

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee on Kingdom Relations,

First a general reaction to the two-minute debate of today, June 29, 2021. It seems to me that this Kingdom Relations Committee is more like a buck in the oat box than before. I am pleased to note that. It seems to me in general that the Secretary of State for Kingdom Relations is running the Caribbean relations like a little Sun King, and fortunately there is an increasing call for normalization of the relations (both between the territories as well as between government and parliament).

I have followed the motions with interest and have also read along critically with some of them and it is from the heart that I make a few comments below.

Just as the "benchmark of livelihood security" only has a normative value and does not directly affect the benefits in the Dutch Caribbean, as a non-lawyer I also look at the laws and regulations in general. Minister Koolmees does not find a comparison between the Caribbean and European Netherlands useful because there are simply very different cost patterns. I do agree with Minister Koolmees for a completely different reason: *a comparison between the Caribbean and the European Netherlands is not useful because it is simply one country*, albeit with regional differences (just as regional differences also exist between Rijnmond and Groningen [mentioned as - random - examples]).

One country with an equal legal infrastructure. So in principle - in my opinion - all laws and regulations as they apply in the European Netherlands, also apply in the Caribbean Netherlands (I would like to refer to paragraph 4 of the Constitution, article 132a, which reasonably concisely states when separate laws and regulations can be drawn up in the Public Entity). And if that - Dutch legislation - does not directly reflect the actual situation, at least you have defined a good "benchmark" to which to migrate. The approach of the government, in particular I am now referring to the social legislation, as it applies to date (from October 10, 2010), has in any case, as has been objectively established, not led to less poverty in the Dutch Caribbean. In short, herewith a plea to not only look at whether the unemployment benefit should be given a place in the laws and regulations of the Dutch Caribbean: if that is already the case in the European Netherlands (and it is), then you do not need to adapt anything further, but simply declare the European Dutch laws and regulations applicable.

Note: I am now also thinking of a recent bill that was submitted on March 30, 2021 concerning *Counteracting Violence in the Care and Education of Children in the Dutch Caribbean* (Amendment to Book 1 of the BES Civil Code). Another example of something that already exists in the European Netherlands and that we are now going to apply in the Dutch Caribbean. It seems to me so much more constructive to reason in the other direction: what is applicable in the European Netherlands is also applicable to the Caribbean Netherlands, unless there is a good reason to define different laws and regulations about this with article 132a Constitution, paragraph 4, as the criterion.

Along these lines I would also like to see Ceder's motion regarding the fiscal domain addressed. To counteract the income inequality (Gini factor) in the Dutch Caribbean and bring it back to the European Dutch level, little more is needed than a progressive tax system (which already exists,

namely in the European Netherlands). *Of course this hurts the higher income groups, but isn't this levelling out exactly what we are looking for?*

In the report, I see the Kralendijk Agreement readily cited, with which employers and employees together have set an agenda for the socio-economic future. Minister Koolmees calls this a positive example that should show that "we are on the right track". This is where it becomes a little unclear to me. The Kralendijk Agreement is in my perception primarily a Bonairean development with a Central Dialogue (of employers and employees) of Bonaire. Unless I am very much mistaken, there has been no input from a Central Dialogue of Saba or St. Eustatius (nor of island governments or island councils of these islands). It seems to me that the participant in the two-minute debate and the reader are easily led astray, whereby developments are presented more beautifully than they are, by simply leaving some facts unsaid. A successful yet ethically reprehensible strategy, if you ask me.

When I think of "ethically reprehensible" I think of an aspect that was not discussed in the two-minute debate (*why not?*) but that would not have been out of place there. It concerns the connectivity of (away from) the small islands of the Dutch Caribbean. Apparently it is a current issue because both BES-reporter ¹ and Koninkrijk.nu ² are reporting about it - just today. The point is that Winair needs a new, additional financial injection (from the Dutch government). I would like to call this improper state aid given the fact that other, competing airlines - *yes, they do exist; the world is bigger than just Winair's...* - are not in such a comfortable position. Moreover, Winair is being praised to the skies with misleading information. Already earlier I cited the very incomplete Titan document in this context. And likewise earlier I have argued why Winair is wrongly using the so-called wetlease construction. An aspect for which both the Government of St. Maarten and that of the European Netherlands apparently rather turn a blind eye than take their responsibility. I estimate that with a bankruptcy of Winair, all those involved in the connectivity in the Dutch Caribbean face a better future, both the other providers and the consumers. Already earlier I have criticized the dependency (of St. Maarten) in which St. Eustatius is maneuvered again and again (besides the aspect of connectivity I mention here also that of notarial services), but the government in The Hague keeps itself *West-Indian* deaf and dumb.

So much for a single (critical) comment on today's two-minute debate.

Kind regards,

Ir. J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MBA,
Bellevue Road 4, Upper Round Hill,
St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean.

¹ see <https://bes-reporter.com/winair-remains-at-odds-with-flight-crew-over-salary-reduction/>

² see <https://koninkrijk.nu/2021/06/28/winair-heeft-nieuw-nederlands-geld-nodig-om-te-overleven/>