

## Prostheses for the unbreakable: How Rinat Akhmetov's Metinvest returns Ukrainians to lives without limitations

The war forever changed the life of Mykola Burlaka from Mariupol. Last year, enemy bombing caught him near Azovstal, where he worked as a repairman. Mykola was injured in the head and arm. When he tried to leave Mariupol, he was captured by Chechens. The fragments were removed from his head in hospital. And when gangrene set in, his arm was amputated. Mykola spent almost four months in captivity until the exchange of prisoners in Zaporizhzhia on Constitution Day.



Every war victim has their own painful story. Thousands of Ukrainians, both soldiers and civilians, need prosthetic limbs. And as the war continues, the number of such people will only grow. Often, those in need of prosthetics do not know where to start and where to turn for help. In addition, not everyone is able to pay for prosthetics on their own and they can cost tens of thousands of euros. That's why the Saving Lives humanitarian initiative of Metinvest Group, together with Protez Hub, decided to help the injured return to normal lives.

In the autumn of 2022, the partners launched a programme for prosthetics and rehabilitation for Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. Saving Lives and Protez Hub manage the organisational and documentary issues related to prosthetics. The programme includes preparation for using prosthetics, fitting of prostheses and follow-up care in Ukrainian clinics, as well as physical and psychological rehabilitation.

Thanks to his participation in the programme, Mykola Burlaka received a bionic prosthesis. "I do not know what I would have done, how I would have pushed for a prosthesis without this programme," the Mariupol resident said.

Currently, 47 people who have endured amputations are receiving prosthetics and treatment at various stages, and 12 of them have already received prostheses worth up to €30,000. Prosthetics are made by Ukrainian specialists in clinics in Lviv, Odesa, Dnipro, Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Ternopil and Poltava, which in turn helps them to develop their own expertise and facilitates the further maintenance of the prostheses. Prostheses, whether mechanical or electromechanical, including bionic or myotic, are selected individually, according to the needs of each person.

"We have expanded our humanitarian mission to overcome the fresh challenges of the war. We are introducing a large-scale prosthetics and rehabilitation programme for wounded veterans and civilians. After all, Ukrainians, to whom we owe our lives, deserve the best prosthetics. This year, we plan to involve at least 70 injured Ukrainians in the prosthetics programme and even open a special rehabilitation room in a hospital in Zaporizhzhia," Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of Metinvest Group, said.

An important part of helping people return to normal life is the launch of Ukraine's first online educational platform, the Knowledge Base: Protez Hub, for specialists in the field of limb prosthetics for injured people. Metinvest has provided over UAH 2.5 million to create the portal.

This knowledge base will allow doctors working with amputees to go step by step through all the stages of

prosthetic provision and recovery, from the moment of injury to returning home with a prosthesis and will help them better understand the needs of people with amputations.

At the same time, the training of medical staff is aimed at providing better services for users of limb prosthetics and related rehabilitation. The platform includes five courses: rehabilitation, for specialists in prosthetics and patient care. The courses consist of video lectures by 16 Ukrainian and foreign practitioners, experts and scientists. The lectures are accompanied by materials that users can print out and use daily. Upon the completion of the training, participants will receive certificates approved by the Ministry of Health of Ukraine.

Metinvest's next challenge is to help veterans reintegrate into society after returning from the war and find jobs. The Group already has ideas about how to develop these areas and is working on how to put them into practice.

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