

## **THE PRINCESS OF ASTURIAS TURNS 40**

**On 22 May 2012, coinciding with their eighth wedding anniversary, the Prince of Asturias delivered these words in public: *“On 22 May 2004, we made, together, a personal and institutional commitment. And from that moment on, the Princess joined me in working, with enthusiasm and dedication, to serve the Spanish people; in promoting constitutional values, freedoms, and democratic coexistence; and in developing initiatives and projects to benefit everyone and to promote the general interests of our nation, both inside and outside Spain. We are bound to these interests, and they constitute our principal institutional responsibility.”***

**Since that day in 2004, the priorities of the Princess of Asturias are her family and supporting Prince Felipe as Crown Prince. Together with the Prince, she cares for and raises her daughters, the Infantas Leonor and Sofía, harmonizing her duties as a mother with her own activities, and those activities she carries out together with the Prince at the official events which so require.**

**Since 2007, she has her own activities agenda, which falls within the official activities of the Royal Household of His Majesty The King. Her main areas of interest are childhood and youth, education, and health.**

**In education, she mainly focuses on education between the ages of 6 and 16 (primary and secondary education), promoting and supporting vocational training, and fostering reading.**

**In the area of health, her attention is focused on infrequent conditions—known as "rare diseases"—and, most especially, on the fight against cancer in all its aspects: research, prevention, information and volunteerism. In September 2010, the Princess took on the Honorary Presidency of the Spanish Association Against Cancer.**

**Together with Prince Felipe, in the last eight years she has participated in more than 1,000 events at La Zarzuela Palace and during trips to all of Spain's Autonomous Communities.**

**In the more than 200 audiences held, she has met with more than 7,000 people from all over Spain.**

**Abroad, the Princess has travelled with the Prince on more than 60 occasions, during which 350 official activities took place. Her Royal Highness has also travelled to Germany to participate in an event on rare diseases.**

## **November 2003 – May 2004**

After Their Majesties The King and Queen announced the engagement of Letizia Ortiz to His Royal Highness The Prince of Asturias, on 1 November 2003, and until the religious ceremony held on 22 May 2004 at the Cathedral of La Almudena in Madrid, the Princess of Asturias participated in 25 official and private events together with the Prince and the King and Queen. Among these activities were meetings with members of the principal national institutions, such as the Government, the Congress of Deputies and the Senate, the Autonomous Community of Madrid, and Madrid City Hall. She also attended meetings with the authorities involved in the wedding ceremony. Noteworthy within her activity in those months of 2004 was visiting those injured in the March 11 terrorist attacks, and attending the State funeral in honour of the victims. Abroad, Letizia Ortiz attended the wedding of the Crown Prince of Denmark and Mary Donaldson.

## **After May 2004**

After her wedding, the Princess started to accompany Prince Felipe on his official activities to support him in his institutional role, and to make contact with public and private institutions and agencies all around Spain. In the first few years, the Prince and Princess visited many places throughout Spain, and participated in major institutional, cultural and social events.

This activity was complemented by some official trips abroad, especially to Ibero-America.

## **Priority: her family and caring for her daughters**

Her official agenda was only interrupted by the births of the Infantas Leonor and Sofía, whose upbringing became the Princess's main priority. She looks after her daughters every day, and strives to harmonize her duties as a mother and her support for Prince Felipe at the official events that so require.

## **Her own activities agenda**

Since 2007, she has her own activities agenda, which she combines with the priorities mentioned above. Her activities focus on supporting issues related to children and young people, especially in the fields of health and education. These activities take the form of official events and public and private audiences. Up to late May 2012, the Princess had carried out 210 such activities, namely 118 public events, 72 public audiences and 20 private audiences.

Together with Prince Felipe, she has attended more than 1,300 public activities, 350 of which were abroad, during the more than 60 official trips made in these eight years. She has held more than 200 audiences, during which she has had the opportunity to talk to more than 7,000 people from all over Spain.

During the first few years, moreover, she visited, on her own, all of Spain's Autonomous Communities, in order to learn about the sectors in which she is most interested.

## **Education**

In the field of education, the Princess first made a tour of all the educational levels, beginning on 10 October 2006. On that day, she visited the Príncipe Felipe Infant and Primary School (CEIP) in Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid. After that, she visited secondary schools, special education schools, schools with bilingual education programmes, and vocational training schools.

These visits were usually preceded by private meetings at La Zarzuela Palace with the educational authorities, who described to the Princess the principal lines of work, the objectives and the problems of each Autonomous Community.

Although her priorities in education are education between the ages of 6 and 16 (primary and secondary education), after this tour of different levels, her activities have focused especially on promoting and supporting vocational training.

To this end, she is touring the different Autonomous Communities to visit vocational training schools, maintaining the above-mentioned format of including a preliminary working meeting, to which representatives from the employment and business world are also invited. During each visit, the students and teachers explain to the Princess the activities included in the most deeply-rooted vocational training tracks in that Autonomous Community. She has visited schools in Madrid and Navarre, and is scheduled to make another two visits in the second half of this year.

Moreover, she presided over the inaugural ceremony of the Spainskills Vocational Training Olympics which, in its national phase, was held in April 2011, with the participation of students from all over Spain.

A great deal of her efforts are also dedicated to activities aimed at promoting reading among children. And, more importantly, to activities aimed at improving reading comprehension, as a fundamental pillar for students' intellectual development. This area of work is essential in the fight against early school-leaving and school failure.

Another facet of education in which the Princess is involved is the acquisition of healthy habits from early childhood, as she is convinced that good physical and mental health has its foundation in these habits, which will be fully effective if they are promoted in early childhood. Among these healthy habits are good nutrition, sports and physical activity, and the development of social skills as a weapon against early addictions at critical ages, etc.

In this sphere, the Princess supports sports in schools. Every year she confers the Honorary Presidency of the National Championships of School Sports, and she attended one of the competitions in Huelva, in April 2009. She has also held audiences with representatives from different sports clubs and national teams which have excelled in national and international competitions, such as the women's national roller hockey team, in January 2011.

## **Support for entrepreneurs**

Like the Prince, the Princess is convinced of the importance of promoting entrepreneurship among young people, which is why she has carried out such activities as audiences with groups of young entrepreneurs, and attended Asturias Entrepreneurship Day on 27 May 2010. On 6 July 2011, she attended the inauguration of the international "Junior Achievement Young Enterprise Europe Challenge", in Madrid. That day, the participants, from a number of European countries, showed Her Royal Highness the projects for mini-companies that they had presented at the competition.

The Princess has also expressed this interest in entrepreneurship as it concerns women. In Barcelona, in March 2008, she attended the FIDEM International Women Entrepreneurs Awards dinner, where she delivered a speech in Catalan for the first time. In March 2010, she presided over the inauguration of the third edition of the Autonomous Community of Madrid's *Lidera* programme.

## **Health and Social Issues**

Since beginning her official activities, the Princess has spent a good deal of her time on visiting different health centres and holding audiences with groups of patients and their families, as well as attending events related to scientific research which, as she has often said, she considers essential to the future of society.

During this time she has made both official and private visits to many hospitals, where she has been able to see first-hand the situation of the medical staff, patients, and their families, as well as those in charge of hospital administration and other services. Highlights include her February 2009 visit to Son Dureta Hospital in Palma de Mallorca, or the inauguration of El Pino Health Centre in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, in September of 2010, as well as the inauguration of Cartagena's Santa Lucia Hospital in February 2011.

The Princess has held 25 public audiences related to this field at La Zarzuela Palace. Starting in September 2008, she began to focus a great deal of her activities on the fight against cancer, attending the opening ceremony of the Spanish Cancer Association (AECC) in Corunna. This concern for the fight against cancer and those suffering from it led her to accept the post of Honorary President of the Association in September 2010. This was the first time she accepted a Presidency of this nature on a permanent basis, and she did so given the impact of this disease on society, and given the AECC's importance in the fight against cancer through its research, information, prevention campaigns and volunteerism.

Hers is an active Presidency, with work including an annual meeting presenting the results of the previous year's work, as well as new projects and goals for the upcoming year. She was present at an event marking International Childhood Cancer Day on 15 February 2011 in Seville, and at the cancer prevention forum titled "For a Comprehensive Approach: Prevention and Multidisciplinary Care", held in Madrid in February 2012.

In the field of information and prevention, she attended the First Conference on Cancer and the Environment organised by the World Health Organization in Gijon in March

2011, and presided over the skin cancer prevention seminar held in Tarragona in June of that same year.

It is noteworthy that one of the principal endeavours of the Princess of Asturias is promoting scientific research, to support any initiative facilitating the inclusion of scientific research as one of the basic pillars in the context of education, health and innovation. Due to this special interest, she lends her support by attending AECC ceremonies awarding research grants held annually in different Spanish cities, and has twice presided over the awards ceremony held in Barcelona for the FERO cancer research grants, in 2009 and 2011.

Moreover, in the area of health the Princess has devoted herself to encouraging and giving visibility to those suffering from infrequent conditions—known as "rare diseases"—and their families. This interest has been shown with her involvement in events marking International Rare Diseases Day, over which she has presided on three occasions, from the first time it was commemorated in the Senate on 10 March 2009, as well as many audiences during which she receives associations of the families of those stricken with these conditions.

She has held audiences and working meetings with the Spanish Federation of Rare Diseases, in order to gain more in-depth information about the situation of this large group of patients, and how to best support their needs.

The Princess supports scientific research as a priority in a society committed to progress for all and, logically, also in the area of rare diseases. This is why the Hesperia Foundation, over which she presides together with the Prince of Asturias, subsidises a project on adrenoleukodystrophy directed by Dr Aurora Pujol at Bellvitge Hospital in Barcelona.

The world of disabilities is another of the Princess's interests. Throughout these years, she has provided institutional support for different groups within Spanish society, ranging from visually impaired people to those affected by hearing impairments or by autism spectrum disorders, to name only a few. Her activities in this area number more than 30, with highlights including 15 public audiences involving such groups as the Curarte Foundation in December 2007, as well as the National Network of Women with Disabilities, in May 2012.

As to official events, she has been involved in several for the Spain's National Organisation for the Blind (ONCE), presiding over an institutional event on 11 November 2011, although she had been supporting the organisation since July 2008, when she attended the closing ceremonies of the ONCE Foundation's specialised professional training programmes. She has also attended the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Spain's National Confederation for the Deaf, where she used Spanish Sign Language during her address. Other groups that have received her support include the National Disability and Mass Media Association (ADIMECO) and the Bilbilis Disability Association in Calatayud, whose centre she visited in May 2008. The Princess has presided over the International Convention on Dependency and Quality of Life in Pamplona (13 May 2009); on three occasions, the dinner for Project Stela organised by the Madrid Down Syndrome Foundation; and, in January 2008, she visited the ISFAS Special Centre (CEISFAS) in Madrid, a residential institution for persons with intellectual disabilities.

### **Contact with the Armed Forces**

H.R.H. The Princess of Asturias has maintained contact with the Armed Forces at the military activities she attends with Prince Felipe, as well as her annual attendance at the Armed Forces Day parade, presenting Combat Flags to certain Units, and presiding over a Flag Oath ceremony of the Royal Guard on 10 April 2010.

### **Defence of the Spanish Language**

Another field of activity is the defence of the Spanish language, including attending, four times, the seminars organised by the Español Urgente Foundation at Yuso Monastery in San Millán de la Cogolla, La Rioja. There, she has participated in events devoted to such issues as the language of young people, in 2008, or politically correct language, in 2011.

### **Activities abroad**

Although Her Royal Highness accompanies the Prince of Asturias during his annual official trips abroad—more than 60 during their eight years of marriage, during which they have carried out more than 350 official activities—the Princess has only made one solo trip outside of Spain.

During the German Federal President's visit to Spain, his wife, Mrs Eva Koehler, invited the Princess of Asturias to attend the awards ceremony for research prizes on rare diseases which she and her husband sponsor in Berlin. The Princess accepted this invitation, the first of her solo activities abroad, during which, as well as giving a speech as the guest of honour at the awards ceremony, she met the mayor of the city and held a working meeting with the prizewinners and representatives of the scientific community, researchers and federal authorities.