

Flanders Peace Field – press conference 25/1/12

Dear Excellencies and other honoured guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As you heard from the Open Stadium representative, Peace Village and Belgian football, supported by different national and international personalities, have a truly ambitious project in mind.

Personally, I was touched by the Flanders Peace Field project from the first time I heard from it. I'm very interested in what happened in our regions during the First and the Second World War. Why? Inter alia because of the lessons we have to draw from these periods and which we have to pass on to the next generations.

A particular lesson we get from the Christmas Truces is that Football is NOT war, despite of what some people say! On the contrary, football connects people, football overcomes differences, football strengthens people and football can be an amplifier on the path to a better world.

Whether one is a fan of the game or not, everyone acknowledges the power of this sport, that it moves and touches a lot of different people. It is therefore our responsibility as a football institution to use our strength and societal impact in favour of our citizens. We have to make and actively support the framework which allows a wide range of actions and projects empowering people of all backgrounds. These can be run or amplified by federations and clubs big and small. And these can be developed on a wide range of topics such as healthy lifestyle, employment and capacity building or integration and empowerment. Not the least topic on which sport can make a difference is education, in particular peace education towards large audiences, as is the case in our Flanders Peace Field project.

For your information, our supported framework, our social representative is Open Stadium, an organisation, which we further intend to strengthen. After all, a better societal embedded Belgian football and a fair social return on public investment in football is at stake.

I would like to conclude by launching a public plea, a call for support. The Flanders Peace Field project is a positive project with a large potential. In order to realise this potential I would strongly like to invite in particular the Belgian football audience, affected organisations and enterprises to join our project.

From 2014 'football is respect' or 'football is peace' must be the generally accepted motto!

Thank you for your attention.