

St. Eustatius, April 22, 2022.

Dear Chairman and Members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

In addition to my letter of yesterday in which I try to keep the lid off of various cover-ups, I would like to share the following with you. In response to that letter, I am hearing several matters related to those potential cover-ups. These matters I would like to share with you.

There is currently a vacancy for a physiotherapist at the hospital on St. Eustatius. A candidate who has previously worked on the island as a physical therapist applied and was rejected twice. Not because the candidate would not be good at the job but because at a previous term on the island this candidate had given positive, constructive comments on the management of the hospital. In short, a "difficult" therapist, "we should not have them here". Well, call it what you will, I myself see traits of autocracy and arbitrariness. And for the time being we still have the vacancy that has to be 'filled' with a physiotherapist to be flown in from a hospital on another island (Bonaire? St. Maarten?). I don't know how that works exactly, but I hear rumors that a plane (!) is chartered for this purpose at 40,000 US dollars, to be paid by the ZVK (financed by the Ministry of Health). And because the communication between ZVK and the hospital on St. Eustatius does not run smoothly (this is a euphemism!) the expensive physiotherapist will not find many clients. From my own experience I can say that the candidate physiotherapist was appreciated by the clients/patients on our island. And that this candidate criticized the management seems at least conceivable to me (given the recent developments), but yes, intimidation is a well-known and proven Statian method to keep "undesirable elements" out.

And further: if the amounts and the stories are correct then it seems to me that the ZVK is making a not rational trade-off with the public money, coming from the Ministry of Health. Employing someone is obviously better for the patients and considerably more cost effective than chartering a plane twice a week for one person.

Note: In a public meeting on April 21, 2022, I understand from the government commissioner that the hospital is going to start working on research and improvements. I'll have to wait and see how that goes but I can hope that the practice of the butcher inspecting his own meat is thrown far from us.

Then a word about connections. A good acquaintance of ours recently left St. Eustatius for Bonaire. Duration of the trip: 26 hours with an overnight stay (this is no exception, by the way: such experiences are widely heard on the island). It is a distance of less than a thousand kilometers by sea. For an airplane it is not such an extraordinary effort. But if routes are flown by different airlines and one airline (Winair) cancels flights all the time, of course it becomes a mess. For a lot of money (because, oh yes, monopolist on the route to St. Maarten!). The government of The Hague and its ministries simply have no eye for the Dutch Caribbean problems. In fact: the government in The Hague is not interested at all!

In the same context I read about Bonairean educational problems ¹: the language Papiamentu on Bonaire would not be good enough for a Dutch MBO training for a cook. I do not know the case personally but I wonder (with others who have gone public with a similar remark) "*when this training would be organized in Frisian, would the same criticism be heard by especially the VVD and PVV?*". It is my hypothesis that the criticism would not have existed because Frisian is a recognized regional language: but so is Papiamentu! My feeling is that here is now a double standard. Unworthy of the House of Representatives.

Speaking of double standards: the discussion about the Caribbean Dutch minimum standard of living is of course a farce when you take into account that the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands are one and the same country. It even seems to me to be a reason to replace the US dollar as locally used currency with the Euro. All benefits in the Netherlands at the same level as they apply in the entire country of the Netherlands. An exception for the Caribbean Netherlands? It seems possible to me as long as it can be explained: after all, "comply or explain". And don't come up with arguments like employment and other such parameters, because also in the various regions of the European Netherlands these are different and yet in the Netherlands across the Atlantic only one social minimum applies.

Then another point: that the Internet is expensive and at times not so very fast and reliable may be well known, but the Gwendoline van Puttenschool pays about 7000 US dollars *per month* (!) for Internet of which the user (I think for example of the individual teacher) says "I'll do that later at home, because there at least I have a usable Internet". It has been better but at the moment it is downright bad, slow and unreliable. The available bandwidth is simply too low for what the school needs. And not just today but for weeks now. While the school is pre-eminently an environment where students are taught the so-called "21st century skills". This price-performance ratio - a child can see that - is of course far short of what should be expected in all reality!

Well, I could, I suppose, go on and on with observations (and I do) but for the purposes of this letter I think it will suffice for now.

Kind regards,

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Cc: *Chairman and members of the Commissions for VWS, SZW, OCW, EZ and I&W*
National Ombudsman
Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee of the Senate

¹ See <https://dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl/2022/04/20/vvd-en-pvv-hebben-geen-boodschap-aan-breed-gedragen-wens-bonaire/>