

Why Someone Becomes the Main Pillar of Ukraine

This article by Tetiana Petruk, Metinvest Group's Chief Sustainability Officer, was published in the February-March 2024 print issue of the Forbes Ukraine magazine.



Mykola Tkachenko from Metinvest's Zaporizhstal defended Ukraine from the first days of the war in the Ukrainian armed forces' 110th separate mechanised brigade. He was demobilised after serving a year as a grenade launcher. He admits that adaptation to civilian life was extremely difficult. He went to the front as one person but returned as an entirely different one. The support of relatives and colleagues helped him to cope with insomnia, nightmares and PTSD. Triggers emerged: not to ask about the war experience, not to put pressure on the veteran, but to listen to them.

Such stories are our new reality. They are united by a common exhaustion, the main sign of the war's third year. People, businesses and foreign partners are exhausted. And only a personal approach to each person can overcome this.

Implementing this personal approach to every employee, especially veterans who are beginning to return to work, is becoming our goal. That is why we are developing an inclusive ecosystem to help veterans to reintegrate into normal life and work.

We focus on rehabilitation and additional medical examinations, as well as return, adaptation and retention programmes. Veterans will be able to undergo training or retraining. We are preparing teams for our heroes' return. We are also planning to create veteran communities to help our heroes to adapt to their new lives more comfortably.

Such strategies are needed at all levels, from the company to the state. People make the country, and unfortunately their numbers are shrinking, which means that everyone is important. As such, a personal approach should be applied to veterans, mobilised and home-front workers who provide for the needs of the front line, as we do at Metinvest. In particular, we retain positions for mobilised workers and pay for the treatment of seriously injured ones. We also help employees who have lost limbs in the war with prosthetics. A motivation system, one of the best in the industry, is available for those who continue to work.

Yes, the topic is extremely sensitive, but it is time for an honest conversation. Due to delays in Western aid, the

More women should already be involved now, where possible.

For example, at Metinvest, women are assuming historically male roles. At a coal enterprise, we have retrained and transferred the first 10 women to the position of underground machine operator.

Another thorny issue is men's draft deferral. This should also be approached in a balanced way, considering the contribution of each employee and company to the economy and budget. We must enable the home front to finance the Ukrainian armed forces. The time for simple solutions has passed. In a war of attrition, the winner will be the one who can best utilise resources, at both the front and the home front. Otherwise, the economy will simply go into the shadows.

The path of Mykola, a Zaporizhstal worker, is not only an example for a million defenders at the front. It is an example of the path that every business and the state as a whole will have to endure. From employees' mobilisation to their demobilisation and readaptation to life. People are the main resource for all parties along this path. Our partners will not be able to provide this for us.

As such, Ukraine needs to create a system with a focus on people, their needs and efficiency. This is the only way to deter the aggressor and save the state.

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