

Dear Chairman and Members of the Home Affairs Committee,

By way of introduction, I was born in the European Netherlands and have now been living (for the past seven years) on St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands. Meanwhile, my passport was renewed several years ago and I received a new one here on the island, issued by the Governor of Sint Eustatius. In this passport my BSN is not mentioned (for the record: I do, of course, have a BSN, formerly called a sofi number).

It has come to my attention that Dutch Caribbean citizens (who have not previously lived in the European Netherlands) do not have a BSN. This is sometimes difficult and therefore I am pleading that Dutch Caribbean citizens - if they so desire - can apply for a BSN. I will explain my request on the basis of several examples.

To begin with, there is the example of the (still increasing) digital communication with the government whereby a DigiD is required. It is obvious that it is impossible to apply for a DigiD without a BSN. On the Internet I see information from the Rijksoverheid entitled "*How do I apply for a DigiD in Aruba, Curacao, St. Maarten or Bonaire?*". When I read this the first question that creeps up on me is "*why is Saba and St. Eustatius not in this list?*"; on Bonaire the DigiD-desk appears to be set up at the tax office of the Dutch Caribbean and Saba and St. Eustatius also have such an office....

And when I read the text, it appears that this is mainly addressed to the pensioner from the European Netherlands who is enjoying his AOW, because you must have a BSN, which the native Dutch Caribbean person does not have.

Of very recent date (actually still in development) is the QR code that must show that the COVID19 vaccination has been obtained. The vaccinations are registered in a central database of the RIVM and I too have been vaccinated and signed at the time of application that I have no objection to the inclusion of the data in this RIVM database. But the vaccination on the island did not take place with registration of a BSN (which is not possible if many islanders do not have such a number either). However, logging in to My RIVM can only be done using the DigiD.

In mijnpensioenoverzicht.nl it is possible to see to which pension benefit(s) you are entitled based on your working life and the corresponding pension accrual (at possibly different institutions). The management of this website is done by the Stichting Pensioenregister, a partnership between the Sociale Verzekeringsbank (SVB), the Pensioenfederatie and the Verbond van Verzekeraars. However, the Dutch Caribbean Pension Fund (PCN) is not included and the main reason is mentioned that the pension administration at the PCN is not (or cannot be) based on the BSN, because the Dutch Caribbean people usually do not have a BSN.

Finally, the example of the students in the Dutch Caribbean who want to continue their studies in the European Netherlands after completing their secondary education. Without a BSN you cannot open an account with a Dutch bank and also the registration with DUO is based on the availability of the BSN.

In practice, Caribbean Dutch students go to the Netherlands and register with the municipality where they will settle *after which* the process can only be continued with the opening of a bank account and the registration with DUO. It is always a challenge to find a way out of the forest of catch-22 situations (for example: for the BSN you need a residential address, but renting a house is often accompanied by a deposit and giving a direct debit authorization, but you do not have that yet because for the bank account you first need a BSN...). Incidentally, this student communicates about his study financing with DUO. Logging in to the DUO site is done with My DUO and you will of course need a DigiD for this.

In my communications with the Kingdom Relations Committee, I have already drawn attention to the BSN for Dutch Caribbean citizens, but without success to date. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that it is your committee and not the Kingdom Relations Committee that deals with this. I also believe that the National Ombudsman, in his conversation with the Kingdom Relations Committee, also drew attention to the desirability of the BSN for the Caribbean Dutch citizen.

In concluding my request, I would like to make one more remark. In general, the relationship with the Netherlands has not improved recently. On St. Eustatius I currently see infrastructural and administrative projects running while communication with the population in this regard is minimal. And all this within the context of a government intervention that has been going on since February 2018. None of this, of course, contributes to a good and understanding relationship.

In short, assuming that you are willing to honor my request (i.e. a BSN for everyone who wants one and a DigiD-desk on the small Windward Islands), it seems to me that timely and proper communication with the population (in any case with the Island Council) about the reason and nature of any necessary adjustments in legislation and/or administration is an important aspect.

I would like to hear from you about the developments.

With kind regards,

J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MSc MBA,
Bellevue Road, Upper Round Hill,
St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands.

Cc: Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee

Note: I would like to remind you of section 4 of article 132a of the Dutch Constitution which states: "*For these public entities rules can be set and other specific measures can be taken in view of special circumstances that make these public entities substantially different from the European part of the Netherlands*". This refers to the Caribbean part of the Netherlands. I have some difficulty in seeing that the wish to have a BSN and a DigiD would only concern Dutch European citizens. In other words: this does not seem to me to be a *substantially different* feature!