

His Majesty the King of the Belgians

His Majesty the King was born on 15 April 1960 in Brussels, the eldest son of King Albert II and Queen Paola.

The King is the first Crown Prince not to receive private education and to follow a classical and bilingual educational path in primary and secondary schools in Belgium. In 1978, as Prince Philippe, he began his university studies at the Royal Military Academy. Interested in aerospace since childhood, he chose to join the Air Force, where he qualified as a fighter pilot. He completed his military training with a certification as a parachutist and a commando.

He then continued his studies abroad. After a trimester at Oxford University in the United Kingdom and two years at Stanford University in the United States, he obtained a master's in Political Science.

Back in Belgium in 1985, he delved into the political, economic, and social realities of his country. Over a period of eight years, he got to know Belgium and the Belgians through numerous meetings, visits, conferences, and missions. He also gained various experiences in the field during humanitarian visits.

During this period, he greatly expanded his knowledge in areas of particular personal interest, such as history, literature, and philosophy. He travelled widely and met all kinds of committed people the world over, both leaders and ordinary citizens. He also closely followed the European integration process.

The death of King Baudouin in 1993 marked a turning point in Prince Philippe's life. Following the accession of his father, King Albert II, Philippe became heir apparent to the throne at the age of 33. From then on, his public role took precedence, and he worked primarily in a number of areas closely related to the major challenges of the time, undertaking international missions to promote the Belgian economy and Belgium's image abroad, promoting sustainable development, encouraging dialogue among Belgium's various communities, fostering support for vulnerable people, and helping nurture talent.

In 1993, he took over the Honorary Presidency of the Belgian Foreign Trade Agency (BFTA), and over the next 20 years led no fewer than 85 economic missions. He forged links between Belgian and foreign companies, and among Belgian companies themselves. After his accession to the throne in 2013, he remained Honorary President of the BFTA, and asked his sister, Princess Astrid, to represent him on economic missions.

Another of the Prince's signature issues is sustainable development. From 1993 to 2013, he was Honorary Chair of the Federal Council for Sustainable Development, which brings together the country's economic, social, scientific, and environmental components, and which advises the federal government. He also agreed to be Honorary Chair of the International Polar Foundation.

He also actively supports dialogue among the country's communities. With the establishment of the Prince Philippe Fund in 1998, he helped to promote dialogue among citizens of different

language communities and to encourage greater mutual recognition and respect for everyone's individuality and culture.

The King is fully aware of the many forms of marginalisation that beset society, and therefore meets with those whom it affects. Here, too, he gets a full sense of the needs of people affected by illness, social exclusion, accidents, and natural disasters.

He is also inspired by the many talents that Belgium has to offer, from sportsmen and women, artists, and scientists, to explorers and young talents. The King encourages them all with keen attention.

In 1999, he married Mathilde d'Udekem d'Acoz. They have four children: Elisabeth, Gabriel, Emmanuel and Eléonore. They combine family life with ceremonial and official obligations. Their children carry on tradition, getting their schooling in classical education, and are growing up in a multilingual environment.

On 3 July 2013, King Albert II announced his abdication. On the National Day, which follows a few weeks later, Prince Philippe took the oath and became the seventh King of the Belgians. His daughter Elisabeth, who turned 20 on 25 October 2021, is now first in line to the throne.

As Head of State, the King grants audiences to visitors each day: members of the Federal Government and of the regional and community governments, members of parliament, and other political leaders, as well as representatives of the economic, social, cultural, and scientific worlds, and of universities, the military, and of the media. The King also receives many foreign dignitaries, such as heads of state and ambassadors who come to pay a state visit or present their credentials. Since the start of his reign, the King has welcomed six state visits.

Several times a week, sometimes together with Her Majesty the Queen, he visits organisations, companies, and various initiatives in Belgium. During these visits, the King is keen to get a clear picture of the state of the country, the projects that are being implemented, and the concerns and expectations of the people. In the case of national disasters, such as the attacks of 22 March 2016 and the floods of July 2021, the King goes to the scene to pay his sympathies.

His Majesty regularly travels abroad to promote Belgium's positive image and to highlight and strengthen relations with the host country. Since ascending to the throne in July 2013, the King and Queen have made ten state visits to countries in Europe and beyond.

His Majesty puts his signature on laws and royal decrees every day. He also mediates with ministers on behalf of citizens who appeal to him for justice in their dealings with the political and administrative system.

In his more than eight years on the throne, the King has overseen two government negotiations, and has played a role in tackling the coronavirus pandemic in Belgium.

Their Majesties spend their holidays with family and friends. In their free time, they like to read and play sports. The King goes jogging regularly, and is especially keen on kite surfing. In

May 2013 and 2014, he took part in the 34th and 35th edition of Brussels 20km. He also plays the piano and is an avid painter.