

Finding a New Vocation. Why Metinvest Invests in Veterans Development — Delo.ua

The article is from the “TOP-100 – Ratings of the Biggest” magazine, in which Metinvest Group was ranked fifth in the “Best Employers of Ukraine 2024” rating and was recognised in a special category for “Best Veterans Adaptation Programme”.



The rating covered Ukraine’s 50 largest employers, and an expert jury determined the winners. The magazine’s editorial board and the business portal Delo.ua chose the top finishers in the special nomination categories.

Today, globalisation and the interdependence of markets have reached significant heights, but the full-scale war in Ukraine has become a profound challenge. Companies are facing issues that affect all aspects of their operations, including the disruption of supply chains, loss of markets, lack of resources and, most importantly, a shortage of human resources and risks to the safety of employees.

The human factor has become fundamental. The pool of issues that HR departments are dealing with today include mitigating the risks to the life and safety of employees, evacuation and relocation, as well as mobilisation and social security for those who defend Ukraine’s independence.

Metinvest Group rebuilt its business processes following the loss of Ilyich Steel and Azovstal in Mariupol and the suspension of operations at Avdiivka Coke. The Group’s enterprises in Italy, the UK and the US, which previously operated as part of the Group’s vertical integration, began to operate independently. European assets now purchase semi-finished products from local suppliers, while US operations have shifted sales to the domestic market and exports.

One of the challenges is safety. Some of Metinvest’s facilities are located near the front lines. The Group is doing everything possible to protect its employees: it has prepared bomb shelters, provided personal armour for those who cannot leave the production facilities during air raid alerts and organised tactical medicine training.

Supporting steel people

Before the start of the full-scale war, Metinvest Group employed 110,000 people, now it has 60,000. The staff shortage is still significant despite the reduced workload. The reasons include labour migration, mobilisation and people moving to safer regions and abroad.

The most sensitive topic is mobilisation. Currently, around 8,000 employees are defending the country, and almost 1,000 war veterans, including both ATO (Anti-Terrorist Operation) and full-scale war veterans, have already started working.

As a basic rule, all mobilised employees are retained in their jobs. Upon request, the Group provides employees with bulletproof vests, helmets and other equipment to help them defeat the enemy. Metinvest has gone further

and developed a comprehensive programme to support veterans. All business processes are being adapted in a consistent manner to accommodate the return of both former employees and veterans hired on the labour market.

Tetiana Petruk, Chief Sustainability Officer at Metinvest Group, said: “We build our work with veterans on the principles of responsibility, consistency and internal fairness. In particular, the Group is committed to applying a unified approach to incentive systems for all employees to unite rather than divide teams.”

Veteran professional development

In addition to social support, Metinvest focuses on the professional development of veterans. The Group conducted a survey of the target group: over 50% of internal respondents expressed a desire to undergo training or retraining. The Group also provides free retraining for veterans who, for whatever reason, cannot return to their previous positions. Retraining is available for almost all blue-collar professions, and 85% of the specialties are trained on-site. In addition, veterans are offered preferential conditions for admission to Metinvest Polytechnic, the first private university in this sector. Metinvest also has a professional adaptation programme for former military personnel, and a mentoring programme to help them update their professional knowledge and skills.

Metinvest has also implemented programmes to prepare managers and teams for the return of veterans. Teams are trained on how to welcome veterans, and managers on how to anticipate conflicts within the team. Also, the Group has introduced a Supportive Leadership training programme for managers at all levels. Around 23,000 Group employees have undergone training on how to interact with veterans. The training of teams is complemented with webinars and video lectures, to which families of military personnel are also invited. Metinvest is learning from the US and Israeli experience of working with veterans and implementing its own practices.

Another important area of work is attracting and hiring external veterans who have been demobilised.

Petruk said: “We are ready to employ thousands of veterans from the labour market. Metinvest has 4,000 vacancies in engineering and technical specialties. It takes three to six months or more to learn a new profession, depending on the desired qualification.”

Rehabilitation and psychological support

Rehabilitation of veterans is the most important issue for those returning to civilian life. Those who have been through combat have traumas that require long-term and expensive treatment. Psychological trauma, post-traumatic stress disorders, and depression require a comprehensive approach from psychologists and therapists who operate using modern methods of psychological support.

A comprehensive approach to physical and psychological rehabilitation helps them to recover and adapt to an active life in society.

For this reason, Metinvest has focused on this area. More than 100 people in need of prosthetics participated in a joint programme between Metinvest and Protez Hub. In October 2023, the Group was one of the organisers of more than 30 reconstructive surgeries on the face and neck for defenders wounded in the war. Among those operated on were two employees of Metinvest mobilised to the armed forces of Ukraine and four military personnel from the regions where the Group operates — Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro and Donetsk regions. The surgeries were provided to all the injured free of charge.

For psychological rehabilitation, Metinvest has developed a partnership programme with a psychological assistance centre that has recruited professional military psychologists and works with families of veterans or military personnel. Since March 2022, the Group's employees have been able to use the Metinvest Together! psychological support service. A total of 5,200 individual and group counselling sessions have been held.

Motivational component

Petruk said: “The main fulcrum and the primary value for Metinvest in these difficult times is the team. Thanks to people, we have been able to rebuild the business, survive and continue to move forward despite all the crises.”

Each business defines the pillars of its internal corporate policy. For Metinvest, it is mutual support. Employees know that they can count on the Group, just as the Group can continue to operate by relying on its strong people.

Metinvest has developed several tools to retain staff. This is one of the best employee incentive systems in the industry. Last year, the Group introduced an additional bonus for teamwork, and production employees were able to increase their income by 15%.

Metinvest supports internal promotion and transfers between enterprises, enabling employees to fulfil their potential. Petruk said: “It is important for us not only to prepare our employees for today's tasks but also to ensure their readiness for future challenges and opportunities within the company.”

Veterans support includes several key areas:

- Medical rehabilitation and additional medical examination of demobilised veterans and candidates for employment
- Psychological rehabilitation, which includes a stabilisation course, individual and group counselling with a psychologist for employees and their families, and individual counselling with a military psychologist as well as legal advice for mobilised and demobilised employees and their families
- Financial assistance for the families of deceased employees and those who lost their homes as a result of the war. Financial coverage of medical treatment for employees who have suffered serious injuries.

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