

Saba: cultural participation and cultural education in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

In 2021, Gregory Richardson mapped out the core data on the cultural infrastructure (arts and heritage) for cultural participation and cultural education in the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. His study was commissioned by the National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (LKCA). In this article, we share the information he compiled about Saba. To find out more about Gregory Richardson's research, [please visit our website](#).

Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and the European Netherlands form the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The islands of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba (collectively abbreviated as BES) are special municipalities within the Kingdom. Together they make up the Caribbean Netherlands. These six islands as a whole form the [Caribbean part of the Kingdom](#).



1 Key population data

Languages: English, Dutch

Spoken and official languages:

- Monolingual: 32.3%
- Multilingual: 67.7%
- English: 80.1%
- Dutch: 4.5%
- Spanish 9.5%
- Other 5.8%
- Papiamentu 0%

[More information](#)

2 Cultural policy

In the area of culture, agreements have been made between the Caribbean Netherlands and the European Netherlands. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for the relevant legislation. Public entities (special municipalities) shape policies through local legislation (island ordinances) and implement policies.

Administrative situation on Saba

The island government on Saba consists of three independent bodies: the Island Governor, the Island Council and the Executive Council. All three bodies have their own duties and responsibilities within the island government. On Saba, dualism is the principle that underlies the division of responsibilities. This means that administrators (members of the Executive Council) are not part of the people's representative body (members of the Island Council). The role of the people's representatives is to hold the executive to account.

Government contacts

Executive Council

The Executive Council is made up of Island Governor Jonathan Johnson, Bruce Zagers (commissioner whose portfolio includes education) and Rolando Wilson (commissioner whose portfolio includes culture). The Executive Council carries out the day-to-day administration of Saba.

[Eilandgids Caribisch Nederland](#)

[Eilandbestuur van Saba](#)

On Saba, the [Public Entity of Saba](#) and the national government bear joint responsibility, with the national government bearing special system responsibility.

Focus areas for community development

- Social work
- -Domestic violence and child abuse
- Preventive youth and family care
- Culture and identity

Important websites providing key data on cultural education and participation per island:

- <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2021/07/08/bijlage-2-evaluatie-skj-eindrapport>
- <https://www.childfocussaba.org/about1>
- <https://www.facebook.com/afterschoolcareSaba/>
- <https://www.sabagov.com/community-development>
- <https://www.learningsaba.com/>

Quality Cultural Education

- Saba is running a project under the Quality Cultural Education subsidy scheme.
- [Caribisch Nederland: Cultuureducatie met Kwaliteit](#)
- [Canon aims to document Sabas history for future generations](#)
- [Working together to make good things happen on Saba](#)

3 Education

Primary school Sacred Heart School

Number of pupils in primary education: 149

Saba Comprehensive School (SCS)

Secondary school (100 pupils) and senior secondary vocational school (MBO)

Secondary education: in preparation for both vocational and academic tracks. Students take the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) exam. Depending on the grades obtained, a CSEC is comparable to the theoretical track of prevocational secondary vocational education (VMBO-T) or senior general secondary education (HAVO).

Senior secondary vocational education (MBO): Students take a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) programme. This is comparable to MBO within the Dutch education system.

More information

Percentage of school dropouts

No reliable figures available.

4 Cultural sector

A total of 313 children from both primary and secondary schools are enrolled in youth activities: 50 at Saba Nature Foundation, 117 at Child Focus, 111 at Saba Comprehensive School (SCS) and 35 at Queen Wilhelmina Library (sabanews.com).

Library services – the Queen Wilhelmina Library

Carmen Simmons Cultural Complex

The Bottom

Public libraries in the Caribbean Netherlands are mainly focused on the traditional lending function of the library. The library on Saba, with support from the Public Entity of Saba, has already undergone modernisation and now offers a wider range of services. But even here there is not yet sufficient scope to perform all of the library's statutory functions, such as organising meetings and debates, introducing people to art and culture, and operating as a fully fledged learning and development centre.

The Royal Library (KB) offers support and guidance to the libraries in the Caribbean Netherlands. In the longer term, the KB will also provide support to the public entities in making structural resources available for library work in the Caribbean Netherlands.

Harry L. Johnson Museum

Historical museum

Els Mommers

Fibre artist

Five Square Art Gallery

Bringing the art of Saba to the world.

Heleen Cornet

An artist who has lived on various islands of the Dutch Caribbean for the past forty years.

Jobean Glass Art

Glass art, studio and workshops

Marie De Saba

Designer of handmade jewellery

Saba Artisans Foundation

Spirits & Arts on Saba

An afternoon of talking about, thinking about and creating art.

Saba Lace Ladies

Angela Johnson and Beatrix Zagers. How Saba honours the contribution of its women and the influence of needlework on the island's economic and cultural heritage.

Art teachers, government organisations, NGOs, independent professionals working in education or for other target groups

Sapphire Ramkissoon Programme Manager at Child Focus

Saba Comprehensive School (SCS)

- Anton Hermans, Director
- Dahlia Hassell, Drama Club Leader
- Tracy Zagers-Johnson, Club Coordinator
- Stacey Simmons Creative, performing and visual arts
- Roxana La Flor-Triana, Dance and drama (jazz, hip hop and ballet)
- Emilio Sobrino Senciales, Drama and acrobatics

Youth leaders & volunteers

- Guyquade Lavia (Budu) Djembe drumming
- Noemi Claire Mandolado Arts & Crafts activities for children aged 4-7
- Carmen Simmons Lessons in the visual arts, piano and singing

5 Funds and funding bodies

No funds or funding bodies known with a specific focus on Bonaire.

6 Other culture and welfare initiatives

Saba Nature Foundation and Child Focus host activities for children between the ages of 4 and 12, while the SCS hosts the after-school activities (clubs) for its own pupils aged 12 to 18. The activities on offer include arts and crafts, boxing, theatre, yearbook, djembe drumming, board games, carnival costume design, Lego tech, LGBTQ+ pride club, guitar and piano lessons, West Indian cooking, chess, ballet, ceramics and textiles, sewing and Latin dance.

[More information](#)

Saba Girls and Boys Sport Society After-School Care

Since September 2011, the society has run an after-school care programme for children aged 4 to 13. A wide range of activities are organised, including homework help, arts, crafts and music.

EC2 Expertise Centre Education Care

A service offering educational guidance and support

Saba Health Care Foundation

Home care and district nursing is organised from the A.M. Edwards Medical Center of Saba LIFE Center (a focal point for Saba's older inhabitants).

Saba Reach Foundation Saba Reach Foundation facilitates sustainable employment and participation opportunities for residents of Saba, young and old, who need help to find their way on the job market.

Body, Mind & Spirit - ASGS Foundation and Facebook Body, Mind & Spirit

The Saba Lions Club

is known for their many projects and fund raising events over the years that catered to the needy, and of course gave it's share towards signature causes that were led by LCIF. Over the past 35 years the Saba Lions Club has also been a key stakeholder in ensuring that certain cultural, yet entertaining, event were executed to the benefit of the entire island.

Out-of-school childcare

Thanks to its central position within the island's community, Saba Comprehensive School SCS also provides broad social support and practical care such as breakfast, lunch and after-school care.