

Speech Hon. Martin Hassink (Minister of Finance, St. Maarten)
Executive Discussion Smart Government - July 3, 2014

First of all, I would like to thank the management of BearingPoint for allowing me to say some words at this executive discussion. I appreciate this initiative very much and would like to thank all present for attending and participating in this executive discussion.

When I got the invitation and read the title in big red letters **SMART GOVERNMENT**, I immediately thought of my old time English teacher who would have classified this title as a perfect example of a “CONTRADICTION in TERMINIS”. Smart and Government just don’t go together. Or do they?

During the last year, I have functioned as the Minister of Finance of this small country, with big and complex problems, with low capacity levels, with growing pains while climbing the stairs which I hoped would lead to a glimpse of perfection, trying to find the balance between the attention of the day to day operations, crisis management and the development and execution of plans resulting from a vision for the future functioning of the Government organization.

This discussion today is about Smart Government, about learning from Best Practices, about transition from vision to action, about effective startup of projects, about effectively using ICT-Technology, but also about funding and monitoring. Although I recognize that all subjects are of importance and although I must admit that the process of coming from a vision to a set of realistic actions is tremendously challenging, I would like to give some special attention to the subjects “funding” (of course you would say) and “monitoring”.

Within our Accounting laws (in Dutch: Landsverordening Comptabiliteit) it is not allowed to fund re-organization expenses, not being material fixed capital goods, through the capital account. Since our operating account does not have any room is not giving at this moment for additional expenses related to needed re-organizations, we have a serious problem. In addition, financial assistance has been decreased to a minimal level. Something in this area needs to be done fast.

With respect to the monitoring subject I remark the following: In our Ministry we have to deal on a daily basis with numerous incoming emails, mails, numerous advices, decisions by the Council of Ministers, findings and recommendations from internal and external auditors, advisory councils and supervisors, with reports from steering committees of projects and programs and last but not least with motions from Parliament. This is just a brief synopsis of the reality. Government covers an extremely broad working area and yes, it is very easy to get lost not being able to properly monitor follow-up actions, projects, decisions etcetera.

There is a serious need, not only for efficiency in Government, there is a need for Smart Government, meaning we need to reach to the level that we can discuss and determine our vision and related policies extensively and plan and take the actions required to make the execution of the established policies possible in an effective way and be able to monitor progress.

This process takes time. We are a young country. Rome was not built in one day and Sint Maarten will not either. Guidance and support in this growing process is of crucial importance, so after all, BearingPoint may beat my old time English teacher by providing us the necessary tools, SMART GOVERNMENT is possible and is not a CONTRADICTION in TERMINIS. We will soon know.

Thank you for your attention.