

Ministry of Education, Culture and
Science

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Island Governor G. Berkel
Government Administration Building
Fort Oranjestraat
Oranjestad
Sint-Eustatius
Caribbean Netherlands

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Reference
306989

Date 22 juni 2011
Subject Public Library work in the Caribbean Netherlands

Dear Mr. Berkel,

Since 10 October 2010, Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba have been public bodies of the Netherlands. Within this administrative structure, the responsibilities of the governing councils of the Caribbean Netherlands islands include the public library system. This system is operated based on a payment made from the BES fund. This means that the governing councils will determine the desired extent of the library system.

Each of the three islands in the Caribbean Netherlands has a public library, but their quality levels are significantly lower than those of the public libraries in the Netherlands. The differences can be observed in all of the dimensions of the library system: location (accommodation), collection, staff, digital content and participation in a library network. Minister Van Bijsterveldt's recent business visit to the Caribbean Netherlands confirmed these observations.

A well-equipped public library can play a substantial role in the promotion of education and literacy in the Caribbean Netherlands. Given the importance of libraries and the current limited level of the library system, I am prepared to provide support for the upgrading of the public library system *on a non-recurring basis and subject to a number of conditions*. I would therefore like to make the following offer:

- The governing council of each island will prepare a plan to upgrade the library system to an adequate level.
- In this context, "adequate" will be understood to mean: a library that is structured using the basic Dutch library as a reference point and which is geared towards local needs and circumstances.
- The plans will describe the envisaged structural situation, the steps that must be taken to achieve it and the island's financial contribution for a period of at least 4 years. Important elements in this respect are the services to, and cooperation with, the education system.
- Over the course of time, the libraries will be connected to Bibliotheek.nl's digital library. Bibliotheek.nl is the collective digital library owned by the Dutch public libraries and provides access to an increasing number of digital media.

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- If the plan meets the aforementioned conditions, I will make a non-recurring contribution to the library system in order to bring it up to the envisaged standard. A maximum of EUR 150,000 per island will be available for this project.

If you wish to avail yourself of this opportunity, please submit the plan for the library system in Sint-Eustatius to me before 1 October 2011. You may obtain further information from:

Mr. Sedney Marten
Sr. Administrator, OCW Department
National Office for the Caribbean Netherlands

The Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Science,

Halbe Zijlstra