

Dear Chairman and Members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

In the Temporary Act Task Neglect St. Eustatius (which was in force until July 15, 2020) there is a Social Advisory Council. In the absence of an Island Council - which had been dissolved - consultation with this council was the only consultation to which the government commissioner was legally bound towards the population. Not that there was much consultation, and certainly not in an advisory sense. This council was the sham behind which consultation with the population was feigned.

This Temporary Act on Neglect of Authority on St. Eustatius is no longer in force. As of July 16, 2020, there is the St. Eustatius Restoration Provisions Act. In this Act there is no longer any mention at all of the Social Advisory Council nor of a similar body.

The Explanatory Memorandum to the latter Act states, among other things, that when the new Island Council takes office, a Civic Participation Council will replace the existing Social Advisory Council. The Island Council has been in office for some time now. As of immediately - as appears from mail exchanges with the government commissioner - the Social Advisory Council has been dissolved and the government commissioner is still considering the question "whether and how a form of citizen participation" can be organized.

There is simply an abuse of the fact that the Explanatory Memorandum does not have the force of law. Citizen participation...? Why would we do that? After all, there is an island council! This is not how I have heard the statement yet but this line of thought - on the part of the Government Commissioner - I can surmise.

It fits the presentation that the government commissioner has been giving himself since his arrival on St. Eustatius. In *words* the consultation and input of the citizens is highly valued, but in *deeds* he only consults with those directly involved and certainly not in a broad sense. His favorite word is "stakeholder": the person directly involved. In Hague parlance, this is called "backroom consultation".

The broad publicity of what is happening on the island in a managerial sense is as good as nil. The agenda is published very shortly beforehand and reports of the Island Council meetings are not readily available. It is often indicated that a subject will be revisited, which does not always happen in public deliberations.

The population is put and kept at a distance. A reasonable amount can be found on the website of the House of Representatives about the Lower House and everything that is deliberated there. What happens locally can be followed on the radio or you can be present (but that too is published fairly

shortly before the consultation). Quietly reading something and responding to it, whether or not to your representative in the Island Council is therefore not possible.

In the period that took place before the intervention in February 2018, all kinds of things will have gone wrong, but the transparency regarding the various administrative consultations was reasonably in order. I detect a pattern in this. Something is found in a limited - mainly Dutch-oriented - circle and that is 'rolled out' on the island. For form's sake it is communicated with the Island Council. Think for example of the ferry: on the island an unknown and unloved phenomenon, in administrative The Hague 'something' which should show decisiveness. Instead, there is no targeted attention to the air connections. Provide a little disinformation with a document about Titan and then there is silence again.

Note: *Isn't this also a case of "Neglect of duties..."? But then from The Hague?*

Communication with the population does not take place, or it must be the periodic radio broadcast (concerning COVID19 developments) which, as the word says, is mainly focused on transmitting and not on receiving. An occasional townhall meeting is devoted to a specific topic, for example, the currently current vaccination. A discussion in a broad sense, concerning the future of the island or how to relate to 'The Hague', is one that the government commissioner, I am firmly convinced, simply does not *want* to have. Consultation with the population is only fraught with risk, because one's *own path* might be crossed. The term "regentesk" (in Dutch) comes to mind.

I do not expect your Commission to pay much attention to this report because all sensors are focused on the upcoming elections and the government is, after all, outgoing. By the way, the government commissioner keeps completely quiet on this matter, possibly because the CDA is already represented on the island, so why would the government commissioner pay any informative attention to the elections...? In short, you do pay attention to the importance of the local elections six months in advance, but the importance of the national elections is totally neglected locally. *Is that the current government policy with regard to the Dutch Caribbean?*

Be that as it may, I would still like to share these findings with you. Perhaps you will pick something up from them.

Kind regards,

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