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Belgium remembers! Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the First World War. Nieuwpoort and Ypres, 28 October 2014

On 28 October, Belgium will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Yser and the First Battle of Ypres in Nieuwpoort and Ypres, with ceremonies attended by the King and Queen, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and numerous foreign heads of state and government. This solemn official event, and the symbolic artistic and lyrical performances accompanying it, will be themed around the refusal to surrender, the flooding of the Yser plain, and honouring Belgium's Soldier King. Belgium remembers!

Late October 1914. The order is given to flood the Yser plain to halt the enemy's progress on the Belgian front. This was the start of the Battle of the Yser and, a few kilometres south, the First Battle of Ypres. Belgian, French and British soldiers fought from their trenches to repel the invasion...

The First World War (1914-18) transformed the history of Belgium and the world. During this conflict, which saw dozens of countries fighting on Belgian soil, the courage shown by the Belgian people had a mobilising effect for others and bore witness to the importance of international cooperation. Although the last of those to have lived through the hostilities are no longer with us, this war remains etched in Belgium's collective memory.

National commemoration

The national commemoration ceremony will take place on Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at 3 p.m., at the King Albert I Monument in Nieuwpoort. This memorial, which has just been renovated, was erected in 1938 to commemorate the King's role in the First World War, and most particularly his decision to stay with the troops and defend his country's soil during the Battle of the Yser. The ceremony will be attended by the King and Queen, representatives of all levels of Belgium's government, and delegations from numerous countries all over the world.

The King will inspect the troops and give a speech. A film evoking the First World War made by the Ministry of Defence will then be shown, followed by speeches by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French Minister of Defence Jean-Yves Le Drian, which, along with the United Kingdom, will represent Belgium's partner countries for this commemorative event. The ceremony will feature artistic and lyrical performances and will end with the King laying flowers, a minute of silence followed by a cannon volley, and the European and Belgian anthems.

At 5.30 p.m., a Last Post ceremony will be held at the Menin Gate Memorial, which is dedicated to the soldiers of the Commonwealth. It will be attended by the King and Queen, various heads of state and government, and Belgian and foreign dignitaries. Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel will give a speech and, after a minute of silence and a moment of reflection, young people will read out poems written by soldiers. A wreath will be laid, then a shower of poppies and a musical performance will close the event.

Follow the ceremonies in Nieuwpoort and Ypres

As the space available is very limited, the general public will not be able to take part in the ceremonies, but they will be relayed to the public on giant screens in the Kaaiplein in Nieuwpoort-Stad and the Market Square (Grote Markt) in Ypres. They will also be broadcast on VRT (Canvas).

In addition to the activities taking place on Ypres' Market Square, a new work by Wim Mertens, composed specially for the commemorations, will be performed in Ypres cathedral at 8.30 p.m. in the presence of the King and Queen. The general public can attend the concert free of charge. Tickets must be collected in person from the Ypres tourist office, upon presentation of an identity document. More information can be found on the [Ypres tourist office website](#).

Publicity campaign

To get the whole of Belgium involved in this commemoration, the FPS Chancellery of the Prime Minister has launched a publicity campaign under the motto *Belgium remembers*. Advertisements are being broadcast on television and on the radio, while posters are on show in airports and railway and metro stations. You can find more information on the website www.be14-18.be.

Further national commemorations

On 11 November 2018, we will be commemorating the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Armistice in Brussels. Theme: the end of war, the return to peace and reconstruction. This will be a time for celebration. It will be the last of the three national ceremonies, following on from the commemoration of the start of the First World War in Liège on 4 August 2014 and the ceremonies in Nieuwpoort and Ypres on 28 October 2014.

For further details on the programme of the official events, please see the website www.be14-18.be.

For further information:

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