



24 June 2014 - Friday June 20 marked the celebration of the World Refugee Day. As the world's attention is firmly focused on the World Cup in Brazil, Belgium hosted its own football cup.

A [mini-football competition](#) , organized in front of the Brussels North train station under booming music and a steady stream of curious fans, was intended to combine the people's love of football, to the necessity to play fair with refugees. This event was meant to draw attention to the 51 million displaced persons, refugees, living today.

The teams consisted of players from NGO's, focused on helping migrants, as well as members of the UNHCR of Belgium and Luxembourg, as well as migrants themselves. During the competition, eight teams faced off, fuelled to action by vuvuzelas distributed by the organizers in 44 stations all around Belgium.

On the same day, [UNHCR](#) they released the [2014 Global Trends Report](#) on the global situation of refugees which shows a massive increase in refugees around the world.

“New conflicts, like in Syria and CAR, are adding themselves to those not yet resolved in Somalia and South Sudan. This situation explains why there are more than 50 million refugees today, the first time we've had so many since the second World War”, stated Frederik Smets, UNHCR employee.

Despite such concerning numbers, Mr. Smets remains optimistic: “We organized this event because we want to demand an equitable treatment of refugees as demanded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Our event shows that the refugees themselves, the NGO’s and the official institutions can work together to attain this goal”

“Over 85% of refugees are welcomed in developing countries. It’s important to note that the countries bordering conflict see the largest influx of refugees. This puts a huge pressure on these countries, which need concrete support from the EU,” underlines Mr. Smets.

Radio personality Lisa Smolders lent her support to the action as the commentator for the matches taking place in Brussels. The plight of refugees is close to her heart, and her reminds people that: “If you walk in Brussels, you’ll meet many refugees, which like all of us need a peaceful haven.”

A number of employees and volunteers also distributed to the passers-by informational leaflets along with the vuvuzelas. The World Cup is the perfect occasion for this event. “If sometimes it seems hard to mobilise people, to generate empathy, this tournament is an opportunity to genuinely create a reaction” concluded Ms. Smolders.