

NV: What Future Awaits Ukraine's Largest Steel Company? Green Transformation and Billions for Victory from Metinvest

The NV magazine has published a rating called "People of the Decade: 100 Ukrainians Moving the Country Forward", which opens with a column by Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of Metinvest Group.



The defenders of Azovstal become a key symbol of the decade

Today, Ukrainians are fighting for their future. The country should know the 100 people moving it forward.

Over the past 10 years, Ukraine has undergone a difficult path of growth. We have chosen the European course and achieved a lot in business, culture and sport. Our outlook has also changed. I consider this time particularly special because I took over Metinvest in 2013. Together with our team and the whole country, I experienced the turbulent events of the decade.

The formation of civil society, which has covered all parts of life, has helped to survive the most difficult times. The main heroes have been the military. We are proud that the defenders of Azovstal are among the 100 prominent Ukrainians who have shaped the direction of the country over the past 10 years. Their feat still inspires soldiers and civilians two years after the defence of Mariupol began. It also inspires business to continuously support the army. Metinvest's contribution is significant: the Group has become one of the largest donors to the Ukrainian armed forces, manufactures steel products, and supplies ammunition and equipment to the front line.



Yuriy Ryzhenkov
CEO of Metinvest Group

In 10 years, the best 100 will undoubtedly include not just military personnel, but also veterans. Working with them is one of the main tasks for business, government and civil society. We are ready to employ and retrain thousands of veterans. The Heart of Azovstal project, founded by Metinvest shareholder, is already rehabilitating former military personnel.

I believe that we will celebrate the next anniversary of NV in Ukrainian Mariupol and Donetsk, for the reconstruction of which we will spare no effort.

The magazine also published an extensive overview article on the Group's future.

The 10th anniversary of NV is about achievements, and this article is about the future. This is a good opportunity to look back at the history of the largest private company in Ukraine, Rinat Akhmetov's

Metinvest, and to hear about its expectations for the next decade.

This June, Metinvest will celebrate its 18th anniversary, and the last 10 years have been the most eventful for the Group, just like for the whole country.

Asset loss and rebuilding the business

Since the beginning of the war in eastern Ukraine, the head office of Metinvest has moved from Donetsk to Kyiv. In 2017, the Group lost several businesses, including Yenakieve Steel, Khartsyzk Pipe and Krasnodon Coal.

In 2022, the Russians destroyed the Group's two largest plants in Mariupol: Azovstal and Ilyich Steel. Avdiivka Coke also fell under occupation. This was a significant blow to Metinvest, which had invested heavily in production and social initiatives in Mariupol. In 2021, the Group invested over US\$1 billion in projects that make Ukrainian industry more competitive and environmentally friendly, a record. After the beginning of the siege of Mariupol, the vertically integrated Metinvest had a difficult time.



The Group began to rebuild: its plants in Italy, the UK and the US became independent businesses. Coal mines in the US have started selling products on the domestic and foreign markets. Rolling mills that used semi-finished products from Mariupol have found new suppliers.

The Group has rebuilt its logistics, selling its products in Ukraine and Eastern Europe. Following the reopening of the maritime corridor in August 2023, Metinvest increased the capacity of its mining and processing plants and steelmaking enterprises. In 2024, the Group completed its adjustment to the new reality. Ultimately, Metinvest has survived.

Assistance to Ukraine's armed forces and Ukrainians

Before the full-scale war, the Group allocated funds for social infrastructure, education, sport and culture. Now, it supports the army, provides humanitarian aid and takes care of employees, veterans and the safety of communities.

Despite all the losses, Metinvest is one of the largest donors to Ukraine's armed forces. The Group remains a pillar of Ukraine, having provided UAH6 billion to help the country and its citizens. This includes over UAH2.9 billion for the army's needs as part of Rinat Akhmetov's Steel Front military initiative.

Previously, Metinvest steel was used to build ships, bridges and iconic landmarks around the world. Now, this list has been expanded to include products for the front line that protect the lives of soldiers and preserve equipment. These include mobile "hideouts", armour for people and vehicles, fake artillery and "lancet catchers". The Group also purchases protective equipment and machinery for Ukraine's armed forces.

Metinvest has taken care of employees' safety by equipping bomb shelters and providing them with personal protective equipment. The Group has helped around 20,000 people to evacuate from dangerous regions. It has also provided various types of support, ranging from food and temporary accommodation to legal and

psychological assistance.

In addition, Metinvest supports communities in the regions where it operates and Ukrainians affected by the war. The Group's Saving Lives humanitarian initiative has already helped more than half a million people. It has delivered 4,200 tonnes of food, personal care products and other essentials to Ukraine. Hospitals have been provided with medicines and equipment worth UAH9.5 million.

Focus on veterans

Metinvest is one of the largest companies in Ukraine in terms of people mobilised to the army. Tragically, of more than 9,000 employees who have joined the armed forces during the war, 569 have been killed. Currently, around 8,000 employees are defending the country, and more than 500 veterans of war have already returned to work. A priority for Metinvest is to employ as many former military personnel as possible.

The Group is creating an inclusive ecosystem for integrating veterans into normal life and work. All business processes are continuously adapted to their return.

The main areas of work with veterans include rehabilitation and additional medical examination. We are also developing return, retention and adaptation programmes for former military personnel. They will be able to undergo retraining programmes, and a mentoring programme will help veterans to update their professional knowledge and skills. The Group also provides free retraining for veterans who, for whatever reason, cannot return to their previous positions. It also offers preferential conditions for admission to Metinvest Polytechnic university. In addition, the Group is working to set up an association and space for veterans.

Metinvest is also introducing 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 in the team. The Group is learning from the US experience of working with veterans of war and developing its own practices.

Production and exports

Even amid the war, Metinvest is managing to launch new products. During the first two years of the war, it was able to launch around 50 new products.

The Group also plans to set up slab production at Zaporizhstal and Kamet Steel for its European plants.

Metinvest is the largest exporter of steel products and iron ore in the industry. Before the war, 25% of its steel products were sold domestically, 46% in Europe and the rest on other markets. In 2023, a quarter of its products were sold on the Ukrainian market, and more than 50% were exported to Europe. Metinvest has said that Europe is its home market.



The opening of the Black Sea corridor has allowed the Group to expand its sales markets, and it now supplies products to Southern Europe, Turkey, Egypt and China.

In 2024, the Group expects to increase exports to North Africa and Turkey. The plan is to sell 25% of its products

in Ukraine, 50% in Europe, and the rest in other markets.

The growth in production capacity and exports has also had an effect on tax payments, which allow to meet the needs of the front line. Over the past two years, Metinvest paid more than UAH35 billion in taxes and duties to the Ukrainian budget, and in the first quarter of 2024, it doubled its year-on-year performance.

‘Green’ transformation and steelmakers of the future

The Group is confident that the next decade will be a period of innovation. Metinvest has not only managed to adapt to operations during the war but is also making plans for a carbon-free future. The Group plans to build a ‘green’ steel plant in Italy. The aim is to compensate for the loss of Mariupol production and increase the capacity of Ukrainian mining and processing plants.

Italy is an importer of steel products, and Metinvest will be able to significantly reduce this deficit. The Piombino plant will be one of the most technologically and environmentally advanced enterprises. It will become a pilot project for the future ‘green’ transformation of the Group’s enterprises in Ukraine. The raw materials will be supplied from the Kryvyi Rih iron ore facilities, which produce high-quality iron ore that can be used to make direct reduced iron. The Group expects the construction to take two to three years.

Metinvest’s ‘green’ strategy also includes the modernisation of the Kamet Steel and Zaporizhstal steel plants in Ukraine, while iron ore facilities are to be converted to produce high-quality pellets. This will require significant investment in the five to 10 years after the end of the war.

Modernised enterprises will require highly skilled workers. The Group sees the steelmakers of the future using large programmable machines like modern drone operators. For this purpose, Metinvest Polytechnic, its university, has been operating for two years and the first specialists graduated this year. European-quality education will make a significant contribution to the development of young people focused on Ukraine’s reconstruction.

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