

# HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands: "An interactive dialogue with children: A new perspective on inclusive growth"

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HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands: "An interactive dialogue with children: A new perspective on inclusive growth" 1 | HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands with OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría

Princess Laurentien received her secondary education in The Hague and later at the Lycée Français in Tokyo, Japan, where she passed the Baccalauréat A examinations. The Princess studied history at the University of Groningen, completing her foundation year in 1986. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in political science at Queen Mary College, University of London, in 1989. In July 1991 she obtained her Master of Journalism degree at the University of California at Berkeley.

For the first part of the Coffees of the Secretary-General—organised with the Inclusive Growth Initiative—HRH Princess Laurentien facilitated an interactive dialogue between 15 children from the Dutch School of Paris (aged 11 to 15 years old) the OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and senior OECD officials. Princess Laurentien is an expert on intergenerational dialogue, having founded the Missing Chapter Foundation which facilitates dialogue between children and

1 [www.oecdobserver.org](http://www.oecdobserver.org) | HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands: "An interactive dialogue with children: A new perspective on inclusive growth"

decision-makers in companies and the public sector. Some 100 companies in the Netherlands already have a Kids Council.

Dialogue with children is, according to the Missing Chapter methodology, a topsy-turvy world: children talk and decision-makers listen. The overall goal is to make child inclusion the new normal, to increase the quality and depth of dialogue between different worlds and ultimately, to make decisions more future-proof.

Including young people into decision-making is only logical, says Princess Laurentien: “It is their universal right to be heard, according to article 12 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, children are the future parents, clients, consumers, employees. And they have to live with the consequences of our decisions and actions way beyond our lifetime. Children are much more than the future. They are, as the late Polish pedagogue Janusz Korczak said: ‘Not only the people of tomorrow but citizens of today’.”

The children analysed the following OECD dilemma: ‘What does the OECD need to do in order for its recommendations to be followed through?’ Princess Laurentien moderated the dialogue and the children shared their perspectives on how the OECD can ensure that its recommendations are followed through, on the ability to take and to provide advice, and on how to successfully lead an organisation.

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HRH Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and OECD Chief of Staff Gabriela Ramos (from left)

### Short biography

Princess Laurentien received her secondary education in The Hague and later at the Lycée Français in Tokyo, Japan, where she passed the Baccalauréat A examinations. The Princess studied history at the University of Groningen, completing her foundation year in 1986. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in political science at Queen Mary College, University of London, in 1989. In July 1991 she obtained her Master of Journalism degree at the University of California at Berkeley.

Besides her official duties as a member of the Royal House, Princess Laurentien's professional activities include being a Fellow of the European Climate Foundation, Special Advisor for Rewilding Europe for the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) and Senior Advisor to the Port of Rotterdam. In 2009 the Princess set up the Missing Chapter Foundation. In the same year she published the first in a series of children's books which centre on a character called Mr Finney and deal with issues such as sustainability and climate change. The second book in the series was published in February 2011, and the third in November 2013.

Since late 2012 Princess Laurentien has been the President of Fauna & Flora International (FFI), a nature conservation organisation focusing on the protection of threatened animal species and ecosystems worldwide. The Princess was first associated with the FFI in 2003, initially as a member of the Executive Committee and then as Vice-President until she was appointed President.

Until 2003 Princess Laurentien worked in international communications, for companies including Weber Shandwick and Edelman PR Worldwide. Princess Laurentien has been active in promoting literacy since 2001. Stichting Lezen & Schrijven (the Reading and Writing Foundation) was set up on her initiative in May 2004. The foundation's objective is to prevent and reduce functional illiteracy in the Netherlands and worldwide.

On 24 March 2009 Princess Laurentien was designated UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development. In this capacity, she acts as an advocate for the cause of literacy all over the world. In February 2011 the Princess was appointed Chair of the European Commission's High Level Group of Experts on Literacy. The Group published its Final Report in September 2012, which included recommended actions for a structured European approach to tackling illiteracy.

On 1 January 2014 Princess Laurentien was appointed Honorary Chair of the Reading and Writing Foundation when Maria van Bijsterveldt-Vliegenthart, former Minister of Education, Culture and Science, took over the role of chair. In her new position the Princess remains closely involved with efforts to tackle functional illiteracy, in which she mainly steers the foundation's international activities. These include partnerships with the European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET) and the Public Libraries 2020 programme.

As a member of the Royal House, Princess Laurentien holds a number of honorary posts: Patron of Reading Unlimited (formerly the Dutch Listening and Braille

Library (NLBB); Patron of the Dutch language society Genootschap Onze Taal; Patron of the Centre of Expertise on Disability and Study; Honorary chair of the Association of Public Libraries; President of Fauna & Flora International (FFI); and President of the European Cultural Foundation.

Reading and Writing Foundation Website: <http://www.readingandwriting.eu/>

Missing Chapter Foundation Website: <https://www.missingchapter.org/>

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