

## “We Are Ready to Hire Everyone”: Metinvest Offers Training and Jobs for War Veterans

On 27 May 2024, Oleg Davydenko, head of corporate communications at Metinvest Group, spoke at the “Veteran’s Path from Military Service to Civilian Life” summit organised by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine. He discussed the main principles that the Group has applied when working with war veterans, as well as opportunities for their reintegration in the civilian world and the value that their military skills can offer to companies.



The event served as a platform to unite the efforts of the government, public sector, business, foreign missions and international organisations to support veterans, focus on their return to the workforce and help them to adapt to civilian life.

The summit highlighted the veteran’s journey from rehabilitation to full recovery and employment. The government’s approach offers veterans economic opportunities (education, employment programmes and starting a business), healthcare (psychological assistance and sports), as well as accessibility and transparency of services (e-services).

The primary aim of the event was to expand the donor group under the Ministry of Veterans Affairs for implementing veterans’ policy. It also included discussions about fundraising, educational initiatives and the development of a network of veterans’ spaces. In addition, it offered the opportunity to share experiences of reintegrating veterans into civilian life.

At the summit, Davydenko shared the Group’s experiences of working with veterans. In addition, a group of veterans joined representatives of the Ukrainian Ministry of Veterans Affairs and Ministry of Education, the UN Development Programme in Ukraine, Ukrasvydobuvannya, the International Organisation for Migration in Ukraine and IREX, participating in a panel discussion titled “Developing new skills and creating new opportunities for veterans as a key aspect of Ukraine’s recovery”.

Davydenko underscored that for Metinvest, the war started in 2014, when 1% of its employees were mobilised to serve in Ukraine’s defence forces. Currently, the number of mobilised employees has reached more than 9,000: every sixth employee of the Group. Around 500 people have already returned from the war.

He said: “Those who have returned need to adapt to civilian life, both for themselves and their families. This raises questions about what services are available and what employers should do for employees. We have onboarded a lot of lessons learned here.”

Over the past year and a half, the Group has been developing an ecosystem that allows veterans to return to work comfortably. It is based on several key principles. The first is responsibility. Leaders at all levels are responsible for working with veterans. The second is consistency. Rather than separate initiatives, Metinvest is implementing

ongoing psychological support projects, additional medical examinations, veterans' communities and more. The third principle is priority. The Group has conducted a survey of veterans to determine what kind of assistance they need.

Davydenko said: "Many people say that they would like to study and retrain. They want not only upward growth, but also development within the Group as specialists. More than half of them expressed this need, which is quite significant."

The fourth principle of building an ecosystem is fairness. He added: "We offer equal salaries, opportunities and growth to all employees. Perhaps this was the very first request from veterans: treat us as civilians, not as veterans. They do not need special conditions. This helps them to be part of the team and unite people."

Meanwhile, the Group has trained leaders about how to work with veterans and prevent conflicts in the team. It has also organised open lectures for teams covering sensitive topics for veterans.

In addition, Davydenko discussed how the Group helps its employees to apply the skills that they acquired in the war to civilian positions.

He said: "Hard skills mean that if a person has had experience with machinery, then after training and adaptation, they can work with certain types of mining and metallurgical equipment. Soft skills are about teamwork, leadership and management positions. These are skills we develop while working. The transition from military experience to civilian roles needs to be clear to HR and a company's leadership. This is a highly important process that takes time."

According to Metinvest's head of corporate communications, the Group strives to create all the conditions that veterans need to transition through the adaptation period, psychologically prepare for civilian life. The team also support them as they learn to apply their military experience to civilian life and use it as efficiently as possible.

Davydenko said: "For Metinvest, a veteran and their mental state are not a limitation but an absolute opportunity. A person with new knowledge and military experience is exactly what is needed in the industrial environment. We have 4,000 vacancies and are ready to hire everyone. We are waiting for everyone who is on the market and ready to work."

He specified that the Group provides employment opportunities in a wide range of engineering and technical specialities. If necessary, training can be provided, as well. Depending on qualifications, it can take three to six months or more.

Davydenko said: "As for inclusivity, there are obvious limits to how open industrial enterprises can be. A blast furnace shop is a difficult place for a person with certain disabilities. However, we need to work now to ensure that there are opportunities for remote employment, to use any digital tools that make it possible for people to work within the large system of a steel enterprise."