

NV: The Backbone of the Ukrainian Economy – Portraits of the Metinvest Employees Who Keep the Steel Industry Alive

The war has left large scars across Ukraine. With the front line under fire, large industrial enterprises, most of which were or are owned by Rinat Akmetov's mining and metals Metinvest Group, have stood alongside Ukraine's armed forces in resisting the aggressor.



There are challenges that must be addressed comprehensively and simultaneously: the loss of production facilities in Donetsk region as the entire world followed the tragic events of the Battle of Azovstal; the shortage of skilled workers as over 9,000 plant employees have stood up to defend Ukraine in the struggle for freedom against the invaders; and the profound personal tragedies that employees have had to face, such as the occupation of their hometowns, the destruction of their homes, the loss of loved ones and combat injuries.

People have become the main pillar and driving force of the Group during this period of severe challenges. Employees keep Ukraine's economy going every day and take on new challenges with determination and confidence. As the saying goes, in dark times, the brightest people are the most visible.

The heroes of this new area are emerging among the employees of the metallurgical shops, mines, and quarries: Women are taking on traditionally "male" professions; veterans are returning to their native production lines from the front lines; dedicated staff have become true professional stars who choose to grow alongside their beloved enterprise; employees simultaneously acquiring new skills at Metinvest Polytechnic alongside their work; and members of multiple generations of families who make Metinvest their family's second home.



Olha Dyachenko, woman in a "man's" role

Recently, the first female metal handler was hired at the Kamet Steel rolling mill shop. Her name is Olha

Dyachenko. The enterprise has a place in her heart as, as she has worked here for 27 years, spending most of that time in production at the rolling mill.

Olha spent time working in another department, but she was eager to return to her favourite rolling operation. During discussions with her supervisors, she came up with the idea of taking on the supervisory role of a metal handler.

The handler oversees the entire journey of the metal, from its arrival from the converter shop to the billet warehouse, through to loading it into the heating furnace. First, the specialist has to receive the metal and sort it into stacks according to specified parameters. This is followed by preparation, cleaning, measuring, and then working together with crane operators who transport the billet to the heating furnace.

Olha Dyachenko said: "I realised that the job was not easy, it entailed great responsibility, requiring constant concentration and new knowledge combined with physical exertion. Rolling is a creative process, and at the same time, demands strict technological discipline and precision. You just realise that you have no right to permit the slightest disruption to the production programme. I am fully aware that I am at the beginning of the process of manufacturing commercial products that will be shipped to consumers in Ukraine or abroad. I simply cannot afford to make a mistake - this is my responsibility before our entire team."



Vadym Yavtushenko, war veteran

Vadym Yavtushenko started working as an ore mining excavator operator at Ingulets Iron Ore while studying in the mining department. He valued the job, which he had chosen following in his father's footsteps, and felt that he was in the right place.

But, since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, his professional development has had to be put on hold. At the military enlistment office, he chose to train as part of the airborne assault troops, and later, as part of the 95th Air Assault Brigade, he was deployed to the Donetsk area. Vadym was seriously injured there and had to be moved from one hospital to another for treatment.



Vadym Yavtushenko, war veteran

In Uzhhorod, the miner came under the care of American surgeons who performed a unique surgical procedure to save his severely damaged left leg: They transplanted the fibula, muscles, and blood vessels from his right leg. Now, every six months, the hero has to travel to Uzhhorod for a consultation. But the doctors are pleasantly surprised by his progress. The Americans joke that Kryvyi Rih iron ore makes people stronger.

Despite the complex treatment, Vadym has already returned to work at his native mining and processing plant. He now holds the position of quarry manager. He had previously completed an internship in this field but he preferred working with machinery.

Vadym Yavtushenko said: "I would still like to work in ore mining, but due to the injury I sustained on the front line, I'm no longer able to. Now I'm remembering my dispatching skills."



Svitlana Chervyatyuk, Metinvest Polytechnic student

Svitlana Chervyatyuk decided to become a metallurgist after graduating from school. She was hired as a filter operator in the dehydration section at Central Iron Ore. As a specialist, she monitored the moisture content and quality indicators of the iron ore concentrate, the plant's commercial product. Svitalana established herself as an outstanding specialist who was keen on advancing her qualifications and continuously developing in her chosen field.

She has now decided to acquire a new professional qualification as an enrichment specialist. She enrolled in a bachelor's degree programme at Metinvest's first private mining and metals university, where she has been studying for three years. She is the only woman in her group and the sole scholarship recipient.

Svitlana said: “The management must have noticed my diligence at work because they offered me the chance to join the first class at Metinvest Polytechnic. I had a wonderful opportunity to obtain a higher education in the field of enrichment and deepen my knowledge of mining. I would note that this educational institution is primarily intended for employees of enterprises in this industry. It offers a specially tailored schedule that makes it convenient to combine work and study. I work at the enrichment plant from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and I spend three hours on online studies in the evening.”



Denys Kononyuk, Golden Star award winner

Every company has individuals who can rightly be called irreplaceable employees. Denys Kononyuk is one such specialist who envisages his professional development at Metinvest Sichstal.

He began his work at the plant as a leading electrical engineer and now holds the position of chief electrician.

This year, Denys received a special Metinvest award — the Gold Star — for his outstanding achievements in his field. When he found out about his nomination for the award, which comes with a substantial financial reward, he considered donating the money to his colleagues who are defending Ukraine. It is worth mentioning that Denys keeps in constant contact with the military — he manufactures drones for them after completing the People’s FPV online engineering course.



Denys Kononyuk

Following the tragic shelling of Northern Iron Ore on 8 July, when ten of his colleagues were killed and 50 were injured, Denys decided to donate part of his bonus to assist the wounded employees and the rest to support the Ukrainian army.

Denys said: “I am very grateful to the Group for the recognition, but I cannot imagine a better use for the award during the war than to donate it for treatment of Metinvest employees who were severely injured by the insidious enemy shelling. I do not know any of the injured employees personally. I used to be a supervisor at Northern Ore and other mining and processing plants because Sichstal implements strategic engineering investment projects here and at other assets. Colleagues who received assistance texted and thanked me... It's true that adversity brings people together. Anyone can face grief now. I did not doubt this for a minute. I hope they recover quickly... And we remain confident of victory.”



The Petrov family labour dynasty

This year, the Petrov family, who work at Zaporozhneupor, received the prestigious Golden Dynasty award from Metinvest Group. This award is given to families of employees who have made significant contributions to the development of both the enterprise and the state.

Currently, the enterprise employs six family members: Nataliya Krepel, raw material acceptance inspector; Olena Lazarok, leading engineer for scheduled preventive maintenance; Volodymyr Kravchenko, head of production dispatch department; Serhiy Lazarok, mechanic; Kseniya Lazarok, planning engineer; and Ivan Lazarok, roaster.