

Dear Chairman and members of the Committee on Education, Culture and Science,

I was interested to read the information that the Minister of Education, Culture and Science sent to the Lower House of Parliament on 10 July 2019. The letter speaks of "a lot of progress" with regard to the status of education on the islands but calls the quality "vulnerable".

This letter relates to this positively tinted progress letter and to a small aspect of it, namely the introduction of CXC on (Saba and) St. Eustatius. In a single beautiful but at the same time vague sentence, it is stated that pupils can achieve the CSEC level where a pre-vocational secondary vocational education (VMBO) or HAVO diploma is obtained in the European Netherlands.

Also in the letter of 8 October 2014 from the then State Secretary for OCW it is stated that the introduction of CXC in connection with the naming of English as the official language of instruction at the schools on St. Eustatius, will be successful. Literally this letter says: "The exams of the CXC are widely recognized, also in the Netherlands. The profiles can be composed in such a way that they reflect the profile of the theoretical learning path of the pre-vocational secondary vocational education (VMBO) or HAVO".

We are now almost five years further (after the letter of October 2014) and at the end of the current school year 2019/2020 there is the outflow (at least on St. Eustatius) of the first cohort of pupils that follow the CSEC education.

Despite these five years, nothing has happened yet in terms of legislation and regulations. At the last final examination (the last HAVO examination on St. Eustatius), the VO BES Final Examination Decree was an excellently manageable document - especially chapter V - to determine whether a candidate had passed the HAVO and whether a re-examination was possible (see articles 37a and 38). The BES WVO Establishment Decree neatly defined the composition of the four havo-profiles CM, EM, NG and NT in article 21. As far as I am aware, equivalents of these aspects of the CSEC regulations do not (yet) exist.

The site with information from the national government does indicate which diplomas you can use to go to a Dutch university or a Dutch university of applied sciences, but it does not contain CSEC. If you want to know more about the value of the CSEC level, Nuffic offers a solution. After all, this is where you can find out what foreign diplomas are worth, particularly in terms of admission to Dutch higher education.

The most recent information you can find here about education in the Dutch Caribbean can be found under "*Curacao, Sint-Maarten and BES-islands*" (edition 2, February 2011, version 2, January 2015) where I arrive at "*about havo*" without the asterisk (*) that implies automatic recognition.

Now I dare to say that the teaching team of the Gwendoline van Puttenschool is perfectly capable, with full knowledge of the facts, of clarifying after five years what the CSEC level stands for, given a certain set (or profile) of subjects. However, when clarity needs to be given to students and their

parents, you need more. An authoritative document (such as law, decree, government website or Nuffic brochure) which clearly shows "*look, if you do this, you have access to that*".

I get a feeling of shame that we as an institution (i.e. the entire system that gives shape to education in the Netherlands, i.e. from the ministry to the executive school, whether or not including the Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, although in my opinion this link implies more delay than acceleration, in any case no added value) have so far - after five years - not succeeded in providing such clarity.

May I, through the Commission's intervention, ask the Minister to fill this gap in legislation and regulations as a matter of urgency, so that the cohort of pupils that will be leaving by the summer of 2020 also know where they stand? In that context, another small obstacle: experience shows that the May/June exams in CXC do not lead to a result to be announced until August/September. This implies a "connection problem" in the transition from secondary to higher education. It would be nice if this point could also be taken into account, for which I would like to thank you in advance.

With kind regards,

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In copy to the Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee.