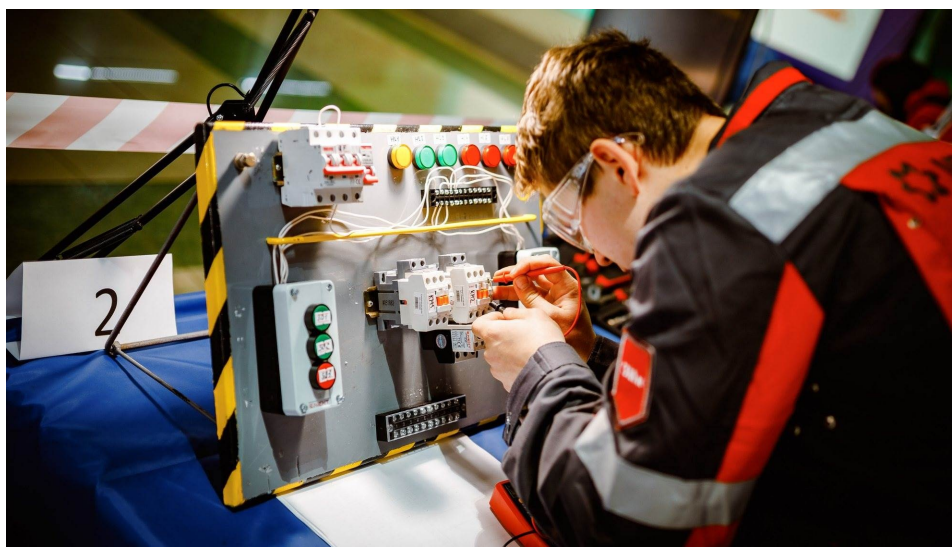


Forbes Ukraine: Metinvest Invests Nearly UAH570 Million in Education Development in Ukraine

IT companies such as SoftServe, GlobalLogic and Genesis; major energy and metals holdings from Rinat Akhmetov's empire, including DTEK and Metinvest; and regional businessmen like Pavlo Stutman have joined the grassroots reform movement in higher education in Ukraine. This article summarises a Forbes Ukraine feature on why businesses are taking the initiative.



The scope of assistance includes scholarships for students and teachers, updated curricula, laboratory upgrades, and even constructing universities and institutes.

The reason for corporate involvement is largely pragmatic – improving education quality to cultivate future employees – and, less frequently, to support fundamental science, which underpins R&D in knowledge-intensive sectors.

Forbes has examined the tools businesses are employing to improve higher education in Ukraine. Below are the findings.

An investment in the future

In March 2021, Metinvest announced plans to establish its own technical university. Slides obtained by Forbes at the time depicted a modern high-rise designed by renowned Dutch architect Hiroki Matsuura.

Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of Metinvest, commented as follows in 2021 about why the Group needed a university: “The inflow of strong engineers has decreased. Bright minds are leaving the country en masse.”

While the project began in Mariupol, the war and subsequent occupation of the city altered its course without halting it. Oleksandr Povazhnyi, the rector of the university, stated: “It is impossible to destroy our dream.” By September 2022, the university had commenced operations in Zaporizhzhia.

Metinvest Polytechnic now operates without its own dedicated building, using laboratories established at Metinvest's enterprises in Zaporizhzhia, Kryvyi Rih and Kamianske, as well as premises in Kyiv.

The university offers bachelor's, master's and postgraduate programmes across 34 disciplines, including metallurgy, mining, programming and business analysis. Since 2022, over 1,000 students have enrolled in classes conducted both in-person and online.

Additionally, around 700 people have completed short-term professional development courses. The university also celebrated its first cohort of 143 master's graduates this year, most of whom are Metinvest employees.

Povazhnyi explained: “Our goal is for graduates to be workplace-ready from day one, equipped with practical

skills.” Academic programmes are tailored to meet business needs.

To align more closely with these needs, Metinvest Polytechnic has created academic councils for seven fields: metallurgy, mining, occupational safety, environmental protection, production and software automation, business analytics and business process management. Each field is overseen by a Metinvest supervisor, such as the IT director, ensuring students learn from real-world case studies.

Rinat Akhmetov is not the only Ukrainian businessman who has established a university. Since 2017, the Kropyvnytskyi Institute of Economics and Technology has been run by the Elworthy Foundation, owned by Pavlo Stutman, co-owner of Hydrosila Holding.

The institute teaches specialties such as mechanical engineers, financiers, programmers and marketers.

Stutman stated that owning an institute is an atypical investment for a business. He noted: “When we engage in philanthropy, it is a one-off. An institute or vocational school is an investment in the future.” Companies take this step when there is no alternative. The businessman explained: “To remain competitive, we need specialists, primarily engineers.”

In 2022, Stutman’s company faced scrutiny from the Security Service of Ukraine due to prior operations in Russia. By October 2022, the company had severed all ties with Russia.

Metinvest Polytechnic’s annual operating budget is UAH64-81 million and it employs 137 staff. Total investment exceeds UAH500 million, including UAH290 million allocated for the development and construction of an academic building in Mariupol.

Stutman, however, does not disclose the amount of expenditures and investments.

Яким ЗВО допомагає бізнес

«Метінвест»	«Метінвест Політехніка» 24 професійно-технічні училища, проєкт World Skills Ukraine	513 55,4
ДТЕК	«Дніпровська політехніка»	>2
«ДТЕК Мережі»	Університет біоресурсів і природокористування України	≈10
«ДТЕК Нафтогаз»	Університет нафти і газу «Полтавська політехніка» Полтавський фаховий коледж нафти і газу	2,4
МХП	Смілянський технологічний фаховий коледж Вінницький національний аграрний університет Ладизинський фаховий коледж	2,4 2,8 2,3
Genesis	Києво-Могилянська академія Київський національний університет ім. Шевченка Київський політехнічний інститут Київська школа економіки	>40*
BGV Group Management	«Житомирська політехніка»	10
Interpipe	«Дніпровська політехніка»	1,2
Ajax Systems**	Національний авіаційний університет Київський національний університет ім. Шевченка Київський політехнічний інститут «Львівська політехніка»	н/д
GlobalLogic Ukraine**	Львівський національний університет ім. Франка Київський політехнічний інститут Києво-Могилянська академія Харківський національний університет радіоелектроніки	н/д
«Гідросила груп» та «Ельворті»**	Економіко-технологічний інститут ім. Роберта Ельворті Харківський політехнічний інститут	н/д
Enzym Group**	Український католицький університет	н/д

2,4 Сума, млн грн

*Загальна сума інвестицій компанії у всі її освітні проєкти.

**Компанії не розкрили суму інвестицій. Список не є вичерним

Джерела: дані компаній, сайти університетів

Three years later, IT professionals realised that this approach was not effective. The quality of education had remained virtually unchanged, while students hired by IT companies still required additional training.

This coincided with an opportunity to experiment. The Department of Computerised Systems and Automation at Lviv Polytechnic, where IT specialists from the cluster worked, was at risk of closure. One of the lecturers, Zenoviy Veres, informed Veselovskyi about this, and together they decided to seize the moment by launching an educational programme focused on the Internet of Things.

This programme became the first of 19 currently running across four universities in Lviv, in which over 4,500 students are enrolled.

Following this, a new strategy was adopted to reboot IT education: new study programmes were designed to compete directly with existing ones, Veselovskyi explained.

This collaboration inspired other businesses to independently invest in higher education. In 2019, the IT company SoftServe launched a study programme on artificial intelligence at Lviv Polytechnic.

Over the next six years, the number of SoftServe's programmes grew to nine, spanning seven universities in Lviv, Kyiv, Kharkiv and Dnipro. Before the full-scale war, these programmes served as a business tool to attract talent, according to Olha Dolia, head of educational partnerships at SoftServe in Ukraine.

While the IT industry is not currently experiencing the same level of talent shortages, companies continue to support higher education to build a pipeline of future talent.

According to SoftServe, around 1,000 people enrol annually as first-year students in programmes developed by the company in collaboration with universities.

Beyond educational programmes, businesses are also striving to improve university laboratories. For instance, DTEK has equipped laboratories in five universities, providing VR simulators that allow future power engineers to train virtually: whether by descending into a mine or practising the repair of a virtual substation.

The company is also funding the creation of a renewable energy laboratory at Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. This facility will feature batteries, solar panels, stand trackers and a weather station.

Teaching those who teach

Genesis has taken a different approach. Since 2019, the company has been supporting leading universities in Kyiv, including Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and the Kyiv School of Economics. In 2022, they expanded their efforts nationwide by launching internship courses that educators can integrate into their curricula.

These offerings include three digital courses: IT Product Creation and Development, IT Product Marketing, and Analytics in IT Products. Volodymyr Mnogoletnyi, co-founder of Genesis, explained: "The idea emerged when we realised that we could collaborate not only with top universities but also with students from regional institutions."

To reach students effectively, Genesis decided to engage professors who are eager to enhance their teaching disciplines. Oleksiy Nishchuk, education operations director at Genesis, stated: "We understood that they needed practical and up-to-date content." According to the company, more than 17,000 students across Ukraine have taken these courses and 1,000 professors are prepared to integrate them into their teaching practices.

Before integrating a Genesis course, educators must complete a two-week training programme and obtain certification, which grants them the right to incorporate the material into their classes.

Genesis is not the only company offering courses for educators. Another notable example is the leadership school for university managers, launched by Taras Kytsmey's SoftServe in collaboration with the Ukrainian Catholic University.

This year-long programme culminates with each participant presenting a project designed to bring about realistic changes at their university. Citing Kytsmey's idea, Dolia stated: "Department heads come from academia, and they need training in managerial skills to effectively lead their departments and operate in a market-driven environment."

Ajax Systems also involves educators in its internships. For instance, a Mechanical Engineering internship has been launched for the second time at the Instrumentation Faculty of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute. One lecturer working with Ajax developed a new elective course, which is now being introduced at the faculty.

Yana Babii, head of recruitment at Ajax, noted: "This creates an educational ecosystem: teachers enhance not only their own knowledge but also the quality of disciplines and programmes as a whole."

In addition to Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, the internship is also available at the Faculty of Radiophysics and Computer Systems at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. There, the focus is on hardware and radio frequency technologies.

Yegor Stadnyi, first vice-rector of the Kyiv School of Economics, highlighted that Ukraine's demographic and economic realities may leave universities without state funding. He remarked: "Sooner or later, the state will face a choice of where to invest in human capital. In pre-school? In secondary school? In vocational schools? Or in higher education?" In his view, the chances of higher education being prioritised are slim.

Without collaboration with businesses, universities face an uncertain financial future. Viktor Yevdokimov, rector of Zhytomyr Polytechnic, shared: "We have an ambitious strategic goal to phase out state funding. Together with the Supervisory Board, we are taking all necessary steps to achieve this in the long term."

Out of the 13 members of Zhytomyr Polytechnic's Supervisory Board, 10 are representatives from the business community, and the board is chaired by Gennadiy Butkevych, co-owner of the ATB retail chain.

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