



Biography of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke

His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri was born on 16 April 1955 at Betzdorf Castle in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Grand Duke Henri, Prince of Nassau, Prince of Bourbon-Parma, is the eldest son of the five children of Grand Duke Jean and Grand Duchess Joséphine-Charlotte.

On 14 February 1981, the Hereditary Grand Duke married Maria Teresa Mestre at the *Cathédrale de Notre-Dame de Luxembourg*. They have five children:

- Prince Guillaume (born in 1981), the Hereditary Grand Duke,
- Prince Félix (born in 1984),
- Prince Louis (born in 1986),
- Princess Alexandra (born in 1991)
- Prince Sébastien (born in 1992).

He became Head of State of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on 7 October 2000.

Preparing his role as future Head of State

Prince Henri completed his secondary education in Luxembourg and France, where he passed his baccalaureate in 1974. He trained at the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst in Great Britain and obtained the rank of officer in 1975.

Prince Henri then enrolled at the *Institut des hautes études internationales* (Graduate Institute of International Studies) in Geneva, Switzerland, where he graduated with a *Licence ès Sciences Politiques* in 1980. Prince Henri met his future wife Maria Teresa Mestre during their university studies.



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In 1989, he was appointed Honorary Major of the Parachute Regiment in the United Kingdom.

He also travelled extensively overseas to further his knowledge and education, particularly to the United States and Japan.

As Hereditary Grand Duke, Prince Henri was an ex officio member of the Council of State from 1980 until 1998, which gave him insight into the legislative and institutional procedures and workings of the country.

From 1978 to 2000, Prince Henri was Honorary Chairman of the Economic Development Committee. As such, he presided over numerous international trade and economic missions in order to promote the image of the Grand Duchy. His personal involvement in these missions facilitated access to new commercial markets and contributed to attracting investments to Luxembourg. His son, Prince Guillaume, took over this official role in 2000. However, the Grand Duke continues to promote his country, notably through State visits.

Accession to the throne

Prince Henri was appointed Lieutenant-Representative of His Royal Highness Grand Duke Jean on 4 March 1998. He was thus delegated certain powers in some specific areas, after having pledged to obey the Constitution. His experiences as Hereditary Grand Duke had prepared him for the role all along.

At the age of 79, Grand Duke Jean decided to abdicate after 35 years as Head of State, entrusting the throne to his eldest son. The inauguration ceremony took place at the Chamber of Deputies on 7 October 2000, when Grand Duke Henri vowed to "obey the Constitution and the laws of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, to maintain the national independence and integrity of the



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territory, as well as public and individual freedoms", as prescribed by Article 5 of the Constitution.

In his inaugural speech, His Royal Highness Grand Duke Henri highlighted the values that characterise Luxembourgish society, namely solidarity, justice, tolerance, respect for others and humanity.

The first courtesy visits of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess following his accession to the throne took them to France (9-10 October 2000) and to Germany (11-12 October 2000). These visits underline the vital and close ties between Luxembourg and these two neighbouring countries. From April 2001 to June 2002, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchesses toured the 12 cantons of Luxembourg.

Duties and activities of the Grand Duke

As part of his role as Head of State, H.R.H. the Grand Duke frequently receives members of the government to stay informed about the state of the nation. Foreign ambassadors have to present their credentials to him and are granted an audience of leave. He maintains regular contact with all major actors of society, be they from the political, economic, social, scientific, cultural or sports sectors.

Being in touch with and understanding the current issues affecting the people living in Luxembourg shapes the daily life of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess. Grand Duke Henri keeps up to date about life in Luxembourg by visiting numerous institutions, associations and exhibitions. He also attends concerts, academic sessions and sports events. Through regular visits to companies, occasionally with the Crown Prince, the Grand Duke stays informed about the national economy. During his many visits in the social, humanitarian and public health sector, the Grand Duchess frequently joins him, particularly during visits to hospitals and nursing homes.



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State and official visits are one of the most visible aspects of the Grand Duke's representative role as Head of State. They provide a valuable opportunity to establish or strengthen the country's relationships with other nations. The Grand Duchess supports the Grand Duke in carrying out his duties, not only on official activities, but also on a daily basis.

The role of His Royal Highness the Grand Duke in the formation of the government is defined by the Constitution. After parliamentary elections are held, and according to customary proceedings, the Grand Duke chooses the Prime Minister. He either appoints first an *informateur* or directly appoints a *formateur* (designated Prime Minister). The *formateur* seeks to form a government that will secure a parliamentary majority.

In his speeches, Grand Duke Henri keeps stressing the importance of the values that define Luxembourg's character: tolerance, respect, dignity and solidarity. In his annual Christmas speech, the Grand Duke addresses all people living in Luxembourg. This is the occasion to look back and reflect on the events of the past year in both Luxembourg and abroad, as well as to highlight the themes of integration and living together in harmony. The Grand Duke also delivers a speech during National Day celebrations. In particularly difficult situations, for instance during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Grand Duke may convey a message of encouragement to the nation.

Since assuming the role of Grand Duke, he has held the title of General of the Luxembourgish Army.



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High Patronages and causes

In addition to his official and ceremonial duties, the Grand Duke is the patron of many associations which work in the cultural, sports, scientific, environmental and social domains. He is interested in technological progress, particularly in the areas of medicine, the circular economy or in the transport sector. Fostering sustainable development and fighting climate change are causes that he is really passionate about.

The Grand Duke is a member of the Board of Directors of the *Fondation du Grand-Duc et de la Grande-Duchesse* (Foundation of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess). The Foundation, presided by the Grand Duchess, supports vulnerable people and people with special needs, and works for their integration into Luxembourgish society. It also backs projects in Africa and Asia.

Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess have given their High Patronage to numerous associations in Luxembourg. Members of the Grand Ducal family can also grant their High Patronage to specific events.

At the international level, the Grand Duke is President of the Galapagos Darwin Trust Luxembourg and an honorary member of the General Assembly of the Charles Darwin Foundation. This non-governmental organisation aims to preserve the unique environment and the extraordinary biodiversity of the Galapagos Archipelago.

The Grand Duke is also a member of the Mentor Foundation, set up by Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden. The goal of the Foundation, which is under the patronage of the World Health Organization (WHO), is to prevent adolescents from using drugs.



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In 1998, the Grand Duke joined the International Olympic Committee (IOC). He attends meetings of IOC members whenever possible. Since 1999, he has also been a member of the Olympic Solidarity Commission. Promoting Olympic values is of great importance to him. Grand Duke Henri has attended almost all Summer and Winter Olympic Games in order to support Luxembourg's athletes.

Family

Grand Duke Henri combines his family life with the demands of his role as Head of State.

The Grand Duke and Grand Duchess Maria Teresa have five children and five grandchildren:

- Prince Charles (born on 10 May 2020), son of the Hereditary Grand Duke and Grand Duchess;
- Amalia (born on 15 June 2014) and Liam (born on 28 November 2016), the two children of Prince Félix and Princess Claire of Luxembourg;
- Gabriel (born on 12 March 2006) and Noah (born on 21 September 2007), the two sons of Prince Louis of Luxembourg.

In 2010, the Grand Duke decided to amend the Family pact of the House of Nassau to introduce absolute primogeniture, thereby assuring equality between men and women for the succession to the throne.

Interests and hobbies

The Grand Duke's hobbies include literature, classical music, nature and sports: he practices swimming, tennis, skiing and water-skiing. He likes sailing and to ride his motorbike. The Grand Duke also goes hunting, a long family tradition which helps to regulate game and fauna in the estates.



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With an extremely tight schedule as Head of State, the Grand Duke nonetheless tries to spend as much time as possible with his family. He particularly cherishes those moments with his family, which allow him to unwind and recharge.