

St. Eustatius, May 18, 2022.

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee of the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament,

Although I am not an economist, when I read with interest the article on [DossierKoninkrijksrelaties.nl](https://dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl)¹ about how generous the Rutte IV cabinet is for the Dutch Caribbean, I try to list a few facts.

The income inequality on St. Eustatius is about one and a half times greater than in the European Netherlands! This inequality is represented by the so-called Gini factor. This Gini factor lies between 0 and 1 and indicates how the disposable income is distributed. The indication 0 implies "completely equal" or, everyone has the same disposable income. The indication 1 means "completely unequal" or, one person earns everything, the rest nothing. In short, the lower the Gini factor, the more equal. In the European Netherlands this factor is approximately 0.29 while on St. Eustatius it is 0.43 (according to the CBS). In absolute terms the difference may not be so great but 0.43 is almost *one and a half times larger* than 0.29!

The GDP per capita in the European Netherlands is about 46,000 Euros, while this figure for Sint Eustatius is about 39,500 US dollars (which is about 37,500 Euros). Anyone who has ever been to the island will agree that the cost of living on St. Eustatius is certainly not lower than in the European Netherlands, but rather higher. I do not have the absolute values for this at hand, I see (on the website of the CBS) mainly what the percentage changes are with respect to a previous year.

The minimum income in the European Netherlands is about 1700 euros per month. The minimum income in the Dutch Caribbean is about 230 US dollars (or: 220 euros) per two weeks. That is about 440 Euros per month. This support in the Dutch Caribbean is therefore about 26% of the same support in the European Netherlands.

Since 10-10-10 nothing is being done about this. In other words: if your cradle stood on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, you are significantly less fortunate with social security than when it stood on the eastern side of this ocean. And all in the same Kingdom of the Netherlands.

So a country that ranks sixth (out of 180!) in a world ranking² from top to bottom when it comes to GDP per capita has for one part (namely the Caribbean part of the country) a Gini factor that is one and a half times higher than for the European Netherlands (with an income distribution that is just as unequal), a GDP that is about 80 percent of the level for the whole of the Netherlands. 80 percent of the level of the whole of the Netherlands, has a significantly higher cost level than the European

¹ <https://dossierkoninkrijksrelaties.nl/2022/05/16/rutte-iv-blijkt-minder-gul-voor-caribisch-nederland-dan-beloofd/>

² https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lijst_van_landen_naar_bbp_per_hoofd_van_de_bevolking

Netherlands (apart from food also energy, water and internet) and a minimum income that is about a quarter of the equivalent in the European Netherlands. For the record: the entire Dutch Caribbean has a size of about 25,000 inhabitants: a village by European Dutch standards!

It seems to me a list of facts for which the average Dutchman (if such a thing exists) would be ashamed, if not the government. Minister Schouten recently expressed the expectation that the social minimum for the Dutch Caribbean will not be realized until 2025, while she must be aware that even that social minimum is not sufficient for a large part of the population in the Dutch Caribbean. It is that social cohesion is so great, so that there is always something to eat at this or that family member's place, but as a country we are - as far as I am concerned - quite exposed to these facts.

There is a great unwillingness in both Parliament and Cabinet to face these facts calmly, if necessary to verify them further or otherwise to provide comments and then to draw conclusions. Too easily one hides behind "too expensive" (but without substantiation with respect to "how much too expensive then?"), "lengthy change processes in terms of legislation" or the "care to be exercised" in order not to have to name the real argument - unwillingness.

My idea: bring the social laws and regulations in line with the European Netherlands! I am convinced that the real additional costs are hardly visible in the Dutch budget. After all, it cannot be that a village in the Netherlands turns the national budget upside down. And even if that were the case: according to the Constitution, Article 1, can not everyone in the Netherlands count on the same application of laws and regulations?

The governmental declaration of Rutte IV has the sentence "*And of course within the Kingdom we work together with the Caribbean countries and the Dutch Caribbean on the basis of equality*". I urge you not to let this sentence become an empty, meaningless phrase. The facts do seem to point in that direction.

Hoping for a timely turnaround in the trajectory we are now on. Let us come to our senses and consider and value the Caribbean Dutchman as an equal.

With kind regards,

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cc: *National Ombudsman*