



# Focus on Ukraine

June 18 – 24, 2012





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## *I. Overviews of political events of the week*

June  
18

**The Prosecutor General's Office may declare a judicial medical examination of the continuing ailment of Yulia Tymoshenko,** First Assistant Prosecutor General Renat Kuzmin said in an interview for the Komersant magazine. Kuzmin said this examination is imperative in order to determine whether the ex-premier can be present during investigation of the case of the murder of former MP Yevhen Shcherban. As Kuzmin stated, the PGO has sufficient evidence on the complicity of Tymoshenko in this crime.

June  
19

**The PGO does not have the right to assign a judicial medical examination of Tymoshenko in the case of the murder of former MP Yevhen Shcherban, defense attorney of the ex-premier Serhiy Vlasenko stated.**

Vlasenko said the ex-premier is merely a witness in the case, meaning that a medical examination is not stipulated by law.

June  
20

**The party headed by Anatoliy Hrytsenko Civic Position joined the united opposition For Batkivshchyna.** The united opposition is made up of five parties: Batkivshchyna (Yulia Tymoshenko), Front of Changes (Arseniy Yatsenyuk), the National Movement (Borys Tarasiuk), Peoples' Self-defense (Yuriy Lutsenko) and Civic Position (Anatoliy Hrytsenko). The leaders of these political forces are compiling a list for the parliamentary elections on the basis of Batkivshchyna.

June  
21

**The Kyiv Court of Appeals appeased the sentence handed down to former Minister of the Environment under the Tymoshenko government Heorhiy Filipchuk, who on April 5 was sentenced to 3 years in prison for abuse of power.** The court reduced his sentence to 2 years conditional and released the guilty from the courtroom. The day before information was revealed that the ex-minister caused UAH 1.5 mn in material damage to the state.

**The united opposition made up of 5 parties signed the Declaration on Guaranteeing Free and Fair Elections in 2012.** According to the document, the opposition obligated itself to compile a list in an open format, publish autobiographies of candidates for a seat in parliament, their income declarations, diplomas, details of citizenship, etc.

June  
22

**President Viktor Yanukovich signed the Law on Guarantees of Execution of Court Rulings, which Chernobyl victims and veterans of the Afghan war opposed.** Even though the government assures that the latter will not suffer from a cut in pay, the victims claim that the law violates the constitutional rights of citizens to defense in a court of law.

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## **II. Analytical Reference**

### **✓ Foreign policy**

#### **EURO 2012: MORE THAN FOOTBALL?**

**On June 19 the Group D stage of the European football championship in Ukraine and Poland closed with two matches. At this point, preliminary conclusions can be drawn regarding the impressions that Ukraine had on fans before the playoffs kick off. In many respects, the championship was beyond the expectations of European fans, which changed their attitude towards Ukraine on the international arena.**

*How did Ukraine greet its foreign guests?  
Will EURO 2012 change the policy of the European Union  
towards Ukraine?*

### ***Not such a dreadful devil after all...***

The information backdrop on which the final phase of preparations for EURO 2012 was held cannot exactly be called favorable for Ukraine. On the one hand, a number of officials of the European Union and its member countries stated their intention of boycotting the Ukrainian leg of the EURO 2012 championship in protest of the imprisonment of ex-premier Yulia Tymoshenko.

On the other hand, many European countries placed materials in the mass media containing negative assessments of Ukraine's readiness to host the championship and the general situation in the country. The objects of criticism were extremely varied from a poorly developed infrastructure, exorbitant prices for accommodation, the low level of security, the freewill of law enforcement bodies, the rage of sex services and even domestic racism. Be that as it may, while the first

blow to Ukraine's image was not dealt, the second one was considerably weaker after European fans were convinced with their own eyes that the reproaches of their mass media were totally justified.

It is glaringly obvious that Ukraine faces a number of problems that prevent it from hosting a tournament of such status at the level of western and even central European countries. The horror stories about Ukraine in the international mass media that gave a scare to European football fans was in many cases highly exaggerated and in some cases drummed up. The personal experiences of many European fans who noted that Ukraine turned out to be a much friendlier place of accommodation than they had expected are testimony to this fact. Indeed, there were very few cases of being beaten up or robbed, the police basically did not demand any bribes for



unjustified breach of the law and Ukrainians were hospitable and helped out foreign guests when necessary.

The most illustrious myth that was dispelled during the first week of EURO 2012 was the issue of racism in Ukraine. The experience of visits of English football fans to Kyiv and Donetsk demonstrated that this problem was artificially blown out of proportion by certain British media. As a result, English football fans demonstratively marched to the Donbas Arena stadium as a show of protest against accusations of racism that the former captain of the English national team had voiced earlier.

Clearly, it is hard to deny that the level of readiness of Ukrainian host cities of the football championship was far from ideal. The main

### ***Everyone has their merit***

The first half of the European football championship gave the international community, including the EU, sufficient grounds to once again reconsider its attitude towards Ukraine. The most obvious conclusion is that the leadership of a country should be distinguished from its people. The government made all efforts to tarnish the country's reputation and threaten the hosting of EURO 2012, thus forcing Ukrainian citizens to renew the trust of Europeans in Ukraine, a task which they brilliantly fulfilled. Given this, there are solid objective grounds for the EU slightly altering its policy towards Ukraine.

On the one hand, the actions of the government in the sphere of public administration, the

problems were the poorly prepared camping grounds for fans, difficulties in orienting foreign fans due to the small number of directional signs, the law enforcers' poor knowledge of English, the relatively low level of service and overpricing of certain services.

At the same time, it must be understood that these problems were associated mainly with the insufficient professional and overly corrupted processes of preparations for the European tournament for which Ukrainian government authorities are responsible. Grass root Ukrainians, in turn, managed to show a high level of readiness for hosting a sporting event of such a massive scale.

supremacy of law and freedom of human rights must be further criticized and backed by the threat of sanctions. The recent statement of President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich that grossly ignored the presumption of innocence accusing ex-premier Yulia Tymoshenko of guilt in the murder of businessman Yevhen Shcherban prior to the start of court proceedings showed that pressure must be put on Ukraine's ruling elite.

Evidently, particular attention must be paid to the financial schemes of the current ruling power as many of them are effectuated through European countries. Besides that, investigation into cases of corruption and money laundering



during preparations for EURO 2012 could be a convenient opportunity to not only learn about the scale of embezzlement of funds of Ukraine's national budget and imposing sanctions on the organizers and executors of the even for the misappropriation of UEFA money. Such measures could become a much more effective way of influencing the Ukrainian government to force to reconsider its domestic policy.

On the other hand, the EU must seriously consider the possibility of creating the most favorable conditions for Ukrainian citizens to visit the member countries of the union. This strategy has several aspects. First of all, this is easing visa procedures with Ukraine by simplifying procedures for the issuing of visas to individuals with a positive visa history, reducing the list

of documents required to obtain a visa, cancelling visa or consular fees, etc.

Secondly, this entails expanding existing educational programs and creating new ones, internship and exchange programs in which as many Ukrainians as possible can participate, in particular representatives of the younger generation.

Thirdly, arranging cooperation at the level of non-government organizations and engaging them in different forms of activity of the EU, as a result of which representatives of Ukraine's NGO sector would be able to strongly promote the idea of European integration in Ukrainian society and force the Ukrainian government to factor in the aspirations of its country's citizens.

### **Conclusions**

*So, the first weeks of EURO 2012 in Ukraine showed that despite the inadequate level of readiness to host the football tournament at the highest possible level, most of the problems that foreign fans were concerned about were artificially blown out of proportion or were simply drummed up. The hospitality of Ukrainian citizens that were forced to patch the image holes created by the government fostered this positive aspect. Accordingly, in conditions of the freezing of the process of Ukraine's integration into Europe this major sporting event in Ukraine and Poland could be a reason for the EU to reconsider its policy regarding its eastern neighbor. It appears that the basis of this should be differentiating the government and the people of Ukraine and devising two separate strategies for each of the target audiences.*