

The Queen of the Netherlands

Queen Beatrix succeeded her mother as Queen of the Netherlands in 1980. From that date, Her Majesty formed part of the government. The Queen was married to Prince Claus. They had three sons: Prince Willem-Alexander, Prince Friso and Prince Constantijn. The eldest, Prince Willem-Alexander – the Prince of Orange – will succeed her.

Youth

Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgard, Princess of the Netherlands, Princess of Orange-Nassau and Princess of Lippe-Biesterfeld, was born on 31 January 1938 at Soestdijk Palace in Baarn. She was the first child of Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard. Her younger sister, Princess Irene, was born in 1939. When war broke out in May 1940, the family left for the United Kingdom.

A month later, Princess Beatrix and her younger sister fled with their mother to Ottawa in Canada, where Princess Margriet was born in 1943. Prince Bernhard remained in London with Queen Wilhelmina during the war. The family set foot on Dutch soil again on 2 August 1945. Princess Christina was born at Soestdijk Palace in 1947.

Education

In Canada, Princess Beatrix attended nursery and primary school. On her return to the Netherlands, she continued her primary education at The Workshop (*De Werkplaats*), Kees Boeke's progressive school in Bilthoven. In April 1950, Princess Beatrix entered the *Incrementum*, part of the Baarns Lyceum, where she passed her school-leaving examinations in arts subjects and classics in 1956.

University

In the same year, the Princess enrolled as a student at Leiden University. She was also an active member of the Leiden Women Students' Association. In her first years at university, she attended lectures in sociology, jurisprudence, economics, parliamentary history and constitutional law. Later she also attended lectures on the cultures of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles, the Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, international affairs, international law, history and European law. While at university, the Princess visited various European and international organisations in Geneva, Strasbourg, Paris and Brussels. In the summer of 1959, she passed her preliminary examination in law, and obtained her degree in July 1961.

In 2005, the Queen received an honorary doctorate from the University of Leiden, in recognition of the attention she has focused on freedom and the responsibilities that go with it.

Marriage and family

The marriage ceremony of Princess Beatrix and the German diplomat Claus von Amsberg was conducted by the Mayor of Amsterdam, Gijsbert van Hall, on 10 March 1966. The civil marriage was blessed at a service in the Westerkerk conducted by Rev. H.J. Kater, with a sermon by Rev. J.H. Sillevis Smitt. On the same day, Claus von Amsberg received the title of Prince of the Netherlands and the designation Jonkheer van Amsberg.

Permission

On 28 June 1965, Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard announced the engagement in radio and television broadcasts. A royal wedding cannot take place without the permission of parliament. In autumn 1965, the two houses of parliament passed a bill consenting to their marriage. Claus von Amsberg immediately became a Dutch citizen.

Children

The royal couple took up residence in Drakensteyn Castle in Lage Vuursche, where the Princess had lived since 1963. Three sons were born to them: Prince Willem-Alexander in 1967, Prince Friso in 1968 and Prince Constantijn in 1969.

Grandchildren

Queen Beatrix has eight grandchildren. Prince Claus lived to see the birth of their first grandchild, Eloise (daughter of Prince Constantijn and Princess Laurentien) on 8 June 2002. On 7 December 2003, the Queen's second grandchild was born: Princess Catharina-Amalia, daughter of Prince Willem-Alexander and Princess Máxima. On 21 March 2004, her first grandson, Claus-Casimir, was born to Prince Constantijn and Princess Laurentien. Luana, the first child of Prince Friso and Princess Mabel, was born on 26 March 2005. Princess Alexia, the second daughter of Prince Willem-Alexander and Princess Máxima, was born on 26 June 2005. In 2006 the second daughter of Prince Constantijn and Princess Laurentien, Leonore, was born on 3 June and on 18 June the second daughter of Prince Friso and Princess Mabel, Zaria. The eighth grandchild was born on 10 April 2007, the third daughter of the Prince of Orange and Princess Máxima, Princess Ariane.

Queen of the Netherlands

Under the Constitution of the Netherlands, Princess Beatrix was entitled to assume the royal prerogative at any time after her 18th birthday on 31 January 1956. She did so in fact when Queen Juliana abdicated on her 71st birthday, 30 April 1980. Princess Beatrix succeeded her mother as Queen of the Netherlands. Her investiture took place at a special plenary session of both houses of parliament in the New Church in Amsterdam.

On that day, she stated that she wished to continue celebrating the Queen's official birthday on 30 April, as a mark of respect for her mother.

In 1981 the royal family moved into Huis ten Bosch Palace in The Hague, the seat of government. Since 1984, the Queen's offices have been in Noordeinde Palace.

Official duties

The Queen represents the Netherlands both at home and abroad.

Politics

As part of the government, the Queen is closely involved with Dutch political life. She:

- meets the prime minister and speaks regularly with ministers and state secretaries;
- signs Acts of Parliament and Royal Decrees;
- appoints informateurs and formateurs when a new government is being formed;
- is president of the Council of State, the government's main advisory body. She became a member of the Council of State on her 18th birthday.

International relations

The Queen represents the Netherlands both at home and abroad. She makes several state visits to other countries every year, and receives heads of state and heads of government who are visiting the Netherlands. In addition, the Queen receives in audience the heads of foreign diplomatic missions to the Netherlands, when they come to present their letters of credence or take their leave.

The Queen has a special bond with the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba and Suriname, former Dutch colonies, where there is still great interest in the House of Orange. She visited these countries in 1958 and 1965. During her third visit in 1966, she introduced Prince Claus to the people of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles. When Suriname became independent in 1975, the Prince and Princess attended the celebrations that accompanied the transfer of sovereignty.

In 1980, the Queen addressed the parliament (Staten) of the Netherlands Antilles. She paid regular visits to the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba with Prince Claus. In 1986, Aruba acquired separate status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Contact with the public

The Queen devotes much attention to important events in the Netherlands. Following disasters such as the Enschede fireworks explosion and the tsunami in Asia, she expresses her sympathy with those affected and talks to the bereaved.

The Queen keeps herself informed of what is going on in society and every year she attends many openings, commemorations and other official events.

Regular visits to the provinces provide the Queen with the opportunity to learn of the problems that affect people at local level. During specially organised working visits, she examines issues relating to such subjects as justice, agriculture, minorities and the environment.

The Queen is patron of many organisations. She also has several honorary appointments.

Leisure pursuits

The Queen enjoys sculpting, riding and sailing. Her favourite sailing boat is De Groene Draeck, her 18th birthday gift from the nation. She also enjoys playing tennis and skiing. The Queen is particularly interested in sculpture, painting, ballet and music. She regularly visits exhibitions and attends performances, and she enjoys talking to the artists themselves. She takes a great personal interest in awarding the annual Royal Grant for Painting.

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