

THE GREAT WAR CENTENARY

in Flanders



2014-18

The Great War Centenary

The information contained in this brochure accurately reflects the current state of affairs in November 2011.
For additional information, please contact the Great War Centenary Project Office or, alternatively, consult the project's website.

Contact details may be found on the back cover of this brochure.

The Great War Centenary

in Flanders



Dear Reader,

The First World War, also known as ‘The Great War’, was the first international conflict on a global scale. Millions of soldiers and civilians from no less than 50 countries lost their lives. All over the world ‘Flanders Fields’ has come to be associated with unprecedented human suffering and material destruction.

In the past hundred years these events have had a major influence on our society. Today, the victims of this war still deserve to be commemorated and honoured.

That is why the Government of Flanders has started preparing the commemoration of the First World War. This commemoration will take place between 2014 and 2018. It is our explicit ambition to establish a humanitarian and internationally oriented project, which we wish to associate with the peace theme, ‘No More War’, in a sustainable manner.

We want to raise awareness amongst the present and future generations about such themes as tolerance and international understanding. After all, these themes constitute the cornerstones of an open and tolerant society.

This is the only way that we can start to understand history and draw lessons from it for the future.

Kris Peeters

Minister-President of the Government of Flanders, Flemish Minister for Economy, Foreign Policy, Agriculture and Rural Policy



Dear Reader,

One of the greatest conflicts in the history of mankind unfolded between the summer of 1914 and the autumn of 1918. Flanders too became a battlefield, for four long years. Today the witnesses of this warfare still bear silent testimony to these horrific events in our landscape, in our immovable heritage and in our culture. The Great War continues to live on in our collective memory.

One hundred years later we wish to commemorate the victims of this war and condemn senseless war violence. This commemoration is an excellent opportunity to preserve our war heritage in a sustainable manner for generations to come and to reflect on war and peace.

As coordinator of ‘The Great War Centenary (2014-18)’ I have the pleasure of introducing the Government of Flanders’ project for the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. This brochure explains the project’s vision and provides an overview of the activities that have been planned in the frame of the commemoration. The project is a unique spearhead in the Government of Flanders’ events policy for the next years.

Our aim is to touch hearts and elicit emotions. We wish to show this war to people so that they can understand it. To commemorate those who died, so those who commemorate them may learn from it.

Geert Bourgeois

Vice-Minister-President of the Government of Flanders, Flemish Minister for Public Governance, Local and Provincial Government, Civic Integration, Tourism and the Vlaamse Rand



The Great War Centenary in Flanders

The project 'The Great War Centenary (2014-18)' aims to promote Flanders' visibility across the international arena during the period 2014-2018 and thereafter, by positioning this commemoration as a great yet serene occasion, within Flanders itself but likewise around the world.

The programme of commemorative activities of the Centenary of the First World War is meant to project the name 'Flanders' upon a broader international canvass and generate an enduring association with the theme of peace.

Another objective is to create amongst the present and future generations in Flanders an awareness of themes such as tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and international understanding, this with a view to fostering an open and tolerant society and an active international orientation. Finally, there is also the further objective to considerably expand upon the Peace Tourism theme in (West) Flanders. ■

■ **The project office**

The Government of Flanders has established 'The Great War Centenary (2014-18)' project office. The project office serves as a one-stop shop for the Government of Flanders in the preparation, coordination and follow-up of the project. The project office operates at three levels.

The project office has been assigned the following international tasks:

- establishing an inventory of the international commemoration ceremonies which will be organised between 2014 and 2018, in Flanders and abroad;
- establishing an inventory of the plans of foreign authorities to invest in the commemorative monuments of Flanders Fields;
- formulating proposals for the organisation of international commemorations in Flanders in 2014-18.

At Flemish level the project office has the following tasks:

- the operational management of the central WWI project group;
- reporting and monitoring on the project's progress;
- establishing an inventory of the Government of Flanders' projects and initiatives.

The project office will carry out the following tasks at local level:

- targeted communication about the project to all interested partners in Flanders;
- the identification of stakeholders which may contribute to the commemoration project.

■ **The central project group**

A central project group has also been established. This working group constitutes the platform for the coordination of and information exchange about the Government of Flanders' activities in the frame of the commemoration project. In addition, it serves as an advisory body for the Government of Flanders. The central project group is made up of representatives of the Government of Flanders and is chaired by the Secretary General of the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs. ■



TO THE ARCHES OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF
THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
BY THE LEGISLATURE
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED
AND TWENTY TWO

International context

The 2007 study conducted by the Flemish Foreign Policy Research Centre shows that soldiers from no fewer than 50 modern-day nations joined the military action in the Westhoek (Flanders Fields). Not surprising then, a lot of these nations are now in the process of preparing their own national commemoration agenda.

In the preparation of these events, timely coordination and information exchange are essential elements. Meanwhile, the first preparations have already been made. Bilateral agreements have been concluded with New Zealand and Australia for example.

In 2010 and 2011 the Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs has organised joint consultations on the commemoration with the diplomatic representatives of thirteen countries: Australia, Canada, Germany, France, Ireland, India, Italy, Morocco, New Zealand, Poland, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

These discussions highlighted a very lively interest in this commemorative project. Two themes were discussed: the planned national commemorative initiatives and the development of an international events calendar, on the one hand, and the 'Flanders Fields Declaration', on the other.

Minister-President Kris Peeters has proposed that this declaration may be signed in November 2012. ■



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The Flanders Fields Declaration

On 11 November 2008, during the official commemoration of the 90th anniversary of the Armistice in Ypres, Minister-President Kris Peeters called for the drafting of an international declaration. This declaration has received the working title 'Flanders Fields Declaration'. It is the Government of Flanders' intention to structurally anchor the commemoration of the 'Great War' in this declaration. Geographically, the emphasis is on the more than 50 nations that dispatched soldiers to fight in Flanders Fields.

The declaration will be structured around the following dimensions:

- **Enduring remembrance**

WWI lives on in the collective memory of modern states in various ways. The angle varies from the commemoration of the military victory to the role that war can play as a source of inspiration for peace and modern conflict management.

- **Scientific research**

To the present day, historical research has almost exclusively focused on the history of the battlefields and this, moreover, from a strongly Eurocentric perspective. What is needed is an integrated historical account that re-examines WWI from west to east, using a holistic approach.

- **Raising awareness and remembrance education**

The lessons to be learned from WWI constitute an important source of information and inspiration towards the promotion of peace and mutual understanding that transcends ethnic, religious, and political boundaries. In the process, our focus needs to be directed towards both the public at large and the younger generations. The already acquired expertise of the Special Committee for Remembrance Education, as active within the non-profit organisation 'Dossin Barracks' (Dossinkazerne), may prove especially useful to this end. ■



Friends of Flanders Fields

In addition to the signing of the 'Flanders Fields Declaration' in 2012 the Government of Flanders will also organise an International Peace Symposium in November 2013, to which the laureates of the Nobel Peace Prize will be invited. The symposium will build on the Flanders Fields Declaration to ensure that the commemorative project is internationally embedded. Moreover the symposium offers a unique opportunity to send out a peace message to the world on the eve of the commemoration.

The South African Nobel Peace Prize winners, Desmond Tutu and Frederik Willem de Klerk, have already agreed to take part in the symposium.

The Government of Flanders has also expressed its desire to build commemorative gardens in symbolically important locations, in consultation with its foreign partners, between 2014 and 2018. These commemorative gardens will be landscaped using soil from Flanders Fields: this allows us to honour and commemorate anyone who fought and died during this war. In addition the commemorative gardens will go on to symbolise hope, peace and reconciliation, in view of a better future. ■



Flemish action plan

Based on the policy documents of the Government of Flanders and a resolution by the Flemish Parliament the project office has drawn up an action plan. The action plan is an internal working document which provides an overview of the various actions per policy area. The action plan focuses on foreign policy, tourism, heritage, education, communication and scientific research. Actions will be associated with each of the objectives.

The action plan is a dynamic plan, which will be further developed with the various policy areas in order to obtain a flexible working tool. It will be used for the annual reporting to the Government of Flanders. ■

Tourism



■ Investments

The First World War has left a great many visible scars in the landscape. Aside from the numerous military cemeteries, graveyards and war memorials, there is a host of other landmarks to remind people of the events that happened during WWI. For that reason, Flanders considers it important that relics of the war be preserved in a dignified manner and suitably maintained. To achieve that aim, investments are made to assist in the renovation, restoration, and maintenance of WWI sites.

Further efforts are devoted to facilitating access to such sites, unlocking them to visitors from home and abroad. This has created a more focused attention on improving both visitor infrastructures and the accessibility of commemorative sites.

In the frame of this investment initiative, Geert Bourgeois, Flemish Minister for Tourism, introduced a new instrument, called the 'Great War Centenary Impulse Programme'.

■ Events

The project's events policy will be made up of various phases. The focus can change every year, highlighting different aspects. As a result the public will always have a more structured overview at its disposal of the many events that can be expected. At the same time this may also encourage visitors to attend other, future events.

In the first phase of the development of the events policy, the aim is to build a structure that allows a well-ordered provision.

In the process, attention will be paid to the following parameters:

- a historical-chronological time line, e.g., the drawing up of lists of relevant historical events and dates;
- a geographic allocation, whereby relevant historical events are linked to specific locations;
- a thematic allocation, whereby relevant historical events are coupled to specific themes, and,
- the target groups, e.g., senior citizens, students, out-of-school youth groups, local and foreign visitors.

In the first phase, Minister Geert Bourgeois has earmarked a budget of five million euros out of the Tourism budget for the period 2014-2015. This budget will be used to support a series of international top-tier events and Flemish events, which will promote the peace message. They will also emphasise the Tourism+ dimension. In so doing the Government of Flanders invests in the preservation and upgrading of war heritage as a natural pole of attraction for peace tourism, focussing on the meaning of and reflection on war and peace. ■

Knooppunt **33**

WESTHOEK 

Zonnebek
Tyne C
WESTHOEK

WESTHOEK 

Zillebeke 3,5
Gasthuisbossen 7,2 





33

Knooppunt

← 30

→ 32

The Great War Centenary Impulse Programme - Tourism⁺

With the Great War Centenary in mind, the Flemish Minister for Tourism, Geert Bourgeois, intends to pay very special attention to ensuring that WWI sites provide a qualitative experience, as well as facilitate access from a recreational tourism angle. The Great War Centenary is to evolve into an exceptional occasion destined to place Flanders on the map as a WWI destination. Although the year 2014 still seems far off, it is imperative already today that projects be prepared and investments made in the kind of infrastructure that will turn the 2014-2018 commemorative period into a successful world event.

The Minister has earmarked fifteen million euros for these recreational tourism projects. With these funds he wishes to support projects all over Flanders, offering an attractive and qualitative integrated tourism product. The Flemish invitation for tenderers to submit their project proposals within the context of the Great War Centenary Impulse Fund was issued in June 2010. This project call elicited a very enthusiastic response from all across Flanders.

Following a very thorough screening process and scoring of the 69 tenders submitted, the 44 selected projects eligible for subsidies were published in December 2010.

Of these 44 projects, 5 strategic projects were approved and publicised: the In Flanders Fields Museum and the opening up of the Belfry Tower in Ypres, the Museum Garden and 'legacy' at the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 in Zonnebeke, '100 jaar Poperinge achter het front - the Poperinge Centenary Behind the Front Line' with the Lijssenthoek Cemetery and the Talbot House in Poperinge, the modernisation of the Yser Tower Museum and the Yser Tower site in Diksmuide, and a new visitor centre at the lock complex at the Ganzepoot in Nieuwpoort. ■

*Coordination: The Tourism Flanders
Brussels Agency*

*Direction signs along bicycle
routes in the Westhoek
(Flanders Fields)*



New In Flanders Fields Museum and the opening up of the Belfry Tower – Ypres

Theme:

man and landscape

- Renovation of the visitor infrastructure
- Re-organisation of the museum: new presentation with the introduction of the WWI landscape as final witness
- Outfitting of the Belfry Tower



‘100 jaar Poperinge achter het front’: Lijssenthoek Cemetery, Talbot House, and Town Hall site

Theme:

life and death – the medical story

- Interpretation centre at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery
- Improved access to Talbot House and the garden
- Refurbishment of the town hall site: death cells and execution post





The legacy of Passchendaele – Zonnebeke

Theme:

the military story

- Construction of a museum garden
- Three walking routes
- Opening up of war sites: bunkers, 'Passchendaele Memorial Park', unique relics of war
- Extension of the visitor infrastructure



Modernisation of the Yser Tower site and the Yser Tower Museum – Diksmuide

Theme:

the ‘Frontbeweging – Front Movement’ and the peace message ‘No more war!’

- Updating of the permanent presentation with emphasis on the Belgian-German front and Flemish emancipation
- Visitor reception centre
- Function of the square around the new pavilion
- Extra buffering for coaches
- Bicycling and walking paths and optimisation of existing routes



Visitor centre De Ganzepoot – Nieuwpoort

Theme:

the flooding of the Yser Plains

- Construction of a visitor centre
- Upgrade of the 'Ganzepoot – Goosefoot' site with the Albert I monument
- The story of the flooding and the role played by the lock complex



Heritage of the Great War

The 'Heritage of the Great War' project occupies a key position within the commemoration of the First World War Centenary. Because the last eyewitnesses have now all died, this heritage constitutes our last link between past and present.

Tangible traces, such as military cemeteries, war memorials and (underground) defences can still be found all across Flanders. But the landscape is the most important last witness, even more so than all these material relics. This landscape did, in effect, create the conditions and circumstances, wherein the First World War's savage combat raged. Therefore, major landscape units such as battlefields, sight lines, defence lines, and landscapes where (archaeological) relics may be found in mutual coherence, receive great attention in this heritage project.

The project encompasses the whole of Flanders, but its point of gravity, for obvious reasons, is to be found in the Westhoek region.

In order to embed the Great War's heritage in a sustainable and permanent manner we have developed a four-track strategy:

- The first track concerns research into the architectural, landscape, and archaeological WWI heritage as a scientific basis for the next tracks.
- The second track deals with the traditional protection and spatial integration of a selection of WWI heritage.
- The third track comprises a management vision in terms of the restoration, maintenance and opening up of WWI heritage.
- The fourth track, finally, underscores the importance of WWI heritage by pursuing UNESCO World Heritage recognition for the most important relics.

The synergy of these four tracks (research, protection, management, and recognition) passes on the heritage of the First World War under the best of circumstances to future generations. ■

WW I Heritage Inventory

In the frame of the first track (research) of the Heritage of the Great War project the Flanders Heritage Agency will establish an inventory of the material witnesses of the First World War in the front line area, from Nieuwpoort to Mesen. Although the architectural heritage there has been inventoried, this is less the case for the war landscape and the archaeological remains in it. Yet, these are the last witnesses to one of the most dramatic periods in history.

The project aims to determine

- what landscapes are still bearing testimony to the war landscape and the events from the 1914-1918 period;
- what kinds of valuable sections of land can be demarcated as heritage landscape;
- how these landscapes can be translated in spatial terms.

In this process, the front lines and the expanse of the devastated regions, from Nieuwpoort to Mesen, form the 560 km² study target.

At the moment, actual inventorisation work is being conducted, consisting of partial research of the war landscape and a valuation study of WWI archaeological remains.

The research methodology encompasses a combination of

- the thorough analysis of trench maps from 1914-1918 in GIS (geographic information system);
- the comparison with present-day GIS layers;
- the development of the historical knowledge of the war landscape;
- site visits;
- archaeological valuation study based on findings from test trenches.

The inventorisation project is to be completed in 2011 in order that the timing for the protection of the First World War heritage may be met. ■

*The partners of this study are:
In Flanders Fields Museum – Province
of West Flanders – University of Ghent
– Flanders Heritage Agency*







Remembrance Park 2014-18

In the frame of the third track (management) of the Heritage of the Great War project one of the projects that is being developed is that of the Remembrance Park 2014-18. The aim of this project is to realize a master plan for an integrated and comprehensive cultural-tourism project for the former frontline in the Westhoek. The Remembrance Park 2014-18 wishes to highlight the WWI landscape as a determining and connective factor so that both visitors and residents can (re) discover it.

The winner of the open call, organised by the Flemish Government Architect, the temporary association of companies Park 14-18, will further elaborate its winning design in 2011. Park 14-18 is a temporary association of companies formed by the team Geurst & Schulze architects located in The Hague (NL) and Lodewijk Baljon landscape architects in Amsterdam (NL), assisted by scenographer Terenja van Dijk from Antwerp, urban planner Jan de Graaf from The Hague (NL), anthropologist Johan Meire from Halle, and Pieter Uyttenhove, professor of town and

rural planning and development from the University of Ghent.

Based on a very thorough analysis of the historic and the existing context they have developed a simple yet powerful overarching concept. Important landscape sites will be consolidated and incorporated in a network thus contributing to the narration of the many storylines about the relationship between the landscape and the war that unfolded in it. On these sites, a landscape scenography is generated, with its own unique style, through limited changes to the landscape, such as the opening up of sight lines, the construction of pathways, or the erection of information boxes, offering a greater insight and better experience of the war in relation to the landscape.

The approach is very realistic and takes into account the spatial planning context, the existing infrastructure, the differentiation between the various locations, and the expectations of all parties involved. ■

*Site of French military
cemetery on the Kemmelberg,
draft*



UNESCO World Heritage

As the fourth track (recognition) of the Heritage of the Great War project, Flanders wishes to nominate the testimonials of the First World War as UNESCO World Heritage. The commemorative and remembrance landscape which has been created on the WWI battlefields is a unique and valuable testimony.

This WWI remembrance landscape is the consequence of an unprecedented global conflict, which completely redressed world relations. It was created and is shared by an international community across five continents, and embodies a universal call for long-lasting peace.

To explain and underscore the universal value of the UNESCO candidacy, Flanders has chosen to develop this project in collaboration with Wallonia and France in the frame of a multinational dossier (leaving other countries the option of joining at a later date). Initiatives will also be set up to inform the (inter)national community, to raise awareness and to ensure their endorsement of this candidacy.

This UNESCO candidacy is the final phase of an integrated and purposefully conducted heritage strategy of research, protection and management, which should realise an enduring and sustainable anchoring of First World War heritage. ■



Moveable and intangible heritage

The commemoration initiatives relating to moveable and intangible heritage will be closely monitored by the Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media and the Agency for Arts and Heritage.

A number of important recognised museums, such as the In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, the Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 in Zonnebeke, the Talbot House in Poperinge, and the Yser Tower, as the Memorial of the Flemish Community in Diksmuide, are located in the front line area.

Recently, the Centre for Flemish Architectural Archives, in collaboration with the province of West Flanders and the Flemish Community, started a project that, based on archival research, aims at more clearly mapping out and disseminating information on the reconstruction works in the Westhoek

The Flemish Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage (FARO) is organising a project around daily life in 1913 (on the eve of the outbreak of the War). On the basis of the cultural heritage, other initiatives can also be developed that place the First World War inside a broader perspective and do not confine themselves to just the front lines.

The cultural heritage covenants with individual municipalities or intermunicipal partnerships can constitute an excellent medium for opening up existing cultural heritage within the context of the centenary commemoration of the First World War.

The Last Post Association and the City of Ypres have submitted an application to the Flemish authorities to have the Last Post Ceremony, which takes place daily under the Menin Gate in Ypres, included in UNESCO's list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. ■



Education

On 22 April 2009, the Flemish Parliament adopted an Act that introduced new attainment targets and developmental objectives at the primary and secondary education levels.

Two of these new cross-subject attainment targets at the secondary level are oriented towards the themes of tolerance and gaining insight into the role of conflicts, hence contributing to what we call 'peace education' and 'remembrance education'.

These attainment targets read as follows:

- the students draw lessons from historical and contemporary examples of intolerance, racism, and xenophobia
- the students present examples of the potentially constructive and destructive role of conflicts.

Within the educational sector, the Special Committee for Remembrance Education will assume a key role in the commemoration of the Great War Centenary. ■

WW I: agriculture and the provision of food supplies

The Agriculture and Fisheries Policy Area, in collaboration with the Interfaculty Centre for Agrarian History (ICAG) at the Catholic University of Leuven (K.U. Leuven), intends to start an innovative research study on the subject of agriculture and the provision of food supplies before, during, and shortly after the First World War.

Themes in this frame are: the evolution of the agricultural policy during this period and the impact of the war on it (also on the question of the international food situation), the state of the Belgian fishing fleet, the war's impact on the (farm)landscape and the farmsteads in the front line area, and their reconstruction.

The findings of the scientific study will be used to initiate a number of public outreach activities (in the Westhoek and around Flanders), this in collaboration with diverse partners. Likewise, a number of concrete end products will be achieved, such as lectures, publications, a biking and walking tour, and educational packages for distribution in secondary schools. ■

Flemish Public Broadcasting Company

VRT

In the run-up to 2014, VRT will each year, during the month of November, devote special programming to the First World War, on radio as well as on TV and online. For instance, the ceremonies in commemoration of Armistice Day will be broadcast directly from Ypres. In addition, one of the channels, CANVAS will each year broadcast two episodes of the documentary series 'Niets is Zwart-Wit – Nothing is Black-White', wherein different aspects of the First World War will be analysed. Many other radio and television programmes also intend to provide broad coverage of the commemoration of the First World War. Thus VRT will for example take part in Parade's End, a BBC/HBO series, which takes place during the First World War and which is for a large part filmed in Flanders.

Special attention is directed to the digital archiving and the release of historical interviews with war veterans and other direct witnesses. In addition to the already recorded interviews, the project 'De Allerlaatste Getuigen - The Very Last Witnesses' has been able to assemble more than one hundred interviews with centenarians who, as children, experienced the First World War at first hand.

Also during the period 2014-2018, VRT will with a generous variety of thematic radio and TV programmes pay close attention to the commemoration of the First World War. As an example, a ten-episode fictional series is to be produced for TV station 'Een', entitled 'In Vlaamse Velden – In Flanders Fields'. ■



Local context

The project's aim is also to organise a commemoration of the First World War, which benefits from the widest possible support and which involves launching Flemish and smaller local initiatives. Because every village and every city has its history and its link with the Great War.

In almost every Flemish municipality where fighting took place, memorials, remembrance sites, and museums were erected after the War. Also, war victims lie buried in many municipal cemeteries. These localised events and the heritage and the memory of these local occurrences remain just as relevant and retain their unique value until this very day.

At this time, it is primarily the province of West Flanders that is actively engaged in the preparation of the centenary commemoration of the Great War. At provincial level a policy steering group has been established and a programme secretariat has been set up in collaboration with Westtoer, with offices in Diksmuide. A budget of five million euros has been earmarked for the cultural-tourism access to

First World War heritage. Next to this the Province will develop a cultural programme in every commemorative year, from 2014 until 2018, with various events, which will take place under the 'Gone West' denominator. These programmes will last several weeks and will take place during important historical commemorative events.

Yet, it should not be forgotten that battles were likewise fought in other provinces, and numerous cities and municipalities intend to commemorate their individual histories as they unfolded during the First World War. Antwerp, Aarschot, Dendermonde and Leuven will all be preparing commemorative programmes. The network of Martyr Cities, i.e., Aarschot, Dendermonde and Leuven, are preparing a joint programme in collaboration with the Walloon cities of Andenne, Dinant, Sambreville and Visé. These cities will be joining forces to commemorate the first few days of the war in the summer of 1914.

Regional and local stakeholders will also contribute to the commemoration. ■

Colophon

Photography

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Translation

Government of Flanders - Department of the Services for the General Government Policy

Printing

Franky Van Varenberg, Government of Flanders - Digital Printing Office Team

Graphic Design

Guy Adam, Government of Flanders - Digital Printing Office Team

Publisher

The Government of Flanders - Project Office The Great War Centenary (2014-18)

Catalogue number

D/2011/3241/265

Publication

November 2011

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The Great War Centenary (2014-18)

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