

Cabinet Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten



Newsletter

Issue: 01 | First quarter 2021

Coming soon: The online B2B Matchmaking event !

The Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten will be hosting an online B2B matchmaking event in collaboration with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK). This event will take place mid-June 2021, with a very interactive and result based program. A wide variety of companies based in the Netherlands showed interest in doing business on Sint Maarten, so the aim is generally facilitating partnerships with businesses on Sint Maarten. This online event is supported by the Ministry of TEATT and also the Chamber of Commerce of Sint Maarten (COCI). Further details will follow.

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Virtual Kingdom Relation debate 2nd Chamber election 2021 in the Netherlands

On Friday, March 12th, 2021, the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary in the Hague hosted an Election debate with Candidates of six political parties. The parties which were represented in this debate were BIJ1, represented by Ms. Lysanne Charles, UBUNTU (UCF), represented by Mr. Carlos Lopes, DENK, represented by Ms. Isaura Carillho, D66, represented by Drs. Jorien Wuite, Christen Unie, represented by Mr. Don Ceder and CDA, represented by Mr. Koos Sneek. The purpose of this debate was not only to offer a platform for the candidates to inform the voters of the party programs and visions but more so to encourage voters hailing from the Caribbean and South American diaspora in the Netherlands to go out and vote. Statistics over the past years have shown a relatively low voter turnout amongst this specific group of voters. Minister Violenus, the host of the debate, in his welcome remarks to the candidates and the viewing public, emphasized the importance of voter participation in the elections of March 17th and the urgency of having persons from the diaspora elected to the Second Chamber. This, the Minister stated would be an added value to the legislative decision-making affecting the diaspora and the islands. The themes debated centered around, the effects of climate change on the Caribbean islands, education and equal opportunities for students from the islands participating in educational programs, and of course Kingdom Relations and the current challenges we face as a result of democratic deficit. The moderator for this event was Mr. Prakaash Rostam, Sr. Economic Advisor International Economic Affairs. This activity was supported by Director of the Cabinet Ms. Carol Voges and Education/Cultural Attaché Ms. Kelly Busby.

The event can be viewed on:

<https://www.facebook.com/carol.voges1/videos/10159080553023187>

Other related links:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=145936027397296>

DEBATING THE ISSUES ON KINGDOM LEVEL



Join in with the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten as we host an online debate leading up to the March 17th Second Chamber Elections.

Listen to the candidates as they debate issues relevant to us all from the various islands and diasporas represented here in the Netherlands.

Date: Friday March 12th 2020

Time: 19.00 -19.45

ONLINE on the Facebook page of the Cabinet of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten

The parties represented: BIJ1, DENK, D66, UCF, CDA and the Christen Unie

Host for this event: H.E. Mr. Rene Violenus
Minister Plenipotentiary of Sint Maarten

Moderator : Mr. Prakaash Rostam

Time keepers: Mrs. Carol Voges and Ms. Kelly Busby



EU-OCTA relations and upcoming activities

Programming activities

Due to covid-19 the Overseas Countries and Territories Association (OCTA) has been conducting its activities virtually. The Cabinet has participated in various EU-OCTA webinars, such as the 11th EDF thematic program introductory session. An amount of 17.8 million euros has been budgeted for this EU-OCT program, whereby the main objectives are to increase the resilience of OCTs to the effects of climate change, as well as to further develop a low carbon, energy efficient economy. The program team will be hosting a virtual meeting with the key focal points for Sint Maarten in early June to gather information and conduct preliminary interviews.

Additionally, the Cabinet took part in OCTA's EU programs webinar. The newly published study by OCTA provides a clear overview of the various envelopes OCTs have participated in and OCT best practices. You can download the report by following the link below. To your right we have included an overview from the report highlighting some of the EU horizontal programs Sint Maarten has participated in over the past few years.

Upcoming activities

As a member of the Executive Committee of OCTA on behalf of Sint Maarten our representative approved the commissioning of a blue economy study for the OCTs, whereby cruise tourism will be one of the focal areas. Moreover, it was decided that in the coming months various webinars on EU-programs will be hosted by OCTA to better assist and facilitate the OCTs in their EU funding requests.

For more information on OCTA's upcoming events visit:

<http://www.octassociation.org/upcoming-eu-events-april-2021>

Download report:

http://www.octassociation.org/IMG/pdf/octa-report_on_the_participation_of_octs_in_eu_programmes_2014_-_iulv_2020.pdf



Sint Maarten



3.22.1. Overview of EU horizontal programmes

1. Erasmus+

	N° of projects	N° of coord.	EU funding to projects	EU funding to OCTs	% of project funds to OCT
Netherlands	92	45	6 814 214	2 656 801	38.0%
Sint Maarten	38	13	1 234 968	385 305	31.2%
Caribbean Education and Culture Foundation	20	6	546 958	168 831	30.9%
Youth mobility	20	6	5346958	168 831	30.9%
Caribbean Youth and Culture Foundation	3		126 134	3960	3.1%
Youth mobility	3		126 134	3960	3.1%
Caribbean Youth and Sport Foundation	6	6	134 224	134 224	100%
Youth mobility	6	6	134 224	134 224	100%
Erasmuscaribbean	4	1	115 950	36 183	31.2%
Youth mobility	4	1	115 950	36 183	31.2%
St. Dominic High School	1		149 445	30 320	20.3%
Strategic partnerships for schools only	1		149 445	30 320	20.3%
The St. Maarten Youth Council Association	7		253 479	11 787	4.6%
Youth mobility	7		253 479	11 787	4.6%
Total OCTs – Erasmus+	177	95	13 693 776	5 535 560	40.4%

3.22.2. Overview of the programme BEST 2.0

	N° of projects	OCT-based coordinator	EU funding to OCTs
Netherlands	9	5	753 992
Sint Maarten	3	1	49 945
Environmental Protection in the Caribbean (EPIC)	1	1	
Nature Foundation Sint Maarten	2 ⁶⁵		
Cooperation projects - beneficiaries based outside the OCT			
Saba, Sint Eustatius, Sint Maarten, Turks and Caicos Islands ⁶⁷	1		253 468
Wageningen Marine Research (WUR)	1		
Total OCTs – BEST 2.0	61	43	7 785 370

Virtual meetings with Dutch entrepreneurs interested in doing business with Sint Maarten

After thorough analysis of how to best facilitate the private sector development on Sint Maarten, the Cabinet started having business network meetings at the Cabinet with entrepreneurs. These pre-Covid-19 meetings contributed to the identification of the challenges Dutch based companies encountered, when exploring business opportunities on Sint Maarten. This resulted in our objective to focus on creating partnerships between Dutch and Sint Maarten based companies. The Cabinet has received support from the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) whom were able to get the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations (BZK) onboard. Together with the Ministry of TEATT and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry a platform has been created. The stakeholders meet biweekly to discuss the process and way forward. A project manager and an intern have been assigned at the RVO to do more research on this issue and present viable recommendations in order to facilitate the process of creating partnerships and doing business on Sint Maarten.

For the research phase several Dutch based companies have been identified and nominated by the Cabinet to participate in this pilot project. The meetings with at least 10 -12 companies were successful during the first quarter of 2021.

In May 2021 a presentation will be held to showcase the findings of the research done by RVO. These findings will then be discussed and function as the base of the Virtual B2B Matchmaking event to be held in June 2021.



Assistance and support to Sint Maarten students in the Netherlands

With the tradition at the Cabinet to support students who are away from home, it is evident that the pandemic has made their adjustment to student life ever more difficult. In the first quarter of 2021 a lot of special assistance and attention was provided to the Sint Maarten students here in the Netherlands. Most of the issues were related to independent studies, integral integration and program choices. In a concerted effort to properly address this matter and inform students and parents alike, a virtual townhall meeting was held under the auspices of the Minister of MECYS and the Guidance counselors.

Leading up to the arrival of the students from Sint Maarten to the Netherlands, meetings are being held with various service providers throughout the Netherlands across the various municipalities to better address the most urgent needs of students. The areas of concern range from proper and thorough insurance policies to ensuring adequate housing prior to arrival in the Netherlands. During the Second Quarter the above mentioned will be further worked out at which point the Cabinet will be organizing a webinar on the preparation of students transition to the Netherlands. This will take place in the month of May and will involve various stakeholders.

Mastering the Dutch language

This has been a point of discussion and a major concern for the students coming from the islands for many years. In order to combat such and be of assistance to our students, talks with potential stakeholders are being conducted to support our students in order to contribute to their overall study success.

Studying in the Netherlands

Preparations are ongoing to receive the class of 2021- 2022 and as such we at the Cabinet wish to make use of this medium to wish all exam candidates much success the coming period and we look forward to welcoming your questions leading up to your arrival in the Netherlands.



Coming soon:

“Ready to Study” webinar focused on preparing all students transitioning to academic life in the Netherlands.

During this webinar, service providers will be on hand to give information on studying and living in the Netherlands.

Kingdom Relations

Liquidity support and COHO

As the Caribbean part of the Kingdom has been confronted with a financial crisis due to the pandemic, the Cabinet in its role as advisory body to the Minister Plenipotentiary has been intensively involved in analyzing the documents regarding the new administrative structure as proposed by the Government of the Netherlands for Sint Maarten. The proposed “Caribisch Orgaan voor Hervorming en Ontwikkeling” (COHO) is one of the conditions set by the government of the Netherlands in order to keep liquidity support flowing to Sint Maarten. Structural meeting between all parties are currently ongoing in order to ensure ownership and consensus on the way forward.



Dutch Politics

On March 17th the Dutch Parliamentary elections were held. The People’s party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) led by Mark Rutte won the elections with 34 seats, whereas the Democrats 66 (D66) led by Sigrid Kaag gained 5 seats becoming the second largest party with 24 seats in Parliament. State Secretary of Kingdom relations, Raymond Knops’ party, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) lost 4 seats in Parliament, becoming the fourth largest party with 15 seats.

Noteworthy, is the election of numerous persons of Caribbean and/or Surinamese descent across party lines, including former Minister Plenipotentiary, Drs. Jorien Wuite for D66. Moreover, the inclusion of new parties that advocate for system change and equality such as Bij1 (1 seat), led by Mrs. Sylvana Simons, demonstrate the changing political climate in the Netherlands.

The formation process started off rocky with leaked documents and the highly publicized Pieter Omtzigt scandal leading to caretaker Prime-Minister Mark Rutte having a formal motion of disapproval adopted against him by Parliament. Currently, the newly appointed informateur, Minister of State, Tjeenk Willink, is conducting meetings with the various parties to ascertain possible coalitions and present his recommendations to Parliament within the coming three weeks.

The Cabinet is closely monitoring the process and will be scheduling introductory meetings with the newly appointed Kingdom relations committee members in early May.

Switching to a cloud based computer system enhancing efficiency and security

The past quarter the Cabinet officially switched to a cloud based computing system enhancing the efficiency and security of all the administrative processes. We are currently working on resolving any outstanding issues and expect the system to be fully functional by May of this year.



Strategic Planning 2020-2024

Other activities for the coming period will be based on the Cabinet's strategic plan for 2021-2024.

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