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Focus on Physical and Mental Recovery — Metinvest Presented Its Practices for the Adaptation of Veterans



Photo: Svitlana Parova, head of veteran reintegration projects at Metinvest

On 15 July, as part of the Veteran Initiatives Forum, Top Lead presented "Veterans After the War: How to Ensure Dignity at Work", an analytical study prepared in cooperation with the Ministry for Veterans Affairs and the Ukrainian Veterans Foundation. At the event, Metinvest presented one of the components of the (re)integration ecosystem for male and female veterans — the area of physical and mental health. "How to help veterans recover both physically and mentally" is an integral part of the Group's overall policy for veterans.

The Top Lead study gathered practices for the adaptation of veterans in the workplace and presented survey results illustrating the current situation on the labour market. The discussion featured representatives from government, business and veterans' organisations. Metinvest Group, Interpipe and DTEK were among the companies that presented their own case studies .

According to the study, only 45 out of Ukraine's 200 largest companies currently have a formalised policy for veterans, while 83% of the employers surveyed have already introduced various support practices. The survey also revealed that 23% of veterans have experienced discrimination during recruitment. During the discussion, participants emphasised that it is now crucial to create a sustainable government policy on this issue.

> *Stanislav Shum, CEO of Top Lead, said: "The idea for the study arose in response to the Veteran Friendly Business initiative. We focused on applied cases that can be scaled by other companies. Because the integration and adaptation of veterans are areas where companies do not compete. This is a task that needs to be addressed together — for the future of Ukraine and for our male and female veterans."*

In turn, Yulia Kirillova, Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, noted that the Ministry has already launched the Veteran Career platform, retraining programmes and a medical support system through family doctors. She stressed that veterans are an exceptionally proactive human capital for our country. Moreover, these individuals gained unique experience during their service, which should be fully transferred to civilian life.

> *Kirillova emphasised: "We are working with the National Qualifications Agency and the Federation of Employers to amend professional standards and convert military experience into civilian terms. Often, employers offer veteran snipers jobs in the security sector. Yet this person has exceptionally specific skills! They do not simply operate a rifle*

> *somewhere out in the field. This is a person who can analyse, calculate and carry out complex mathematical calculations — that is, they could become a very good financial analyst. A company, platoon or section commander leads people and bears material responsibility for equipment, so they are a senior manager. Therefore, it is extremely important to broaden the horizons of understanding and perception of our male and female defenders. If we only begin to think about veterans after the victory, we risk winning the war but losing the peace."*

At Metinvest Group, the reintegration programme for veterans is being implemented comprehensively, as over 8,000 employees are currently serving in the defence forces, and nearly 1,000 have already returned to production and civilian life. During the event, Svitlana Parova, head of veteran reintegration projects at Metinvest, stated: "Metinvest approaches the programmes for veterans as a long-term, systemic policy, in which not only initiatives but also sustainable mechanisms to support them are important. The focus on psycho-emotional state, medical support, professional and social integration, and working with teams is the toolkit that enables to return veterans not just to work but to a full life."

She noted that veterans identify health as their top priority. Therefore, this area is an important part of the policy for veterans. Metinvest is working to improve and expand programmes in this field and monitors their quality.

> *Parova said: "One of the first programmes is 'Metinvest Together', a psychological support service for all employees and their families. For veterans, we have added the option of consultations with military psychologists and group meetings called 'POBRATYM', where veterans share their experiences of adapting to civilian life on a peer-to-peer basis, moderated by experienced psychologists."*

In addition, to improve the physical and psychological well-being of veterans, Metinvest, together with the Heart of Azovstal project, has launched a veteran camping programme in the Carpathians, a mountain rehabilitation for veterans that

combines psychological support, health improvement, physical activity and communication within a circle of trust.

> *Parova highlighted: “We reviewed the health insurance policy and launched the VETERAN programme for veterans in their first year following demobilisation. The programme includes an increased limit for dental services, extended medication coverage, and covers the treatment of chronic illnesses, injuries and wounds sustained during service. For veterans, we also offer the Free Waves rehabilitation programme through swimming, with a focus on inclusivity.”*

The veteran (re)integration ecosystem also includes preparing teams for the return of veterans. Regular training sessions are held to explain how to interact with veterans appropriately. The emphasis is on respect, avoiding stereotypes and building trust.

> *Metinvest’s speaker concluded: “It has also become a cherished tradition at Metinvest enterprises to hold small events for veterans and their families, such as veteran clean-ups, weekend tours, quizzes, sports competitions and more. And such events make a very good contribution to the social adaptation of veterans.”*