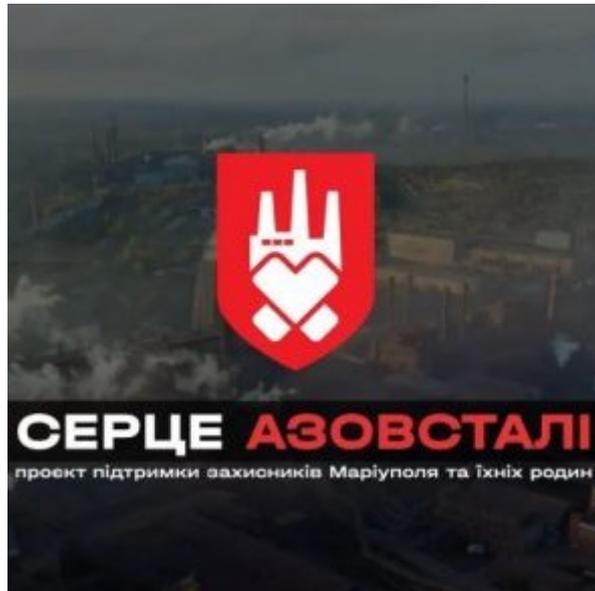


16 February

Heart of Azovstal project launched to support defenders of Mariupol



The Heart of Azovstal project launch took place on 16 February 2023. The initiative is designed to support Mariupol fighters, the families of the killed, captured and missing defenders of a steel fortress Azovstal who put up a hellish last stand in the besieged city in February-May 2022. Ukrainian businessman Rinat Akhmetov has donated UAH 1 billion to support the soldiers and their families. The Heart of Azovstal is a part of his large-scale [Steel Front](#) initiative.

The project mission is to show respect and to support each Mariupol defender.

The key project principles:

- Respect the dignity of warriors today and in the future;
- Implement the project in coordination with the recipients;
- Draw on the global expertise in supporting the soldiers after the discharge from military service;

- Cooperate with the leading Ukrainian experts and organisations in each project area;
- Develop open-code practices and projects.

The key areas of the Heart of Azovstal have been identified in consultations with the military:

- Health: providing medical assistance, rehabilitation and prosthetic treatment to the military;
- Employment: helping soldiers return to civil life after the military discharge;
- Families: helping the families of the killed, captured and missing defenders of the heroic city;
- Legal assistance and defence of rights;
- Psychological support and sustainable assistance to the fighters released from captivity.

Natalia Yemchenko, Director of Public Relations and Communications, SCM:

"For 86 days, our defenders held the line in a totally besieged Mariupol. Their bravery made it possible to slow down the advance of the Russian army and has already become a world legend and a symbol of Ukraine's invincibility. At that time, it was Azovstal plant, Ukraine's steel fortress with its robust bunkers, food and stock supplies enough for many weeks, stocks of medicines and fuel that brought together the defenders and gave them shelter. For all Mariupol defenders we must ensure they have a decent support and can look ahead with confidence. That is why Rinat Akhmetov tasked us with launching the Heart of Azovstal project, an effective system of support for soldiers, a way to show our respect and admiration for their valour and dignity."

Ksenia Sukhova, Head of the Heart of Azovstal CSO:

"For every area, we have a dedicated flexible programme that will adapt to the needs of our beneficiaries. We will be advised by experts in every related field, but the key experts for us are Mariupol defenders who know exactly what is important and what is not for their brothers-in-arms and families of those who fought for the freedom of Ukraine, putting their own freedom and life at stake."

An agreed Coordination Council of the Heart of Azovstal project will be established to ensure maximum support to the fighters. The Council will be in full operation in late March 2023. This advisory board will include representatives of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard, the Azov Regiment, border guards, marines, the National Police, combat medics, and other units that defended Mariupol in spring 2022.

The Coordination Council will be responsible for verification (proof of identity) of the warriors who have sought assistance as well as for discussion of the main areas of the project. The military have already identified the priority areas for the Heart of Azovstal project. However, the Coordination Council will serve as the primary platform for discussion of requests and project priorities.

About Heart of Azovstal

[Metinvest Group](#), the owner of Azovstal and Illich Iron and Steel Works of Mariupol, helps organise the project.

Follow the project, its programmes, news, and stories on its FB page at <https://www.facebook.com/HeartofAzovstal/>

Background

On 16 January 2023, Rinat Akhmetov announced allocation of UAH 1 billion for the Heart of Azovstal. This contribution comes from the transfer fee paid by Chelsea for FC Shakhtar's Mykhailo Mudryk.

"Their acts of bravery are unparalleled in the modern history. It is them, their sacrifice and courage that helped contain the enemy in the first months of the war and let all of us feel the inevitability of the Victory of Ukraine now," Mr Akhmetov stressed in his statement.

Rinat Akhmetov's Steel Front is an initiative that brings all military assistance provided by Rinat Akhmetov's SCM businesses to the Armed Forces, Main Directorate of Intelligence, medics, and critical infrastructure workers under one umbrella. The total amount of military and humanitarian aid provided by Rinat Akhmetov's companies has reached UAH 4.5 billion (not including UAH 1 billion allocated specifically for the Heart of Azovstal).