



to The Standing Committee on Kingdom Relations
of Statistics Netherlands

subject Discussion note round table discussion Social minimum Caribbean Netherlands

Date: 22 January 2026

Reason

In October 2023, the Committee on the Social Minimum Caribbean Netherlands published the report "A dignified existence: A social minimum that provides increasing prospects for self-reliance". It concludes that many households on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (BES islands) have too few resources to make ends meet. The cabinet has taken measures to increase incomes and reduce the cost of living.

Although the aim is that measures such as raising the statutory minimum wage will increase disposable income and thus social security, undesirable side effects could also arise. Think of price increases so that, for example, there is no increase in purchasing power. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), has therefore asked Statistics Netherlands (CBS) to draw up a Monitor macroeconomic context Caribbean Netherlands.¹

The purpose of the monitor (see this link for the dashboard) is, on the one hand, to be able to monitor any consequences of the measures taken. In addition, the aim is to improve data management. This monitor clearly bundles relevant available statistics and develops and adds new statistics.

Monitor macro-economische context Caribisch Nederland

Wages

The government has increased the statutory minimum wage, especially in 2024. Preliminary figures for 2024 show that the average annual wage on Bonaire has increased by 11 percent (compared to 2023). On Saba, this is five percent. The percentage increase in the statutory minimum wage was also higher on Bonaire than on Saba. When producing statistics, CBS depends on source holders for the timely and correct delivery of data. Due to problems with the provision of the necessary data, no recent figures are yet available for St Eustatius. CBS hopes to be able to publish these later this year.

¹ A baseline measurement of the monitor was published at the end of 2024. A report was chosen so that the design and interpretation of the statistics could be properly explained. Follow-up measurements are published in a dashboard. This is so that the figures are easier to update in the future and can be offered in a more user-friendly way. The first version of the dashboard was published in January 2026: Dashboard Monitor macroeconomic context Caribbean Netherlands.



Price increases

Inflation for 2024 was relatively limited: 2.6 percent on Bonaire, 2.2 percent on St Eustatius and 2.3 percent on Saba.² On St Eustatius, inflation was also limited in 2025 (2.2 percent in the first quarter and lower in the second and third quarters). On Bonaire and Saba, inflation was higher in the first two quarters of 2025 (more than five and four percent respectively). One reason for this was higher utility costs. By the third quarter of 2025, inflation rates for these islands had fallen to around 3.5 percent. This is because drinking water and energy subsidies, which were discontinued at the beginning of 2025, were reintroduced during the third quarter.

Income and purchasing power

Due to the aforementioned problems with the data supply of wages, Statistics Netherlands has not yet been able to publish recent figures on incomes and purchasing power.³ The government has increased the amounts of the General Old Age Insurance, Child Benefit or Social Assistance. Since wages have also risen and inflation was relatively limited compared to 2022, it is expected that recent(er) purchasing power figures will be more favorable than the purchasing power figures from 2022.

Labor

The unemployment figures at the end of 2024 were not significantly higher than in the previous measurement in 2022: 2.1 percent on Bonaire, 4.4 percent on St Eustatius and 1.4 percent on Saba.

Purposes of stay

Measures such as raising the statutory minimum wage could influence reasons for wanting to move to the BES islands. For example, it is sometimes assumed that immigrants have a pull effect. On the other hand, an increase in the legal minimum wage could ensure that the contracts of immigrants already residing on the islands are not renewed because of higher wage costs. However, data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service Caribbean Netherlands do not show any major shifts in residence goals in 2024.

Looking ahead

At the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, CBS intends to expand the [dashboard of the Monitor macroeconomic context Caribbean Netherlands](#). For example, a preliminary study is currently underway into the possibilities of mapping poverty in the Caribbean Netherlands according to the [new measurement method](#) used in the European Netherlands. An investigation is also underway to see if it is possible to map out debts, for example by looking at problematic payment arrears at the Tax and Customs Administration.⁴ In addition to the expansion, CBS intends to periodically update the monitor, at the request of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, so that the dashboard shows the most recent figures for statistics that may be relevant in, for example, the issue of the social minimum.

² The European Central Bank (ECB) has an [inflation rate of two percent as a guideline](#).

³ The central question in purchasing power development is: what can households buy with their income? If the (standardised disposable) income rises faster than prices, purchasing power increases.

⁴ For the European Netherlands, CBS also publishes a dashboard on debt: [Debt problems in focus 2025 | CBS](#).