

Dear Chairman and members of the Finance and Social Affairs and Employment Committees,

Following a message on the website of Kingdom.nu ¹ about the difference in the rate of transfer tax between the Caribbean and the European Netherlands, State Secretary Vijlbrief refers to agreements made to this end in the past (i.e. an 'exchange' of transfer tax and petrol tax). The State Secretary points out that the tax legislation in the Dutch Caribbean is different than in the European Netherlands. This almost immediately raises the question: *why*?

I would like to see the question asked placed in a broader context. When I see the Caribbean Netherlands as a part of the country 'the Netherlands', article 1 ² of the Constitution seems to me to apply to both the Caribbean and the European Netherlands.

There are several aspects which, when tested against the cited principle of equality, in my opinion can be solved relatively easily. Think, for example, of the social minimum (which for me unclear reason is different between the European and Caribbean Netherlands and of which the determination of that of the Caribbean Netherlands has been accompanied by so much discussion and delay).

To stay within the financial domain, I see in the summary 'Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba' of the SEO report 2019-08 of February 2019 ³ that the income inequality (Gini factor) in the Dutch Caribbean is 31 to 45 percent (!) higher than in the European Netherlands (0.38 to 0.42 versus 0.29, calculated over the period 2011-2016). The fact that income tax in the European Netherlands is gradually increasing seems to me a logical consequence of the principle "*the strongest shoulders bear the heaviest burden*". The fact that the rate in the Dutch Caribbean is a fixed percentage ("flat fee") for almost all income earners is incomprehensible to me, given the relatively high Gini factor!

In the field of social benefits I also see differences in AOV versus AOW and other benefits with differences between the European and Caribbean Netherlands. Also here the question (with article 1 of the Constitution in mind): *why*? Differences that logically result from the difference in climate, or the fact that the Dutch Caribbean is (partly) located in hurricane-prone areas, seem explainable to me, but that is not at all the case here, is it?

And while we're at it. How rational is the decision taken at the time to use the US dollar as the local currency instead of the euro? And why is the only bank on the Windward islands one with a head office in another country within the Kingdom (and therefore also a supervising central bank which is not the Dutch Central Bank)?

¹ <https://koninkrijk.nu/2020/11/17/vijlbrief-caribisch-nederland-heeft-zelf-gekozen-voor-hogere-overdrachtsbelasting/>

² All who are in the Netherlands will be treated equally in equal cases. Discrimination because of religion, philosophy of life, political affiliation, race, gender or any other reason is not allowed.

³ https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/kerncijfers_koninkrijk_definitief_19022019.pdf, page 5

And finally (at least for the moment ;-)) a question I have asked before and to which I have never seen an answer: why does the Dutch Caribbean citizen not 'naturally' have a Burger Service Nummer [BSN] (or at least the possibility or choice to do so)?

Because I can easily or fairly quickly foresee a reaction like "*that equating socially and financially is far too expensive*" (is that actually a valid argument with Article 1 of the Constitution as a criterion?) I am also happy to submit this question to the Court of Audit. After all, the Caribbean Netherlands is 'only' about 25,000 people. Perhaps the Court of Audit can draw up an authoritative bill.

Kind regards,

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Sint Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean.

Note: Although I live and work on St. Eustatius (Dutch Caribbean), I did not submit the idea described here to politicians here in advance. I would like to see the question asked in all its purity, regardless of pro- or anti-Dutch emotions.

cc: Committee Kingdom Relations (of the Lower House of Parliament)
 Netherlands Court of Audit, P.O. Box 20015, 2500 EA The Hague, The Netherlands
 National Ombudsman, Antwoordnummer 10870, 2501 WB The Hague
 Board of Human Rights, P.O. Box 16001, 3500 DA Utrecht, the Netherlands.