

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committees KR, I&W and EZK,

Recently, Winair was in the center of attention again. On the one hand there was the Island Council meeting on St. Eustatius of February 4, 2021 in which a motion called for more competition in the air connections of St. Eustatius ¹. On the other hand, there was the report in the Daily Herald of Friday, February 5, 2021 ²which mentions some correspondence between the Cabinet and the House of Representatives regarding the granting of the loan to Winair.

The newspaper report mentions that an independent investigation was conducted. The newspaper further reports that several airlines would have been approached to operate a regular service between St. Eustatius and only Winair would be willing to do so.

However, information reaches me that EZ Air - nota bene the airline based in the Dutch Caribbean (Bonaire) - did make a bid which was simply ignored by Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland.

The independent investigation has led to a PWC document, in which - as if it were a secret project - the company Winair has now been given the code name Titan ³. With regard to the analysis made in this document, I do not want to be exhaustive in my comments, but I would like to bring two points to your attention.

Firstly, there is the comparison made between the various airline companies and in this 'independent' analysis the Caribbean Dutch company EZ Air is missing. Also missing are the locally established parties such as Divi Divi, SXM Airways and JetAir Caribbean. By deliberately leaving out viable and already operational players, the image quickly arises that there is no alternative. And so that is a false picture.

The second comment I would like to make is that Bonaire is not an integral part of the analysis, in the sense that Saba, St. Eustatius and Bonaire together form the Caribbean Netherlands. Instead, I see Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten being taken as a unit. St. Maarten is another country in the Kingdom and does not have much in common with the islands of Saba and St. Eustatius. Winair seems to be able to earn much more on flights to and from St. Barths and when connection has to be maintained with Saba and St. Eustatius it is only because it is forced to do so (by for example the government of St. Maarten and/or of the Netherlands).

¹ I would have liked to give you a literal quote of the relevant passage from the motion but of documents concerning this public meeting ordinary mortals on the island are neither informed in advance nor afterwards through the website of the Public Entity of St. Eustatius (<https://www.statiagovernment.com/>).

² See page 7 of that paper, or <https://photos.app.goo.gl/SjijiXEbRSFsbCz1A>

³ See <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2021D05036&did=2021D05036>

When it comes to the ZVK flights it already applies, as far as these flights are directed to the Leeward Islands (e.g. Bonaire), that these flights are provided by EZ Air. It is therefore incomprehensible to me that this Bonairean airline is left out of the analysis.

In my earlier letter - for example that of January 2, second paragraph and footnote 4 - I have already made it plausible that Winair (or, if you want: Titan) wrongfully uses the so-called wet-lease construction. The 'independently' made analysis is completely silent about that.

With this argument I want to make clear that the government has (consciously?) misled you. I suggest you do your own research (or commission a truly independent party to do so under your auspices).

I conclude by wishing you much wisdom in the exercise of your role as a Member of Parliament, especially when it comes to critically monitoring what the government does.

Kind regards,

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Cc: Government commissioner on Sint Eustatius