

St. Eustatius, Caribbean Netherlands, December 4, 2021.

Dear chairman and members of the Committee on Kingdom Relations,

Dear chairman and members of the Committee Social Affairs and Employment,

In dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl of Friday, December 3, 2021 ¹, I read that State Secretary Wiersma does not want to raise the minimum wage to 70 percent of the minimum wage, as in the European Netherlands. He is, according to the article, afraid that this will remove the incentive to look for work.

In a first reaction I would like to remark that this idea is full of prejudices (in the vein of "Antillians are lazy") and therefore unworthy of the cabinet. If scientific research supports this (racially oriented) comment, I would be happy to take note, but of course it is only a 'feeling'. But a 'feeling' that is felt at high official and even governmental levels!

A treatise follows on the benchmark for the social minimum in the Dutch Caribbean. This benchmark has been leading a life of its own for quite some time. We are already talking about a 'progress report 2021' on this subject.

Can you imagine that we are talking about a benchmark for the social minimum on the Wadden Islands? No, of course not! I can already see you thinking "*yes, but those are Dutch islands...*".

In that case we are exactly where we need to be in the discussion. *The islands of the Dutch Caribbean are Dutch too!* So why all this contrived stuff? I am convinced that the Dutch Ombudsman will agree with me when I say that you - the Lower House - are letting the government pull all the wool over your eyes.

The starting point is (see article 132a paragraph 4 of the Constitution) that for the public entity (as the status of the individual Dutch Caribbean islands officially reads) specific, island regulations may apply with a view to special circumstances that distinguish the public entity from the European Netherlands. In my letter of November 7 ², I have already given the 'perverse' interpretation of this article whereby the Caribbean Dutch population can easily be put at a disadvantage, and in this case - about the social infrastructure - this is happening again.

¹ see <https://dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl/2021/12/03/staatssecretaris-wil-onderstand-bes-niet-verhogen-tot-70-van-het-minimumloon/>

² see http://statia.nu/bibliotheek/20211107_sint_eustatius_EN.pdf

It would be worth it to me if you, via a motion, 'force' the government to ask the Council of State for an explanation of how to correctly understand this article of the Constitution. I would like to ask you for that again.

If this hurdle is taken, then - as far as I am concerned (and assuming that my interpretation of this article is the correct one) - various other discussion and question points can easily be resolved by declaring the current Dutch laws and regulations applicable to the Caribbean Netherlands and for the truly distinctive circumstances (which must be substantiated) to apply the specific, island laws and regulations created for this purpose.

Of course, there is the formation of a new government and there are probably other arguments one can think of *not* to take action, but I fail to see how asking the Council of State for an explanation of a (Constitutional) law article that already exists and was established in the past, can stand in the way of coalition negotiations.

I am pleased to conclude and wish you much wisdom (and courage?) in the ongoing critical monitoring of government policy in all our interests.

With kind regards,

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