

The Hague, April 12, 2024.

Dear Members of the Committee on Kingdom Relations d.t.v. the Registrar,

For the new Chamber members, I will first introduce myself. My name is Jan Meijer and from 2014 to 2022 I lived on St Eustatius and worked as a math teacher at the only secondary school on the island: the Gwendoline van Puttenschool. Gradually I began to notice major differences and especially inequalities between the European Netherlands and the Caribbean Netherlands. Since the 2018 intervention, I have been writing with some regularity about my observations to the Kingdom Relations Committee of 2nd and 1st House of Representatives, Ombudsman etc. These letters were regularly posted in The Daily Herald (newspaper of St. Maarten) but also taken over by Dossier Koninkrijksrelaties. These letters can be found at <https://www.jhtm.nl/statia/> (in English and in Dutch: make choice with flag at top right; default is set to English).

My wife, Mia van Deelen, published her observations as a concerned resident of St Eustatius as a columnist in [Dossier Koninkrijksrelaties](#). During the first period of the intervention, she was a member of the Social Advisory Board and was able to experience at close quarters the manner of decision-making. Even after our departure from St Eustatius (2022) we have remained closely involved in what is happening there and have contacts with people from different parts of the Statian population.

Where possible we attend meetings of the House of Representatives related to the Caribbean Netherlands. Also on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, we attended the meeting of the Kingdom Relations Committee. It was noticeable that there were many questions about matters that have been going on for years.

In particular the questions by Mr. Van Haasen (PVV) and Ms. Bruyning (NSC) were *to the point* in particular about health care, flight connections, comply or explain.

Health care

The Secretary of State parried the question about poor care on St. Eustatius by saying that many steps have been taken. That is true. But those steps have been made in place or not in the right direction. The measures taken do not bring any improvement in the organization at the hospital. A hospital director has been reappointed. Until now, little progress has been made in organizational improvement because the shop floor has not been listened to. The general practitioners are not adequately qualified and too little is being done on proper in-service training. There is too little staff both among physicians and at the bedside. Waiting times of two to three weeks to make an appointment are more the rule than the exception and only two issues may be discussed.

Often there is no physical therapist on the island (there is a vacancy and we are aware of a candidate but he is turned away by the management because the candidate is said to be "too mouthy") and there too the waiting times are very long. Also in the referral off island - contrary to what the secretary of state stated - things are not running smoothly at all. In any case, the transportation of patients organized by ZJCN (the old ZVK) - is not well organized. Lots of ambiguities in transportation lead to

many with patients not knowing where they are going. Also, sometimes the destination is suddenly changed. Furthermore, there are signs that emergency rooms have to wait two to three hours before a doctor is present. This has serious consequences, sometimes resulting in death (!). And then there was a situation where a medicopter could not land on Guadeloupe because the pilot did not speak French. Isn't it true that the international language of communication among pilots is English? Finally, I don't understand where 2018 inspection report on the hospital went. It was public but now the link does not work (anymore). Several requests on my part to make the report visible again, addressed to minVWS, Statia Government and the hospital, have not received any response.

Flight connections

On the issue of classifying air transport as public transport, the secretary of state announced a new study and also that the decision will be deferred to a future cabinet. Why another new study? What happened to the previous reports? It is abundantly clear that intra-island traffic between the Windward Islands with distances comparable to The Hague - Amsterdam counts as "public transportation." There is much to be said for including Bonaire (together with Saba and St Eustatius) in the area to which "public transport" applies. There may have been a boat connection after lobbying by the then governor-commissioner Van Rij, but this is not an alternative to air connections. In any case, the Statian people never asked for such a ferry. The duration of the crossing is long, very noisy, not comfortable due to rough ocean (the Atlantic Ocean is not a Wadden Sea) and there is no good connection from the port to the airport on any island.

Comply or Explain

Much has been written about comply or explain (including by yours truly). It is in fact very simple: all laws must apply in the Caribbean Netherlands just as they do in the European Netherlands, unless an exception must be made (as also argued in the Constitution). The decision of local applicability does NOT lie exclusively in The Hague but the islands should also have a say in this (each island separately); of course they are also expressly involved in this.

In conclusion...

I recommend that on your next visit to St Eustatius you talk to ordinary people and not just the island government. I am happy to provide you with a list of those who would like to speak with you.

Yours sincerely,

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