

“IT and AI could make the steel industry more environmentally friendly and efficient” - Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of Metinvest Group, at the G7 meeting on green transformation

On 13 March, Verona hosted the first meeting of B7 Italy 2024, organised by Confindustria, an association of Italian businesses that aims to facilitate dialogue between the business world and the governments of the G7 countries. More than 250 guests participated in the conference, including CEOs and other business leaders from G7 countries and international companies, as well as Adolfo Urso, the Italian Minister of Enterprises and Made in Italy.



Participants discussed the main factors affecting industrial productivity and competitiveness in a fast-paced, global economy. Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of Metinvest Group, was among the speakers on the main discussion panel. In his speech, he addressed the specifics of steel production in Ukraine during the war, the Group's vision of the European Green Deal and the transformation of business processes in heavy industry through the use of new technologies. Below are the key takeaways from Yuriy Ryzhenkov's speech:

Managing a business during the war

— I am from Ukraine and spend most of my time in heavy industry. The last time I looked at digital technology was when I graduated from university 27 years ago as a software engineer. Usually, managers don't care about technology, they care about results. In recent years, we have cared about results and didn't notice the technology. Just to give you a few examples. In 2021, Azovstal outperformed all its competitors in terms of process efficiency due to AI and analytics. Our specialists, using augmented reality, could perform maintenance two times faster than most of our competitors in nearby countries. The “space” computer-based vision system we introduced set new standards for the quality of our products. Finally, an internal data management and communications system allowed us to run the company seamlessly in the middle of the fiercest war in Europe since World War Two. So, there is definitely a place for digital technologies to make a breakthrough in traditional industries. And our company is a very good example, despite everything that has happened to us recently.

Implementation of the Green Deal

— We've heard today, and we will hear more in the future, politicians talking about the Green Deal. It is on almost every political agenda, not only in Europe but also in the US, China and all over the world. The steel industry is at the top of this agenda as a key actor in the implementation of green technologies. But at the same time, the steel industry is very traditional, with technologies developed a long time ago, and now you cannot make a major breakthrough. You can only gradually improve the system. And when it comes to gradual improvements, this is where digitalisation and AI come in. This is what can make the industry not only greener, but also more efficient and competitive. For this reason, many heavy industry executives are now talking not only about a green transition, but about green and digital transitions for our industries.

IT specialists in the steel industry

— The path towards the Green Deal is not going to be easy. We are short of IT specialists to work on the transformation. Only five to seven years ago, we were looking for steel engineers to train in IT. Now it's the other way around. We're developing IT specialists that we then teach about the steel industry. And these are the people who will be leading the green and digital transition of our company. This is happening right now, and it is here to stay. We will all be part of this transition, and we better be up to the challenge.

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