

## EUBAM AND THE STATE BORDER GUARD SERVICE OF UKRAINE HOST INTERNATIONAL MINI-FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

By Matthew Taylor



**Odessa, 10 June 2010** - The world is going football mad. The first ever World Cup in Africa is about to kick off. In 2012, Ukraine and Poland will jointly host the European Championships.

If you're a big fan, this is great news. But even if you don't know Pelé's goal scoring record or the UEFA champions you can still enjoy a good game, or a good kickabout with friends. The international mini-football tournament between border services was exactly that; a good kickabout with friends.

Two days, with teams from the Moldovan and Ukrainian Customs and Border Guard Services, the Romanian border police, The Odessa Law academy, Odessa regional authorities, FRONTEX, Management of the Southern Regional Directorate of State Border Guard Service and EUBAM. Matches were played in two groups, play offs for all places took place after and a riveting 40 minute finale between the Moldovan and Ukrainian border guards ended with a penalty shoot out. Winning wasn't the point, playing was. But if you really want to know, the Ukrainians won.

*'The football tournament is about building trust and good relationships'* said Udo Burkholder, Head of EUBAM. *'Last years tournament helped build working relationships between Moldova,*

Ukraine and EUBAM and I'm delighted that experts from the EU are joining us this year' he added.

*"It's quite symbolic that our football tournament has been awarded international status and that the number of participating countries grows every year. Football is a team sport where it's important to develop not only one's own strategy but also to understand the playing style of all players on the pitch. Through such games we learn to better understand each other. The fact that we are holding such a sport competition between border services is evidence that borders unite both countries and people"* said the Chairman of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine  
Mykola Lytvyn.

The tournament took place at the Lyusdorf Sport and Recreation Centre, Sovinion district, Odessa and was jointly hosted by the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and EUBAM. The Mission and the border guards and customs services of Moldova and Ukraine have held a number of such trust building exercises to date, including a women's volleyball tournament and the first international mini-football tournament in 2009.

On the pitch, loyalties can be fierce and some blood nearly boiled. But a good kickabout always brings people back together. Backs were slapped and hugs were shared.

Awards were given to the best player, best goal keeper, the 'junior' and the 'veteran.' A friendly mini-tournament for border guard and customs chiefs, EUBAM senior management and regional leaders also took place as part of the festivities.

The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, partners in preparation, did an excellent job with the lavish opening and closing ceremonies. Anthems were played, flags were raised and parades marched. For those with civilian backgrounds, all this pomp and ceremony was something new, but all was neatly underpinned by respect.

The formality of the ceremonies was offset by troupes of young dancing girls who cartwheelled, ran, jumped and skipped their way across the grass between matches.

Vasyl Krasovsky, EUBAM goalkeeper and chief interpreter, was delighted to be back on the pitch.

*'It was extremely exciting to be back in the goalkeeper uniform, on the green pitch and in the team after more than 30 years of a football- less life! All this just made me feel at least 30 years younger'* He said.

Mr Krasovsky and many others suggested ways to make next year's event an even bigger success, and as a warm up for EURO 2012, the next tournament will continue to grow. Teams from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary may also join the kickabout.

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The opening ceremony

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