would also be a very impractical idea: after all, the distance between Bonaire on the one hand and Saba and St. Eustatius on the other hand is about 900 kilometres.

That brings me "automatically" to the subject of "connectivity". A report on this subject was recently published and presented to you. In my e-mail of March 8th - you have taken it for notice - I have based on this (argued!) argued for improved connectivity between the small Windward Islands of Saba and St. Eustatius on the one hand and Bonaire on the other hand and to set up this connectivity as a so-called Public Service Obligation (PSO). I would like to know how this development is progressing.

There are several other topics that I would like to discuss (such as issuing citizen service numbers, opening a NL bank account, etc.) but it seems to me that this mail is already quite extensive. I hope that in the forthcoming

procedural consultations (or in an AO that may result from this) you will be able to "really" get things off the ground.

Again and for the record: I want nothing more than for this intervention to be successful. That gives confidence in the - local AND national - politics of the public. For the time being, however, I am not at all convinced that the future of St. Eustatius will really take place at an improved general administrative level.

Yours sincerely,

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[Annex 1](#): Press release (dated 15 March 2019)

[Annex 2](#): Financial table of projects/activities (dated 11 April 2019)

[Annex 3](#): List of projects (dated 14 November 2018)

[Annex 4](#): Progress report (dated 14 November 2018)