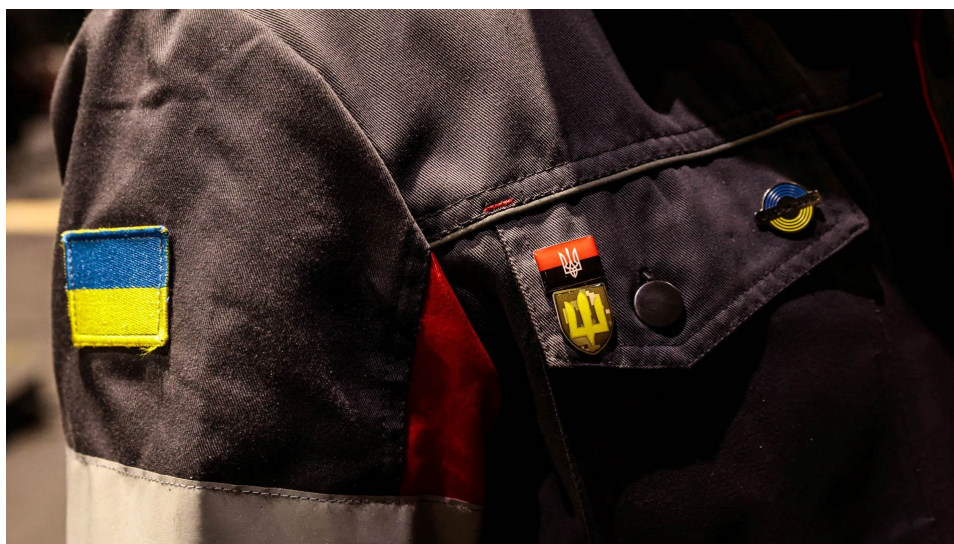


## How Veterans Can Help Tackle Ukraine's Skills Shortage: Metinvest's Experience (NV)

How big business is dealing with staff shortages, why veterans are becoming an asset to industry, and what opportunities Metinvest is offering those coming home from the war: as explored in NV magazine.

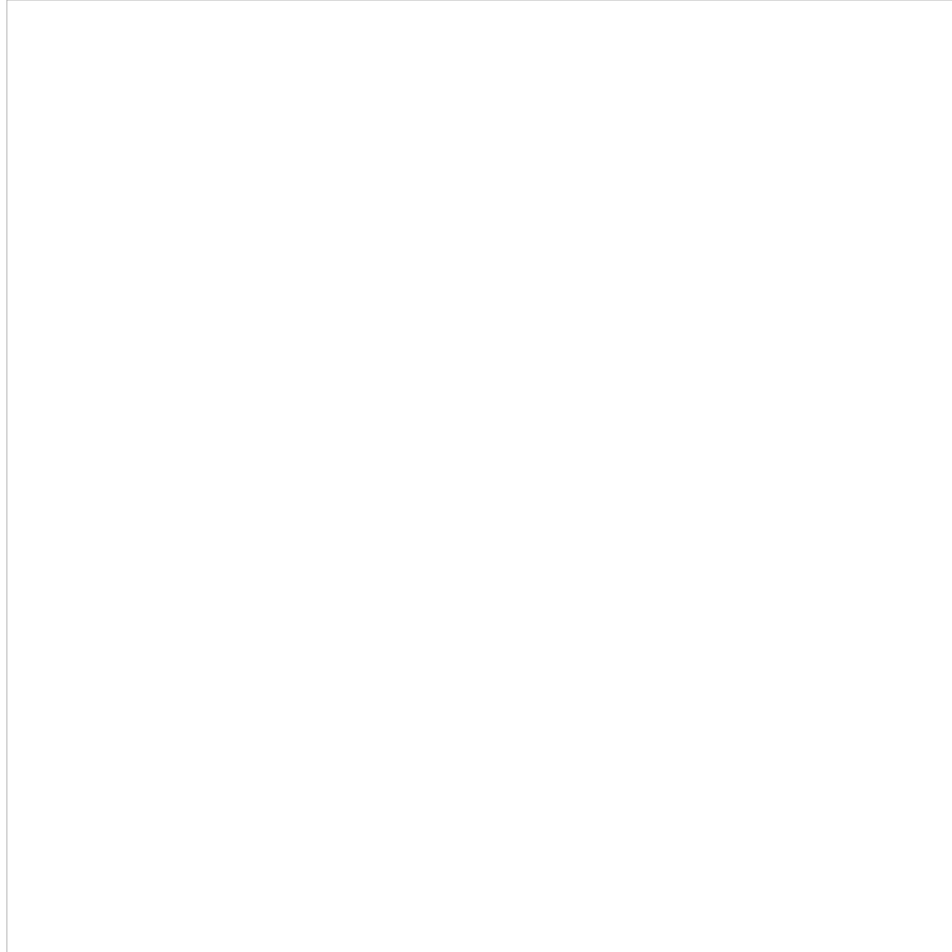


Despite the losses inflicted by the war, Metinvest Group remains the largest company in Ukraine's mining and metals sector. Over the decade-long Russian invasion, it has also become the country's leading employer of veterans.

### **The economy's foundations**

Experts agree: industry without metallurgy is like a building without foundations; it will not stand the test of time. Before the full-scale war, the mining and metallurgical complex accounted for about one-third of all industrial investment. In 2021 alone, enterprises in the sector invested almost US\$2 billion. Together with related industries, the complex generated roughly 10% of GDP. Even after heavy wartime losses, it still accounts for around 7%.

At present, the mining and metallurgical industry employs 60,000 people, or 360,000 including related sectors: roughly the population of a regional centre such as Vinnytsia. Before the war, the figure was twice as high.



Anatolii Kostiuk — war veteran, works at Zaporizhstal

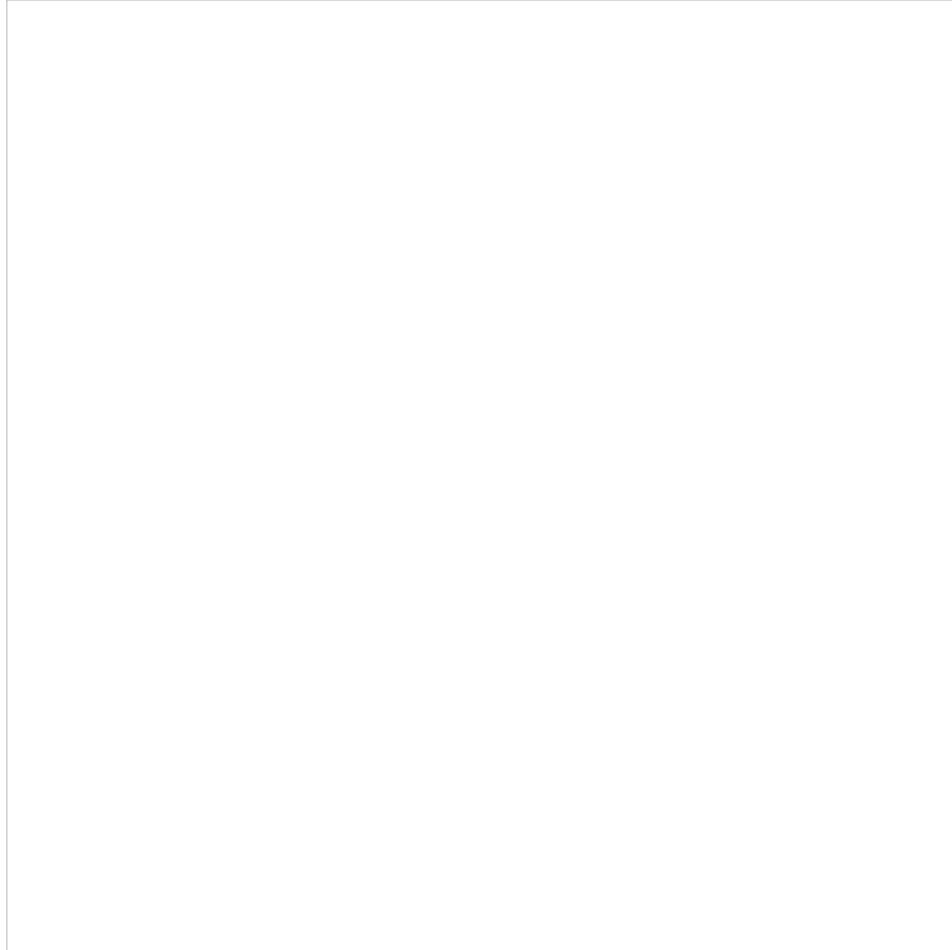
Although output has fallen during the Russian invasion, the sector remains one of Ukraine's largest exporters and taxpayers.

As a major player, Metinvest brings substantial foreign-currency earnings into the country (US\$3.9 billion in 2024, according to Forbes) and pays the highest taxes in the nation's metals industry (UAH20 billion in 2024, according to NV). This is despite being one of the companies hit hardest by the war. It has lost plants in Mariupol and Avdiivka, and suspended operations in Pokrovsk. Even so, the Group has increased production of high-grade commercial concentrate and pellets with increased iron content. It has also launched more than 100 new products during the three years of full-scale invasion.

#### **Risks in wartime**

Loss of assets is only one of the steel giant's problems. A key challenge is a staff shortage equal to 10-15% of its workforce, felt most acutely at sites close to the front line.

Mobilisation has intensified the shortfall. Since 2014, more than 10,500 Metinvest employees have served in Ukraine's defence forces: nearly one in five. Over 8,000 are serving today, while around 1,000 have already returned to work. Consultancy Korn Ferry ranks the Group as Ukraine's largest private employer of veterans, who now make up 20% of the workforce, including those still mobilised. Even so, its plants currently have roughly 4,000 vacancies.



Anatolii Uzlov — war veteran, works at Zaporizhstal

#### **Putting veterans first**

Metinvest believes that it can close the gap by employing veterans and is ready to hire everyone interested. It has created a comprehensive ecosystem to reintegrate former service personnel into civilian life and work, built on managerial responsibility, consistency and internal fairness. The Group is adapting business processes both for returning mobilised staff and for veterans recruited on the open market.

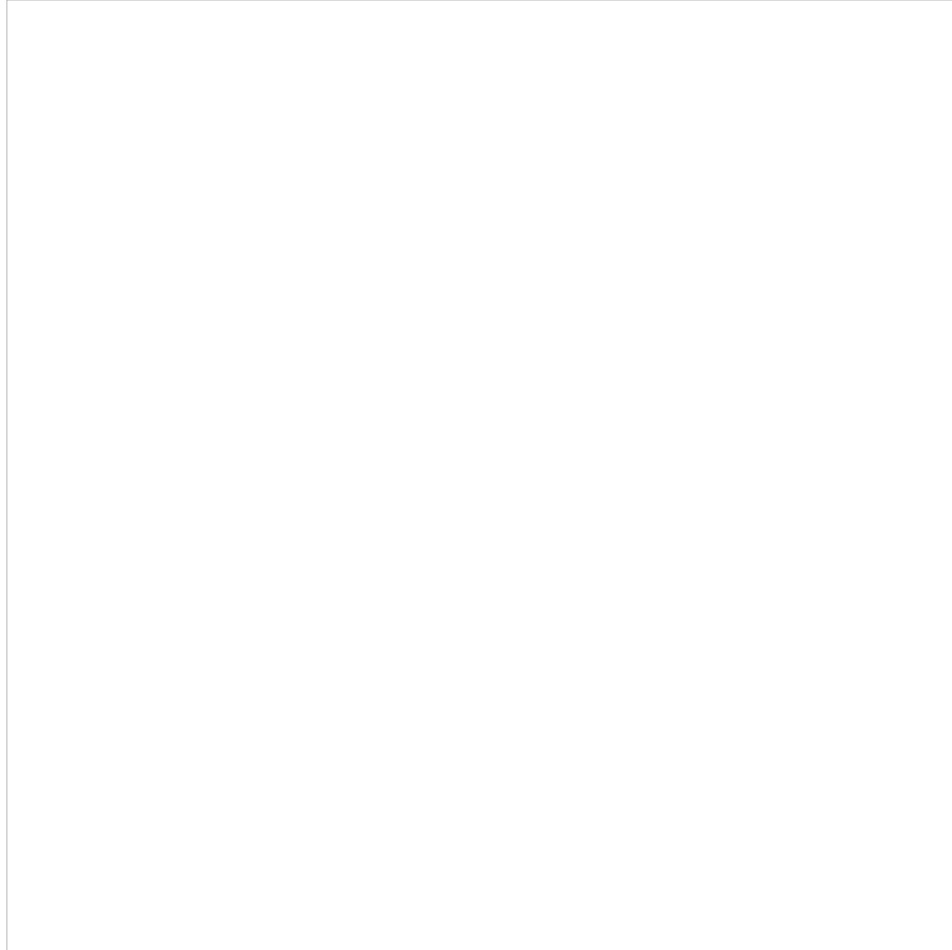
A veteran's journey with Metinvest starts the moment they are mobilised. The Group stays in touch and offers various forms of support to them and their families. Work with veterans spans training, psychological support, rehabilitation and communication.

Last year, Metinvest allocated US\$250,000 to veteran adaptation programmes and has budgeted US\$550,000 for 2025. The Group's largest projects focus on training, psychological support and children's recreation.

Metinvest notes that the main obstacle to employing veterans is their reluctance to return to regions near the front. Many would rather relocate westwards to be with their families or to areas safer than Zaporizhzhia or Kryvyi Rih. To encourage a return, for example, the Group reimburses displaced staff from Mariupol and Pokrovsk for a year's rent.

#### **Guarantees for former service personnel**

Metinvest has tailored programmes for different categories of employees. All mobilised staff retain their jobs. Those seriously wounded receive paid treatment and, if necessary, prosthetics, with a maximum payment of UAH500,000 in 2024. To date, around 140 defenders and civilians, including Group employees, have received prosthetic limbs and undergone treatment and rehabilitation. Veterans undergo compulsory medical examinations on recruitment and periodic checks by a psychotherapist.



Ruslan Sutkovyi — war veteran, works at Zaporizhstal

Metinvest offers all veterans training programmes linked to employment. A new trade can now be learned on site in just a few months rather than the previous six to nine. Instructors and shop managers provide the tuition.

Veterans can also upgrade their skills or gain a university degree free of charge at Metinvest Polytechnic, a mining and metals university where 23 veterans are studying this year.

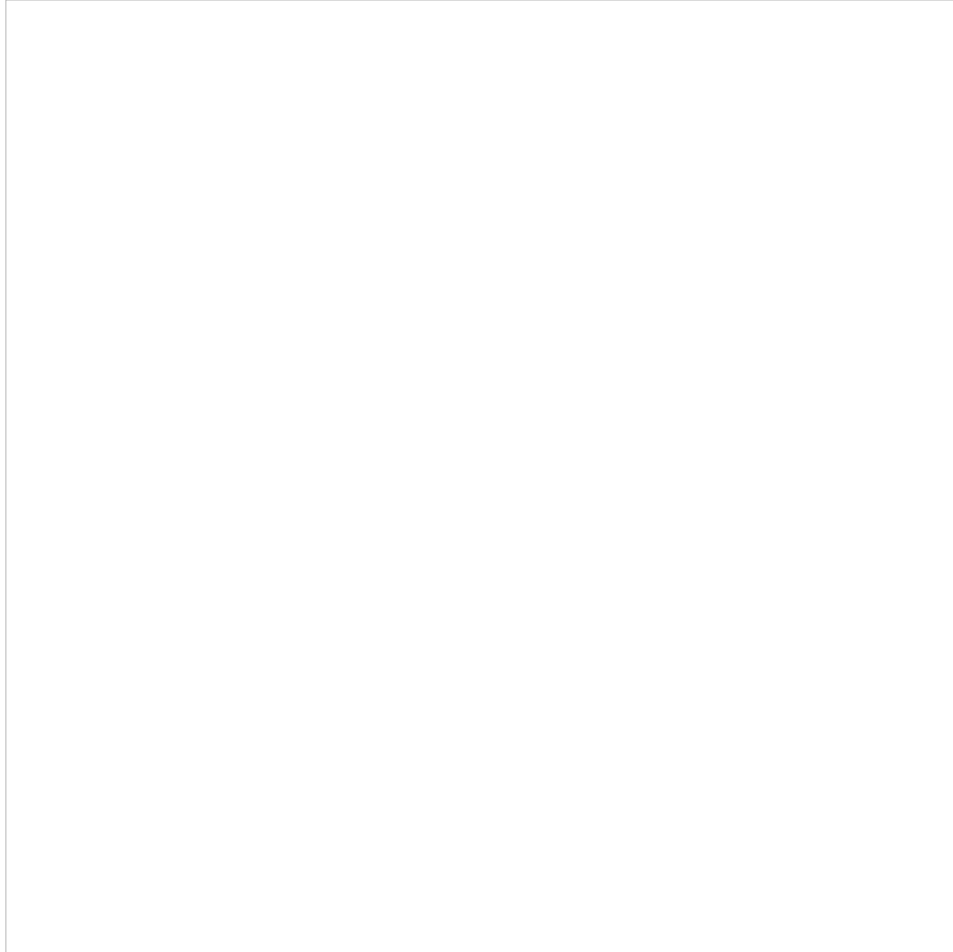
The Group has reinstated voluntary medical insurance programmes for employees who have served. During the first year after demobilisation, each veteran can take part in an extensive healthcare programme covering examinations and treatment.

In regions where it operates, Metinvest runs the Free Waves programme: swimming-based rehabilitation developed by Olympic medallist Denys Sylantiev.

The Group pays particular attention to PTSD and mental health more broadly. Psychological issues affect civilians too: more than 1,000 employees have been killed and over 1,600 injured. Metinvest has therefore launched two large-scale psychological support programmes that have already reached nearly 20,000 people.

One of them, Metinvest Together, is available to all employees and their families. For veterans and mobilised staff, it is supplemented by specialist rehabilitation courses and sessions with military psychologists. Investment in the service totalled more than UAH16.5 million in 2022-24, with a further UAH5.7 million budgeted for 2025. New projects for veterans' psychophysical rehabilitation are also planned.

Preparing teams for veterans' return is another priority. In partnership with the military, the Group has developed the Heroes Among Us course, already completed by over 12,000 employees. The course helps colleagues to understand the experiences and emotions that veterans have faced, their psycho-emotional state, and the difficulties of readjusting to civilian life. In addition, more than 1,000 managers have taken the Leadership During War programme.



Yurii Arkusha — war veteran, works at Kametstal

Metinvest also supports veterans' families, offering psychological rehabilitation and holidays in scenic parts of western Ukraine.

Veteran communities have been set up in Zaporizhzhia and Kryvyi Rih, providing supportive spaces where colleagues can meet and spend time together. The Group is also establishing veteran hubs in its operating regions, inviting specialists to advise on legal and other matters.

All these initiatives were designed on the basis of a 2024 survey of veterans' needs. Further surveys are planned so that the programme can evolve.

Metinvest values veterans for their teamwork, discipline and mutual support: qualities that the business community calls cross-functional interaction. The Group welcomes everyone with the energy and motivation to work at its facilities, rebuild Ukrainian industry and help to shape the country's future.

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<https://metinvestholding.com/en/media/news/yak-veterani-dopomozhutj-podolati-kadrovij-deficit-ukrainsjkiego-bznesu-dosvd-metinvestu-v-materal-nv>