

St. Eustatius, August 19, 2021.

Dear Chairman and members of the Infrastructure and Water Management Committee,

With interest I took note of the following reports:

- July 28, BES-Reporter ¹: EZ Air has gained an aircraft with 34 seats; a second aircraft will follow soon.
- July 30, BES-Reporter ²: A demo flight is carried out with this plane to St. Eustatius where the plane is enthusiastically greeted by both government commissioners; a flight Bonaire-Saint Eustatius only takes about 2 hours;
- August 17, DossierKoninkrijksrelaties ³: With an all telling title - "Netherlands considers giving up interest in Winair" - DossierKoninkrijksrelaties reports on a possible change of course in Dutch policy regarding Winair.

Although I see the BES reporter of July 30 show a picture with enthusiastic government commissioners on it, it is otherwise unknown to me to what extent they are really making efforts for improved connectivity. On the island I hear nothing at all about this, despite a motion passed with four to one in the Island Council of February 4th ⁴ aimed at an improved air connection with the surrounding islands (especially Bonaire) at reasonable rates (as if it were public transport).

And then there is the company EZ Air, nota bene a company of BES origin (namely Bonaire), which with a suitable aircraft - partly financed with funds from the "local" pension fund PCN - seems capable of establishing a connection between the Windward and Leeward Islands (and - I hope - to be able to provide affordable transportation between the BES islands themselves).

My advice (through you addressed to the Minister) would therefore be: free yourself from the burdensome obligation to keep Winair in the saddle and renounce the Dutch interest in Winair. Instead, let the market do its work and explicitly involve EZ Air (in cooperation with SXM Airways) in this picture. It is almost inevitable that you - with me - believe that EZ Air can set up a good service here (whereby I note that specifically for Saba, SXM Airways completes this service in addition to EZ Air).

I conclude with two concluding remarks:

1. this development would contribute to St. Eustatius and Saba becoming more independent from St. Maarten, which strikes me as a favorable development;
2. although I am not aware of the actual developments, I do not exclude the possibility that no party has come forward to provide the ferry service; my view is: forget the ferry service and focus on an improved air connection.

Kind regards,

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St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands.

Cc: (Deputy) Commissioner of the Government of St. Eustatius
Members of the Island Council of St. Eustatius
Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Commission

¹ <https://bes-reporter.com/ez-air-receives-first-30-seater-saab/>

² <https://bes-reporter.com/ez-air-executes-demo-flight-to-st-eustatius/>

³ <https://dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl/2021/08/17/nederland-overweegt-belang-in-winair-op-te-geven/>

⁴ <https://www.statiagovernment.com/binaries/sint-eustatius-en/documents/decrees-orders-and-decisions/2021/02/04/adopted-motion-winair-connectivity/20210204+Adopted+motion+Winair+connectivity.PDF>