17 November

Metinvest CEO Yuriy Ryzhenkov on innovation and Ukraine's recovery at the Ukrainian Students Union summit in Oxford



Ukraine needs to plan for a future beyond day-to-day survival and encourage young people to take part in rebuilding the country, said **Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of**

Metinvest Group, SCM's steel company. He was speaking at the National Summit of the Ukrainian Students Union in Oxford on 7–8 November 2026. Speaking to around 150 Ukrainian students from UK universities, he explained how staff shortages are driving innovation and asked young people to come to Ukraine and lead it.

What was the Ukrainian Students Union summit?

The fifth National Summit of the Ukrainian Students Union, "Beyond Recovery: Rebuilding Ukraine for the Next Generation", took place in Oxford on 7–8 November. It brought together around 150 students representing Ukrainian communities at 60 UK universities. Continuing the tradition of earlier meetings in Bristol and Cambridge, it connected Ukrainian students with people from business, academia and government to discuss the country's future. The main conference was held at Jesus College, University of Oxford, and at Oxford Brookes University.

Who spoke on the panel with Metinvest's CEO?

Mr Ryzhenkov joined the panel "The Economics of Reconstruction: Investment, Innovation and Growth". He was joined by Vladyslav Chechotkin, co-founder and co-owner of ROZETKA, and Oleksandr Gryban, former Deputy Minister of Economy of Ukraine. Andy Kilmister, Senior Lecturer in Economics at Oxford Brookes Business School, moderated the discussion. The speakers discussed how the experience businesses gained adapting and introducing innovation during the war can support Ukraine's long-term economic development.

How are staff shortages driving innovation at Metinvest?

Staff shortages are pushing businesses to adopt new technologies. Mr Ryzhenkov gave the example of Metinvest's use of artificial intelligence and machine vision for quality control at its plants in Italy. In Ukraine, the war makes the staffing challenge even greater, as more than 8,000 Metinvest Group employees have joined the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This means technologies that help companies work with

fewer people will remain important.

> "This ability to adapt, this flexibility that the war forced on us, is now one of the most powerful sources of our creativity," he said.

He also pointed to the competition for skilled specialists, including from the military technology sector. The need to attract and keep people is already pushing businesses to adopt new technologies. He said he hoped companies would keep up this pace after the war and use what they have learned for reconstruction.

What role can young Ukrainians play in the recovery?

Mr Ryzhenkov asked Ukrainian students abroad to bring their skills to Ukraine.

> "The young people in this room will start their professional lives, and we want them to come to Ukraine and become the drivers of these innovations," he said.

Metinvest already works with the Ukrainian Students Union through the Steel Force international internship programme. The programme helps Ukrainian students abroad gain practical experience and stay connected with Ukrainian business.

Why does long-term planning matter during the war?

Discussing the role of the state in strengthening business resilience and in Ukraine's long-term development, Mr Ryzhenkov stressed the importance of strategic thinking, even in wartime.

> "You cannot think only about how to survive the next day, because after it there will be another day, another year and another ten years," he said.

He added that Ukraine needs to make a conscious change to how it sets priorities, so that urgent problems do not push aside decisions that matter for the country's long-term development.