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How Shakhtar Donetsk uses its Champions League shirts to speak for Ukraine



[Shakhtar Donetsk Football Club](#) is playing the 2026/27 UEFA Champions League with the call "Invest in Ukraine" on its shirts. The club first used its shirts to speak for Ukraine in 2022. Other European clubs, from FC Barcelona to VfL Wolfsburg, have also given shirt space to a cause. What makes Shakhtar's message credible is the work behind it: through its charitable foundation, Shakhtar Social, the club supports children and war veterans across Ukraine.

What does Shakhtar's Champions League shirt say this season?

"Invest in Ukraine" is printed directly below the SCM logo on the front of the shirt. It is part of a global communications initiative by SCM companies. The idea behind it is that Ukraine's economic recovery cannot wait for the war to end. Shakhtar will play at least eight matches against leading European clubs and host its home games in London, one of the world's financial centres. SCM companies have invested UAH 168.5 billion (\$4.3 billion) in Ukraine since 2022, and the campaign calls on international business to invest alongside them.

Natalya Yemchenko, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at SCM, said the message to international capital is that investment in Ukraine is needed now, adding:

"The reconstruction of Ukraine cannot wait. Our businesses understand this clearly. That is why we are actively investing. We are not only restoring, we are building world-class technologies such as renewable energy and green steel. We want to be very specific in our message to international businesspeople: the time to invest in Ukraine is now. We are ready to be not only an example of successful investment, but also your partner. Because we want Ukraine, as our shareholder Rinat Akhmetov has said, to be a free, independent and prosperous country."

The back of the shirt carries a second message. The logo of the [Rinat Akhmetov Foundation](#) sits below the player number as part of the Foundation's Youth Chooses Ukraine project. Across eight matches, the club and the Foundation will tell the stories of young people who have returned from the occupied territories and

chosen their future in Ukraine.

Has Shakhtar used its shirts to support Ukraine before?

Yes. After Russia's full-scale invasion stopped Ukrainian football leagues, Shakhtar played charity matches across Europe in 2022 as part of the Global Tour for Peace. At the first match, against Olympiacos in Greece in April 2022, both teams wore "Stop War" in place of their sponsor logos. Shakhtar's players also had the names of Ukrainian cities on their backs instead of their own names. In Croatia, the team walked out in shirts reading "Save Mariupol" and "We Azovstal" during the long siege of the city. In September 2024, Shakhtar wore a blue and yellow kit for a Champions League match against Bologna. It was the first time the club had played a competitive match in Ukraine's national colours.

This year **Sergei Palkin, CEO of FC Shakhtar Donetsk** commented:

"From the first days of the full-scale invasion, the club clearly understood its role as an advocate for Ukraine in Europe. Football diplomacy has been an important part of our existence since 2022. We do not only represent the country, we constantly remind people about the war in Ukraine, about the needs of Ukrainians, their courage and their resilience. Today we are taking on a new challenge — attracting investment for Ukraine. I am confident that the whole club, its management and all the players understand that they are going out on the pitch not only to win, but also so that our call is heard."

Which other clubs have used their shirts to send a message?

The best-known example is FC Barcelona. In 2006, the club put the UNICEF logo on its shirt. It was the first shirt sponsor in the club's history, and instead of being paid, Barcelona made an annual donation to social and humanitarian projects. From 2022, Barcelona placed the logo of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, below the player number on the back of the shirt.

After the full-scale invasion, other clubs also used their kits to support Ukraine. VfL Wolfsburg replaced the Volkswagen logo with a peace symbol for a Bundesliga match against Union Berlin. SK Slavia Prague players walked out in "We stand with Ukraine" T-shirts, and the club made Ukraine defender Taras Kacharaba captain for the night.

Countries also buy shirt space to promote themselves. The Visit Rwanda logo has appeared on the shirts of Arsenal, Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern Munich and Atlético de Madrid. Shakhtar's campaign is different. It comes from a Ukrainian business that is already investing and is calling on others to join it.

What does Shakhtar do for Ukrainians off the pitch?

Shakhtar Social, the club's charitable foundation, turns the message into practical help. Its flagship project, Come On, Let's Play!, is run with our energy company DTEK as general partner. The project offers free football training and English lessons for children at about 25 locations in different cities. With the UEFA Foundation for Children, Shakhtar Social delivered equipment to 32 schools in 14 regions, so that 2,005 children can now train regularly. Frontline and liberated communities were a priority, and more than 500 of the young players come from displaced families.

The club also supports veterans. Shakhtar Stalevi is one of Ukraine's first amputee football teams, where veterans who defended the country train and compete. In June 2026, the team signed a memorandum of cooperation with the [Heart of Azovstal](#) NGO. Through a joint project called Among Your Own, Shakhtar Social and Heart of Azovstal offer sport, rehabilitation and family events to defenders of Mariupol and their families in Dnipro. In March 2026, Shakhtar Social received the Symbol of Change grant from European Football Clubs and EA SPORTS FC.

Since the start of the full-scale invasion, SCM businesses, the Rinat Akhmetov Foundation and Shakhtar have together provided UAH 14.6 billion (over \$392 million) in aid. The shirts carry the message to millions of Champions League viewers, and the work of Shakhtar Social shows that the club stands behind it.

