



Annual Plan

Chamber of Commerce & Industry St. Eustatius &
Saba

2014

Annual Plan 2014

Annual Plan St. Eustatius & Saba Chamber of Commerce 2014

Preface

The St. Eustatius & Saba Chamber of Commerce has been established in 2010. Initially it was the intention to have a chamber of commerce for the three islands Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. After strong reservations were expressed from St. Eustatius and Saba this idea was abandoned. As a result of this two chambers have been established, one on Bonaire and one for St. Eustatius and Saba. Our chamber is officially established on St. Eustatius but there is also an office on Saba.

The existence of the chamber is regulated in the “Wet op de Kamers van Koophandel en Nijverheid BES” which has been amended on January 19th 2013.

In 2011 a business plan has been drafted by PCM for the years 2011 – 2014. This annual plan is intended, after careful review of the business plan and comparison with the actual situation, to draft an annual plan for the year 2014 which better reflects the present situation. This is necessary since after three years of operation the Chamber has a better view and understanding of its role and the environment in which it has to carry out its activities.

The decision has been made to draft a year plan for only 2014 that can form the basis for a multi-annual plan for the years after.

Vision

The Chamber of Commerce is an institution that is recognized by businesses and foundations as a valuable partner and service provider. The Chamber plays an important role in stimulating entrepreneurship, investment and social economic development. It can do that by working closely together with government and other organizations locally and abroad with a similar or related vision.

Businesses and other registered organizations need to see the Chamber as a logical partner to contact because they know that the Chamber has the information they need and can offer the support they require for their activities.

Mission

The Chamber’s mission is to inform the registered entities and support them in any way possible with the goal to strengthen the individual organizations and the business community as a whole and as such contributing to the social-economic development of the islands.

What are the core values of the Chamber?

- First of all the Chamber is nearby. On both islands, St. Eustatius and Saba we have an office which is open daily and easily accessible.

Annual Plan 2014

- The Chamber is independent. Although we are established by law, the Chamber has an independent voice and advises government on their request or at any time the Chamber deems this necessary.
- The Chamber is a professional organization. The chamber has professionals in house and is able to attract expertise from outside.
- The Chamber communicates with our registered entities. We do this on an individual level when giving information and support. We also communicate through the media, our website and periodic newsletters.
- The Chamber cooperates with other entities with a similar objective locally as well as abroad. This cooperation improves the level of service and increases the chances of success.

Commercial Registry

The “Handelsregisterwet BES” is in effect since 2010 and governs the workings of the commercial registry. In accordance to article 2 of this law the Chamber holds the commercial registry. Registration is mandatory for all businesses and NGOs that are operating on St. Eustatius and Saba. For registration a registration fee and in the following years an annual fee needs to be paid. The amount of these fees is set by law.

The role of the commercial registry can be compared with the role of the civil registry at the census office. It is the place where in this case a company or foundation is registered and legal documents can be obtain to proof the existence and legal status and other information of the registered entity.

The “Handelsregisterwet BES” and the “Handelsregisterbesluit BES” provides strict regulations as to how the commercial registry has to be kept.

The ICT of our commercial registry is at the Chamber of Commerce in Curacao. With Curacao we have a service level agreement to maintain our registry. This solution has been chosen to cut cost as no expensive software needed to be purchased and no specialized IT expertise and personnel is required to maintain the software.

Review of laws and regulations

The Chamber of Commerce and its purpose and activities are stipulated in a number of laws and regulations. The chamber itself as explained above is regulated in the “Wet op de Kamers van Koophandel en Nijverheid BES”. The commercial Registry , which is the main responsibility of the Chamber, is regulated in the “Handelregisterwet BES” and “Handelsregisterbesluit BES”. For the elections of the members of the Chamber of Commerce there is yet another regulation namely, “Kiesbesluit Kamers van Koophandel en Nijverheid BES”. Although a few amendments have been made in 2011, the experience of the past three years have learned us that these laws and regulations are in some cases outdated and do not meet the particular circumstances of our small organization and the demographics of the entities that by law have to register at the commercial registry. It is therefore that already a process has started with the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce of The Netherlands to

Annual Plan 2014

make proposals to the lawmakers for adjustments. These adjustments have to be made among other in the following areas.

- The fee structure as mentioned in the “Wet Handelsregister BES” need to be simplified;
- The fee for foundations need to be reduced;
- To be eligible for a position in the board one need to be a legal resident on the islands. This need to be limited to registered voters conform art 3 of the “Wet op de Kamers van Koophandel en Nijverheid BES”;
- Also registered individuals representing foundations and associations should be eligible to vote in the elections for the Chamber.
- The process as mentioned in the “Kiesbesluit” needs to be simplified. This is felt as much too bureaucratic and complicated. Also the time period for the voting (9AM – 12) needs to be extended in order to allow more voters the opportunity to cast their vote.

It is important that in this process there will be a close cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce in Bonaire.

Interaction with local stakeholders

The Chamber cannot operate as an entity on its own. Also in order to be most effective cooperation with other local entities such as the business associations, tourism organizations and other institutions that play a role in our social economic environment is very important. For Statia this concerns the St. Eustatius Business Association (STEBA), the St. Eustatius Tourism Development Foundation (STDF) and STENAPA. On Saba parties are the Saba Business Associations (SBA), the Saba Merchant Association (SMA) and the Saba Tourism Office.

On Statia there is since about two years a platform established, the Economic Development Team (ED-Team). Besides the stakeholders mentioned above this team also consists of representatives from the airport, the harbor and utility companies. The ED-team meetings are shared by the commissioner of economic affairs. The purpose of the ED-Team is to coordinate the activities of the various entities to avoid contradictions and doublures. The interaction of parties in the ED-Team is also used by government to establish their social economic and investment policies. On Saba such a platform is not yet established. Therefore the Chamber will propose to the Saba government to establish the Saba ED-Team. Both ED-Teams may also share information and establish forms of cooperation.

Themes

Since the inception in 2010 the main focus of the Chamber was the proper setting up and maintenance of the Commercial Registry. The question needs to be asked: “What are besides the registry now the most important themes the Chamber needs to focus on? These are:

- Support and educate the existing business sector;
- Provide information;
- Stimulate economic development and investment.

Annual Plan 2014

Support and educate the existing business sector

To support and educate the existing business sector appears to be a top priority. The quality of almost all segments of the sector is below acceptable standards, in particular on Statia. Most staff on the work floor isn't properly trained and educated in their field. Also there is a general lack of management skills among the leaders of the businesses. There is a need for education in the areas of financial management and budgeting, marketing and planning but also in the areas where it concerns knowledge of one's own business and specialty. It is therefore important that training programs need to be introduced. These programs can be geared towards the general business community, a particular sector or towards an individual business.

Provide information

Since 2010 a lot of new laws and regulations have been introduced on the islands. For the entrepreneurs it has become very difficult to know what this all means for their business and what the effects will be. We can think hereby about rules for business licenses, hiring of personnel and labor laws, immigration and work permits, environmental laws, tax laws to name a few. The chamber will be the focal point for the business sector where all this information can be obtained and more importantly can be explained and clarified.

Stimulate economic development and investment

Through the economy of scale and the limited size of the market it is very difficult for local businesses to become successful, to have opportunities to expand and generally to be profitable. One of the goals of the Chamber therefore is to look for ways and means to stimulate economic growth by:

- Increasing the local market;
- Diversify the business sector by introducing new types of business;
- Reduce the need for import from St. Maarten;
- Research possibilities for export;
- Organize trade missions to and from the islands;
- Innovative entrepreneurship;
- Networking and making use of existing networks.

The organization

The Chamber has its main office at the L.E. Saddlerweg in St. Eustatius. The office on Saba is at Windwardside. The opening hours are from 9 AM until 1 PM. To reach a larger percentage of the businesses the Chamber will look into the possibility to extent the opening hours or shift some of the opening time to afternoons.

The Chamber consists of five members. As of January 1st 2014 three members are from St. Eustatius, while the other two are from Saba. The president is from Statia, and therefore the vice-president resides on Saba. Further there is a secretary and a treasurer.

Annual Plan 2014

To be able for the Chamber to offer adequate and professional service to the business community and to be able to realize this annual plan it is very important that professional expertise will be available. It is therefore necessary that the staff will be extended with an executive secretary. Financing has been made available by the ministry of economic affairs to the tune of US \$ 24,000 to hire a part-time executive secretary who will be charged with the day to day operations of the Chamber. An application process has been started in 2013, but has not been completed. The filling of this new position has to be dealt with urgently.

2014 Plan of activities

Activity	Participants	Date	Result
Compilation annual report 2013	Chamber	January - April	Presentation report to EXCOs/EZ
Prepare budget 2014	Chamber/accountant	January	Budget 2014 adopted
Hiring executive secretary	Chamber	January	Contract executive secretary
Meeting EXCOs Statia and Saba	Chamber/EXCOs	January/February	Establish understanding role of Chamber and working relation with government
Town Hall meeting	Chamber/Chamber Curacao	February	Presentation annual plan and agenda. Improved knowledge of role Chamber
Meeting stakeholder organizations	Chamber/STEBA/SBA/SMA/Tourism	February	Proper cooperation with stakeholder organizations
Meeting with Chamber Bonaire	Chambers Statia-Saba/Bonaire	February	Create working relation between Chambers
Training Quickbooks	Chamber/professional	February	Improve knowledge of bookkeeping program
Review Laws and regulations	Chamber/Chamber NL/Ministry EZ	First quarter	Improved and simplified laws and regulations
Workshop on tax laws	Chamber/Tax office/Tax expert/business community	March	Improved knowledge and understanding of tax laws in business community
Meeting Chamber St. Maarten	Chamber Statia-Saba/St. Maarten	May	Create working relation with St. Maarten
18 th Trade mission in St. Maarten	Chamber/members business community	May 21-22-23	Networking; promotion doing business and investment on Statia and Saba
Establish need for service among businesses	Chamber and business sector	Year round	Improved service and adjust this to demand of the sector

Annual Plan 2014

Activity	Participants	Date	Result
Improve availability of statistics	Chamber/CBS/Min EZ	Year round	More reliable and useful statistical information
Membership ED-Team	Chamber/EXCOs/Ed-Teams	Year round	Collective decisions making on social economic policies and plans.
Management training entrepreneurs	Chamber/business sector/moderator	June	Improved management skills in business management/HR/marketing
Establishment permits and business licenses	Chamber/business sector/moderator	August	Improve knowledge of process and requirements
Providing advice and information to organizations	Chamber	Year round	Improve knowledge of organizations
Organize elections Chamber of Commerce	Chamber/Chamber Cur	August - December	Fill vacant positions per Jan 1 st 2015
Workshop work permits and immigration	Chamber/SZW/Business sector	October	Improve knowledge for hiring foreign labor