



Parliament of Sint Maarten

Staten van Sint Maarten

Parliamentary Year 2017-2018-109

**National Ordinance containing rules for
granting study finance (National Ordinance
Study Finance)**

**Report
No. 5**

Parliament in its meeting of the Central Committee has exchanged views with the Government on the Draft National Ordinance containing rules for granting study finance (National Ordinance Study Finance).

Parliament considers the present draft to be adequately prepared when the questions below are answered in time for the public meeting so that the draft can be discussed in a public meeting.

The United Democrats-faction has taken note of the draft with interest. The faction would like to know how the current financial state of the country will impact how students will be granted study financing and how it will affect those that are already receiving study financing.

Has the Government looked into mandating a committee for handling study financing (granting, cancelling or the changing of studies) to avoid uncertainty in the decision-making process? Is there a provision in the national ordinance for this?

Why only 1 out of 10 students requests study financing to pursue a degree on the Masters level? Is it because of the priority list? Is there a reason why other fields of study do not come into consideration for Masters degrees?

Can clarity be given regarding article 3, paragraph 1, under a and b? What rules apply to those who have recently acquired their Dutch nationality?

What are the consequences for students who have lived on the island for less than the five years? Will they not be granted study financing? Is there any provision in the legislation for students whose parents are permanent residents, outside of studying in the Caribbean Region? What happens to students that do not meet these criteria?

Is there an exception for persons between the ages of 26 and 40 who apply for study financing? Or is it limited to just studying at the USM? Is it for attending the institution or is it also for online studies?

Some students are applying specifically for online studies. How is that handled and dealt with in this legislation? Is that process the same as for a regular student attending classroom studies?

Concerning students whose parents' earnings exceed the amount for which one can be eligible for study financing: What happens in the cases when students are unable to get study financing because their parental income exceeds the maximum amount for the awarding of study financing? What happens when the parents do not have their taxes up to date? Is it possible for students to work for a year or two so that they can file for themselves? Are there any other provisions in the national ordinance for these situations?

Why do SBO students only obtain limited study financing? Can Government explain this? What about those students? Can some clarification be provided as to what the limitations are?

Students following Vocational Education: What are the possibilities for them other than the NIPA? What are their options? It would be unfortunate that this group of students would not have other options.

The Study Finance Committee Members should be experienced persons. What does this experience entail exactly? Is the four-year appointment similar to the Monument Council? Who are the members on the Committee right now? How long have they been serving? How does the appointment take place?

What is meant with unsolicited information in article 25 and 26?

Is a parent required to submit a change in his/her income? If the parent does not send in the change, how will this affect the student? If so, what are the consequences if the parent loses his/her job? This can cause some misunderstandings in the previous filed information. Can some clarity be given on this issue?

Repayment and collection of Study Debt – Who determines the number of months and years to repay? What are the criteria to determine the amount of interest and who decides that? If the student returns within 2 years of completion of the study, 20% will be a loan and 40% a grant. Will 20% be additional to the 40% grant? So, the student will actually receive 60% grant?

What is the total financing for 2018? Which are the countries where students are graduating from? List of study locations per year. Can they be named per year? Is there a surplus of NAFl. 3 million still in the budget? What will this be used for?

What is the overall picture of collection, repayment and data base of such thus far?

What is the Government's policy regarding the working agreements with universities? And especially with the universities in the USA? Which universities and where? Are there agreements with universities outside the USA? Which universities are these?

In terms of agreements as it relates to the goal of reducing tuition. What are the conditions? How many students are making use of this?

Several European Union universities offer students incentives, such as reductions in tuition. St. Maarten students can make use of these types of programs in Europe being holders of European passports. Has the Government looked into this and informed students as it relates to these avenues in obtaining study financing? What is the Government doing to stimulate this?

Students that didn't graduate the H.A.V.O, will they always have to do the G.E.D. to be able to get student financing? Does the G.E.D. number have to be high as it was in the past? Is it possible to remove the Expat article from this draft national ordinance?

Based on the slides, the conclusion is that less than 50% of students graduate every year. What are the main causes for students not being able to complete their studies as mentioned in slide 26 and 27? Students go to other countries to study, can the amounts be specified per year?

What can be done for St. Maarten students that are graduating Cum Laude outside of St. Maarten?

Is it possible to increase the years of an Expat in this draft national ordinance?

The Sint Maarten Christian Party-faction has taken note of the draft and is pleased with the manner in which it was presented. However, the faction wants to know what legislation was being applied prior to this national ordinance and what is being applied now? Was there ever a legal basis to collect the money from student loans under the current policy being executed by the Government?

What does the Government have in place to obtain student loans from students who do not return to the island? Does the Government have agreements with the Netherlands or other islands in the region or in the world on how student loans are to be collected?

The National Alliance-faction has taken note of the draft with great satisfaction. The faction indicates that it appreciates that former Ministers of Education were also recognized for their work in the preparation of this extensive draft national ordinance.

The faction would like to know if the Government is working on other regulations including the national decrees containing general measures (LBhams) to ensure that this national ordinance can be enforced.

The faction also hopes that the general public is paying attention to this national ordinance, especially where the responsibilities for the students and parents are concerned.

Furthermore, the faction is particularly happy that other than academically talented students that excel in the arts or sports are now also being recognized with this national ordinance.

How many students who have received study financing returned back to St. Maarten and entered the workforce? Which amendments or incentives does the Government intend to introduce to encourage persons to return to the island? The Expat article will have to be amended or else all Dutch students will misuse this.

The faction agrees that students that excel should be recognized when coming back to the island or when they act as an ambassador for St. Maarten. The challenge would be to remain in contact with these students. Perhaps Government can look into formalizing this communication.

The United St. Maarten Party-faction has taken note of the draft and mentions that the ultimate goal of study financing is to leave the island in order to get an education and then return home to make a meaningful contribution to society. This is very important to the island. What are the reasons or what is preventing students from returning to St. Maarten? Is the repayment a discouraging factor? Do they believe that it doesn't make economic sense?

Are there any provisions for internships on the island? Or writing a thesis/dissertation and getting it financed? Is there any room in this national ordinance for incentives for persons who do internships or write a thesis in St. Maarten?

Is the national ordinance aligned with the repayment terms that DUO is offering?

Why aren't students of the M.A.V.O and VSBO qualifying for NCAA study financing? The students from Aruba and the Netherlands do qualify. Can the Government explore the possibility for St. Maarten students on that level to qualify for NCAA scholarships?

What is the annual procedure for the compilation of the priority list? Are there opportunities for pilots for aviation and maritime studies? Are they included on the priority list?

Students receiving financing from the Netherlands. Does a student receive their funds directly from DUO? Or does it go through the Government's administration? Has the Government explored the possibility for the awarding of scholarships under this current national ordinance? Are there guidelines for the Education Department to follow and be able to raise funds for more study financing for students?

What kind of synergy exists between the Department of Sports and the Study Financing Department? Does the Sport Department advise the Study Financing Department if it knows some gifted students in sports in the community? Do extremely gifted students have to do a G.E.D. if they didn't graduate H.A.V.O? What kind of help is there for gifted students (sports related) in this draft ordinance?

This report is to be considered the Final Report.

Stipulated in the meeting of the Central Committee of August 27th, 2018.

The Reporter,

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