



Annual Plan 2016

Chamber of Commerce & Industry St. Eustatius &
Saba

A large, stylized graphic of a blue and grey geometric shape, resembling a folded piece of paper or a ribbon, with the year '2016' written in blue on the right side.

2016

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Annual Plan St. Eustatius & Saba Chamber of Commerce 2016

Preface

The purpose of the annual plan is to have a document outlining the activities the Chamber will embark upon during the year. During and at the conclusion of the year one can use the contents of the plan as a tool to measure the performance of the Chamber.

Vision

The Chamber of Commerce is an institution, established by law, which 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. The Chamber holds the Commercial Registry.

Businesses and other registered organizations should see the Chamber as a logical partner 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 and educate 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.

Are we meeting our objectives of our vision and mission statements?

It is clear that the Chamber did get a long way where it comes to our image and the services we are offering. Still we are fully aware of the fact that there is still much room for improvement. The main bottleneck to achieve our goals has to do with finances. The present fee structure does not provide sufficient means to carry out activities such as information, training and stimulating entrepreneurship. Incidental subsidies by the Ministry of Economic Affairs are mainly used to cover salary expenses and only marginally allow room for other activities. Requests for subsidy from our local government remain unanswered or agreements are reversed. Restructuring the fee structure and general financial income of the Chamber is therefore of high priority.

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.
- 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.

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- 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 obtained to proof the existence and legal status and other information of the registered entity.

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

The back office 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 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.

In 2015 the Chamber together with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Chamber of Commerce Bonaire had met several times to go through the different Laws that rules the Chamber of Commerce. At the last meeting in Curacao it was decided that there will be a draft document with the changes that need to be made and after everybody agrees on it then it will continue the process of changing the Laws. The

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latter ultimately should lead to not only to simplified and clearer laws and regulations governing the Chamber but at the same time a more adequate budget, which will as a consequence will result in an improved level of service to the registered organizations.

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.

On Statia there is since last year a platform established, the Statia Innovation Team. This is some kind of team similar to the ED Team that was functioning in 2013. The stakeholders in this new team, next to the Chamber of Commerce, consists of representatives from the government, the CNSI, New Challenge Foundation and the Tourism Development Foundation. The Statia Innovation Team meetings are shared by the director of economic affairs. The purpose of the Statia Innovation Team at this moment is to strengthen the small and medium enterprises through any opportunity available from government or from the EU funding programs.

Regional cooperation

In 2015 a new attempt was made to meet with the different members of the Dutch Caribbean Chamber but it did not succeed. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss regional cooperation. It is the intention that, if possible with the use of the EU COSME program, another attempt will be made to come together.

Involvement Chamber with national and regional programs

The Chamber continues to work together with other programs and organizations during 2016, among them we can mention the COSME Program from the 10th EDF, the OCTA-Innovation Program also from the EU and PUM, Netherlands senior experts.

Special projects

Depending on the approval of funding the following special projects will be executed:

1. *Payroll workshop*

If the subsidy request is approved a workshop on Payroll will be organized in the first quarter of the year.

2. *Marketing workshop*

This workshop will be organized for the second quarter of 2016 with the assistant of professionals brought from abroad.

3. International Women's Day Conference

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This conference will be organized together with STEBA and the Tourist office and SPICE foundation in an attempt to improve female entrepreneurship of the Island.

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.

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 on both islands is below acceptable standards. 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.

In the last two years the Chamber has been introducing some training in both islands and is planning for new training this year as well.

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 has been functioning as a 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;

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- Research possibilities for export;
- Organize trade missions to and from the islands;
- Innovative entrepreneurship;
- Networking and making use of existing networks.

Financing

The regular activities related to the operations of the offices in Statia and Saba and the holding of the Commercial Registry will be financed out the regular income of the Chamber. Information and support activities are financed by subsidies from the Ministry of Economic Affairs. A large part of this subsidy is also used to cover the executive secretary's salary.

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 board consists of five members. The last elections were held on December 8th 2015 and have resulted that as of January 1st 2016 three members are from St. Eustatius, while the other two are from Saba. *The president is from, and therefore the vice-president should reside on Saba.* The executive secretary functions as secretary/treasurer. There are 3 permanent staff in the Chamber.

2016 Plan of activities

Activity	Participants	Date	Result
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Compilation annual report financial statements 2015	Chamber	January - April	Presentation report to EXCOs/EZ
Adopting Budget and Annual Plan 2016	Chamber	January	Have a planning for the whole year
Adopting Rules of Order	Chamber	January	Mandatory by law
Appoint accountant for 2015 financial Statement	Chamber/Accountant	January - February	Drafting Financial Statement 2015
Women Intl. Day Conference	Chamber/STEBA/STDF/SPICE Found.	March	Stimulate female entrepreneurship
Draft Review Laws and regulation	Chamber/Bonaire/Curacao/	January - December	Proposal Amendment Laws (Wet KvK, Handelsregisterwet & Vestigingswet BES
Meeting Dutch Caribbean Chambers	Chamber/SXM/Bonaire/Curacao/Aruba	January - June	Improve working relation between all the Dutch Caribbean Chambers
Payroll workshop	Chamber/business sector/moderator(Antek)	January-April	Improved payroll skills in business management
Approval annual account	Chamber	May	Finalized Financial Statement 2015
Trade Mission Suriname	Chamber/entrepreneur	May	Networking: promotion import-export Statia
Seminar NFIA	Chamber/Saba Gov.	May	Allow to attract potential investors
Workshop with COSME	Chamber/COSME	Year round	Strengthening SMEs & BSOs
Workshop on marketing	Chamber/entrepreneur	May-August	Improved marketing skill in business community
Participation STDF Sustainable Conf.	Chamber/STDF	September	Participation in Sustainable conference
Membership Statia Innovation Team	Chamber/E&I/Tourism/CNSI/NCF	Year round	Collective decision making on social economic policies/plans
Establish need for service among businesses	Chamber/business sector/PUM	Year round	Improved service and adjust this to demand of the sector
Improve availability of statistics	Chamber/CBS/Min EZ	Year round	More reliable and useful statistical information
Trade mission Curacao	Chamber/business sector	November	Networking: promoting Statia and Saba for investment

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Providing advice and information to organizations	Chamber/	Year round	Improve knowledge of organizations
Organize elections Chamber of Commerce	Chamber/Chamber Cur	July - December	Fill vacant positions per Jan 1 st 2017