

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Committee,

In view of the procedural meeting of Wednesday 19 December 2018 and referring to the commentary on the elections on St. Eustatius that has been published on <https://koninkrijksrelaties.nu/2018/12/17/commentaar-i-verkiezingen/> (from which reference is also made to your procedural meeting), I hereby inform you of a brief reflection on my part.

Broadly speaking, I endorse the observation contained in the commentary cited above. However, I do not wish to deny you an observation on my part.

The problem is not so much the fact that unelected lay people populate the Advisory Board. The problem is rather the non-transparency that surrounds the consultation and decision-making process.

Meetings with the Advisory Board are not open to the public, the agenda is drawn up by the (acting) government commissioner and is only known to the members of the board, and minutes are not made public either.

The fact that the democratically elected members of the Island Council were dismissed in favour of directly appointed members of the Advisory Board can, in my view, be explained by the fact that the functioning of the elected members was not acceptable.

I would therefore like to wholeheartedly endorse the call for elected members instead of appointed members, but I have two comments to make:

1. The agenda and discussions with elected and non-elected members of the local population must be completely transparent. So you should be able to attend the discussions, the agenda - if necessary with underlying documents - should be available at an early stage via the government's website. And the minutes as well as the decision making should also be available to all of us via the website shortly afterwards.
2. If the body with which the (acting) government commissioner consults consists of elected members, these should somehow be accessible to the local population. After all, what is sorely missed here (on St. Eustatius) is a critical press, as a result of which there is a tendency, once elected, to ride mainly one's own hobbyhorses (as for example Van Putten did and does with "autonomy"), without taking into account whether or not people are speaking on behalf of a representative and significant part of the local population.

All in all, I consider the decision to postpone the elections to a time when the twelve conditions mentioned (ref. the letter from Secretary of State Knops of 14 November) have (sufficiently) been met, to be justified in any case as long as the issue of transparency is raised additionally.

At this point I would like to argue strongly for transparency, both during the phase in which plans are drawn up, decisions are made about them and reports are made on them with regard to the progress and (financial) realisation, as well as the extent to which they contribute to a more liveable St. Eustatius.

Wishing you much wisdom,
kind regards,

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Postscript: The State Secretary would be pleased if letters to the Lower House concerning St. Eustatius were sent in both the English and Dutch languages. So far I do not know of an English version of his letter of November 14th. The official language on this island is English and that is also official in so far as the instruction language in the schools is English; this as a result of a decision in the Cabinet of October 2014.