

Dear Chairman and members of the Commission on Kingdom Relations,

BES reporter gives today - September 9, 2020 - an analysis of the recent (relative) outbreak of covid19 on Sint Eustatius (see <https://bes-reporter.com/index.php/2020/09/09/analysis-does-statia-government-deserve-so-much-heat-for-the-current-covid-crisis/>). The central question is according to the article: "*could the outbreak have been prevented by the local government?*". I don't know who wrote the article and I don't need to, but after reading it I realized that the political party of both the responsible secretary of state and the current government commissioner has never really been shy about a 'spin doctor'.

In the article this 'central question' is embedded in a broader context from which it can easily be said that no one could foresee these pandemic consequences and that full decisions must be taken continuously on only deficient science or facts. After all, in statistically formulated quantities (i.e. so many cases per hundred thousand inhabitants) the (relative) outbreak is still small. Whether a small, closed community such as the community of Sint Eustatius can be 'just' put along this yardstick is a question to which the answer is not yet so clear to me. The point of making excuses is absolutely true, but at the moment they should have come (yesterday evening!) they were certainly not expressed (rather the opposite is true). Every later word of apology comes across as "made" and as "prompted by others".

I wholeheartedly agree with the analyst of BES reporter when he (or she?) states that the virus is not just out of the world. It is on the surrounding islands (and in the rest of the world) so count on it to arrive on Sint Eustatius one day. However, the only strategy followed by the local government is "keep the virus off the island as long as no drug or vaccine has been developed". In my letter of April 4 I write to you: "*In terms of scenario thinking, it seems as if nobody wants to face up to what should happen when more positive cases occur, in which the serious symptoms with a life-threatening attack on the respiratory system also manifest themselves*". No, all efforts are aimed at keeping the virus out. There is no other strategy.

Note: In case I am wrong here, this broader targeted strategy is only known in a very small circle because no other strategy has been given any publicity whatsoever. Incidentally, this fits in with the image that exists everywhere of this and the previous government commissioner (under the direction of the State Secretary for the Interior and Kingdom Relations): there is simply no communication (in terms of consultation, with room not only for speaking or writing but also for listening).

The only weakness in all of this, and the analyst at BES reporter acknowledges this too, is the 'essential worker'. In truly life-threatening situations in which, for example, a doctor has to act, I can imagine that exceptions have to be made (in this example, therefore, for the doctor, assuming that he is not there on the island; in the current situation, by the way, not even 'just' an example...). In all other cases, in my opinion, there is no such thing as an 'essential worker'. In short, remove that notion from the vocabulary of the policy maker, the crisis manager, the government commissioner, in short: of the entire local government!

For the time being, the analyst of BES reporter does not get any further than that the definition of the 'essential worker' needs to be re-examined. Such a definition does not exist at all: Mr Van Rij once indicated to me that only he determines who is an 'essential worker'. He did this in a conversation with me in which he indicated that "*teachers in that case are also just 'essential workers'*" (with which I

disagree by the way: teachers are important but not essential in the sense of a life-threatening situation). The analyst from BES reporter gives examples of telephone or internet failures. These are certainly not examples of life-threatening situations. I am the first to agree that such situations are extremely awkward, but certainly not life-threatening. After all, even with Hurricane Irma in 2017, we had to do without these facilities for a while.

Finally, the analyst from BES reporter states that people simply cannot know everything and will make mistakes. Not only now, but also in the future. Who am I to deny such wisdom. But an attitude in which protocols are simply not adhered to is difficult to grasp under "people just make mistakes". This is just deliberately stupid and therefore really chargeable.

Well, and then I conclude with something elusive like consensus in a government coalition and duality in cabinet and parliament. It seems almost inadvisable to raise something 'boring' when it concerns a 'own' Secretary of State. This attitude bothers me, at the same time I understand it. If only Members of Parliament could and should be able to judge without any burden or backbiting, even when it concerns their own party. With this omission in our politics - or if you like: with this difference between theory and practice - I too will have to learn to live.

I continue to wish you much wisdom! Especially with this last paragraph in my head... ;-)

Kind regards,

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cc: Chairman and members of the Committee on Public Health, Welfare and Sport