

## REINTEGRATION OF WAR VETERANS IN PEACEFUL LIFE IN UKRAINE: CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

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**Introduction.** The national economy is currently focused on supporting the population, mobilisation processes, socio-economic stabilisation and military issues. At the same time, the longer the war lasts, the more the number of veterans grows. According to the Ministry of Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine, as of May 2024, 1.2 million veterans were officially registered, and after the war, including family members, their number will increase to 5-6 million [2]. But in Ukraine, to this day, there is no proper legislative framework and no active civic position to realise their rights and interests, and the process of reintegration of veterans is mostly entrusted to NGOs formed by the same war veterans. However, the issue of veterans' reintegration is crucial during the war, and especially in the post-war period, as combatants who are not reintegrated into civilian life will begin to unite and separate into their own closed groups, which can be dangerous for the population and for these military personnel, who may not want to return to civilian life.

The international experience of countries that have experienced active hostilities shows that it is the state that should ensure proper regulation of the veteran environment, especially in terms of defining its legal and social framework. In addition, it should be noted that the attitude towards war veterans is directly dependent on the readiness of the next generation of Ukrainians to perform military service and thus ensure a high level of the country's defence capability in the future.

It should also be noted that approximately 15-20% of the population will have the status of war veterans, which is a significant category of citizens who need reintegration into civilian life, special rights, benefits and services. Such a large number requires unprecedented approaches to the formation of a post-war space for war veterans, where they become an active part of civil society. It is on the basis of these facts that reintegration and rehabilitation are very important and relevant. Without an effective reintegration system in place, veterans will face many problems and challenges: legal, financial, psychological, etc. Failure to address these issues may, in the long run, lead to unlawful behaviour that endangers civilians and themselves. The state and society need to recognise the responsibility and obligation to war veterans who have given their most valuable assets, their health and in some cases their lives.

Thus, an effective mechanism for the reintegration of war veterans is a necessary element of Ukraine's socio-economic development, both during the war and in the post-war period.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Wars have existed as long as humanity has existed. Whenever new interstate conflicts or wars arise, scientists naturally do not stand aside and develop effective mechanisms for reintegrating war veterans into civilian life. Russia's war against Ukraine is no exception. The works of foreign scholars who study the risks and challenges of a veteran's transition from military to civilian life are important for the implementation of the research objectives: J. Ahern [6], Y. Bryndikov [7], S. Vetlyns'kyi [8], S. Horbenko [9], R. Zhylenko [10], T. Zakharina [11], D. Ishchenko, O. Kolesnichenko, Ya. Matsehora [12], O. Kokun, I. Pishko, N. Lozins'ka, V. Oliynyk, S. Khoruzhyy, S. Larionov, M. Syrytsya [13], T. Kolenichenko [14], O. Lozova, L. Shymanovs'ka [15].

Despite the significant body of research in the field of reintegration of military veterans into civilian life, the scale and brutality of the war in Ukraine is simply staggering and requires absolutely unprecedented approaches

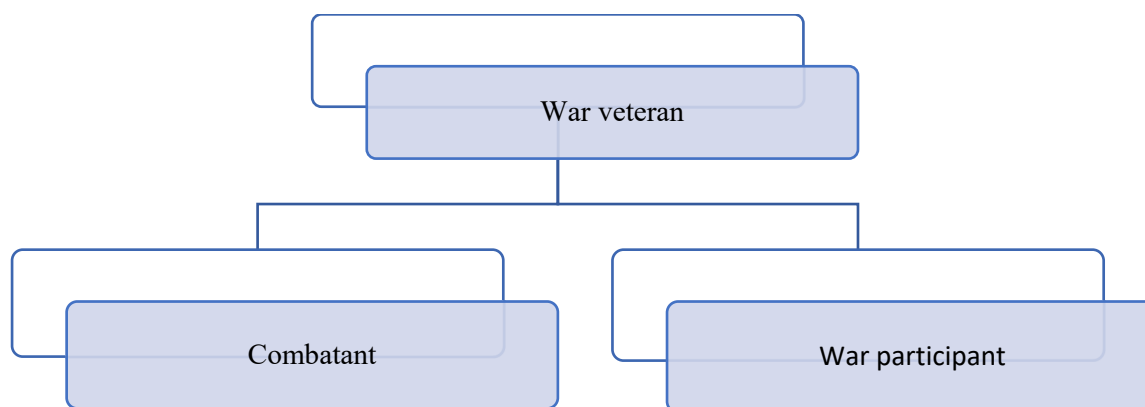
to the reintegration of war veterans into civilian life, as one in five people belong to this category of population, and no other country in the world has such experience of adaptation of the military in the post-war period. That is why this study is relevant and timely.

**Objectives of the article.** The aim of the study is to analyse the current state of reintegration of war veterans in Ukraine and identify future challenges to improve this process.

**The main material of the study.** Today, in Ukraine, there are the concepts of "war veteran", "war participant" and "combatant", all of which are defined in the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection" of October 22, 1993. Thus, Article 4 defines that "war veterans are persons who participated in the defence of the Motherland or in hostilities on the territory of other states. War veterans include: combatants, persons with disabilities as a result of war, and war participants" [1].

Article 5 of the same law stipulates that "combatants are persons who took part in combat missions to defend the Motherland as part of military units, formations, associations of all types and branches of the Armed Forces of the active army (navy), in partisan units and underground and other formations, both in wartime and in peacetime" [1].

Article 8 also states that "military personnel who served in the Armed Forces of the former USSR during the war, home front workers, as well as other persons provided for by this Law are recognised as war participants" [1].



**Figure 1. Differentiation of the category of "war veteran" according to the current legislation of Ukraine**

In other words, it can be defined that a war veteran is a broad enough term to cover all persons who took part in the Russian-Ukrainian war or other wars or the ATO, regardless of their status during service. Furthermore, war veterans can be either combatants or war participants. In some cases, the same person may have both statuses. For example, a combatant is a person who is safely and directly involved in hostilities, performing combat missions to defend the country. This category includes military personnel who participated in combat operations, as well as those who performed tasks in direct contact and fire contact with the enemy [1]. In contrast to a combatant, a war participant is a person who served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the war but did not take direct part in hostilities.

The distinction between these military categories is extremely important for reintegration and social support. Each category has its own algorithm for reintegration into civilian life and its own list of social benefits and adaptive programmes.

The process of reintegration of war veterans is a complex and long-term one that requires consideration of many of its components and factors that influence it. In author's opinion, there are several key factors that will directly affect the effectiveness of reintegration:

The duration of the war – every year, every month and every day the number of war veterans increases. Due to the constant shelling of civilians, the number of war veterans in need of long-term reintegration and rehabilitation is growing. Due to active hostilities, the number of combatants who will need comprehensive reintegration at the national level, and possibly at the international level, is also growing. In other words, the duration of the war directly determines the scope of reintegration of war veterans.

Insufficient level of respect for veterans on the part of society - the process of decline is gradual and has several reasons: unformed state content supporting the image of veterans, poor counteraction to disinformation and Russian narratives, lack of understanding of the needs and psychological state of the military by society, low level of tolerance and focus on their own needs. For example, the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada Foundation of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs in Ukraine and the Sociological Group «Rating» conducted a nationwide survey "The Image of Veterans in Ukrainian Society". According to the survey, the following data was obtained: in July 2022, 55% of respondents spoke of unquestioning respect for veterans by society, in September 2023, the number was already 79%, and in March 2024, 76% [3]. The results indicate that respect for veterans is not sustainable and needs to be shaped by a long-term state strategy.

Complicated regulatory framework for the reintegration of war veterans. In Ukraine, the experience of war has been counted since 2014, when Crimea, parts of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts were occupied. As a result, the process of providing benefits and guarantees to veterans is currently regulated by more than 150 legal acts, which causes ambiguity in their interpretation and complicates their implementation in practice. In addition, some laws and bylaws were adopted on an urgent basis and do not have a clear implementation procedure, which leads to unsatisfactory social protection of veterans. These factors can lead to delays in the provision of assistance, reduced effectiveness of reintegration programmes and increased psychological and social burden on veterans. It is important that the state works to simplify and optimise legislation to facilitate the process of reintegration of veterans into society.

This is only a small part of the factors that influence the process of reintegration of war veterans and on which its scale, effectiveness and long-term nature depend.

Ukraine has faced a full-scale Russian invasion of its territory on an unprecedented scale since the Second World War. That is why, since 2014, and then in 2022, a new category of population has emerged in Ukraine – war veterans – and, as a result, the issue of their reintegration into civilian life is urgent. In author's opinion, the experience of other countries in reintegrating war veterans can be useful for Ukraine to develop its own effective mechanism for the adaptation of military personnel to civilian life.

Today, such programmes exist in almost every developed country in the world. For example, the United States has a Veterans Affairs (VA) programme that provides a wide range of services, including medical care, psychological support, vocational training and employment assistance. The programme focuses on the detection and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological problems in former military personnel. Israel has a programme called Zahal Disabled Veterans Organization (ZDVO), which provides medical and psychological care, as well as rehabilitation services for veterans. This programme focuses in particular on the reintegration of veterans into society through professional development and lifelong learning. In Canada, the Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) programme offers medical care, psychological support, financial assistance and vocational training programmes. Particular attention is paid to supporting not only veterans themselves, but also their families, who often need as much psychological help as the military personnel themselves. In the UK, there is the Veterans UK programme, which provides medical care, psychological support, employment assistance and financial support. After the Second World War, Germany developed comprehensive reintegration programmes for veterans, including medical care, psychological support and vocational training. Australia has a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) programme that provides medical care, psychological support, financial assistance and vocational training programmes. France also has programmes that provide medical and psychological care for veterans, as well as support for employment and social integration. The Netherlands has a Veterans Institute programme that provides medical care, psychological support, financial assistance and vocational training programmes.

The above countries demonstrate that successful reintegration of veterans requires a comprehensive approach that includes medical and psychological care, vocational training and social support. It is important to consider the specific needs of veterans and their families to ensure effective reintegration.

Several approaches used in other countries may be useful for Ukraine: comprehensive medical and psychological care, as in the United States and Israel, it is important to ensure that veterans have access to quality medical care and psychological support, especially for the treatment of PTSD and other mental disorders, which will help veterans better adapt to civilian life; vocational training and employment, programmes such as those in Canada and Australia can help veterans acquire new skills and find jobs that will contribute to their economic independence and social integration; social support and integration, as the experience of Germany and the Netherlands shows that it is important to support veterans in their social integration through educational

and vocational programmes, as well as through support for veterans' families; financial assistance, as in the UK and France, providing financial assistance to veterans can help them overcome economic hardship and provide stability during the transition to civilian life.

The implementation of these approaches in Ukraine, in author's opinion, can significantly improve the reintegration process of veterans, providing them with the necessary support and resources to successfully return to civilian life.

Scholars, politicians and civil servants also have different views on the components of the reintegration process for war veterans in Ukraine. It is the understanding of these components that will determine whether reintegration programmes will cover all areas of military and veteran recovery. Below is the author's vision of the components of the reintegration process for war veterans (Table 1).

Table 1

**Components of the reintegration process of war veterans in Ukraine**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Psychological support	Provision of qualified psychological assistance to overcome stress and trauma to enable people to live and work in society to the fullest.
Social integration	Facilitating the return of veterans to active public life, including participation in communities, transferring experience to the younger generation, and forming a socially active class of veterans.
Economic reintegration	Support in employment, professional training and entrepreneurship development. Military experience often provokes a complete change of profession and speciality, and therefore all opportunities for education, training and the acquisition of new competencies should be created. A disability sustained during the war will also shape the need to change careers, and companies should be prepared to work with employees with disabilities.
Medical care	Ensuring access to medical services, including rehabilitation and treatment. Given the degree of moral and physical damage suffered by veterans during the war, medical care should be provided throughout the life of the military and their family members.
Legal support	Providing legal aid and advice on veterans' rights. Due to the complexity and number of legal acts regulating reintegration and social support, veterans have a constant need for legal support.
Educational programmes	Professional development and retraining programmes for adaptation to civilian life. It should be noted that these programmes should be coordinated and systematised at the state level, and veterans should receive the required training free of charge.
Housing support	Ensuring access to housing and improving living conditions. The housing issue has always been an acute problem for veterans since the ATO, as government programmes to provide them with housing were ineffective and did not cover even 10% of their housing needs.
Support for veterans' families	Helping veterans' families adapt and overcome difficulties. The reintegration of veterans primarily involves returning to their families and building new relationships, which is why not only the military but also all members of their families need support.
Public initiatives and events	Organisation of events and programmes to support veterans and their integration into society. Every veteran should feel respected and important in society. Therefore, the active involvement of veterans in public life will only accelerate the reintegration process.
Information support	Provision of information on available services and veterans' rights. In author's opinion, Ukraine should create a unified information field for veterans, where they could receive all the necessary information about the state programmes and initiatives for their reintegration.

*Source: compiled by the author based on [10; 12; 15]*

As can be seen, the reintegration process is complex and multicomponent, requiring systematic, balanced and sustained support from the state and international organisations. Ukraine already has several national and international programmes aimed at reintegrating and supporting the military:

- The IREX Veterans Reintegration Programme, which aims to improve the quality and access to services for veterans, including employment, vocational training, psychosocial and physical rehabilitation [3]. It should be noted that this programme has been in place since 2014 and has only expanded its activities since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

- The eRobota project and the Ukrainian Veterans Fund support veterans in setting up their own businesses and provide grants for entrepreneurship development [4].

- The eOselia programme allows contract servicemen and women, healthcare workers, teachers and researchers to access affordable mortgages and compensation for housing [5]. Although the programme

provides mortgages for military personnel, the author believes that there should be a separate programme specifically for war veterans, which would significantly expand the categories of people who can apply for it.

– New experimental projects of the government – these include the programmes "Electronic Office of a Person with a Disability", "Social Support for Servicemen and Their Families in Military Units" and "Building Resilience" from the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, which include the provision of comprehensive social services such as social and psychological assistance, social skills development and adaptation.

– Support from the EU and IOM, which includes training, support for the transition to civilian life, business development, as well as community strengthening activities and support for veterans' centres.

The above programmes are aimed at providing comprehensive support to veterans, helping them to adapt to civilian life and integrate into society, and given the number of war veterans and the continuation of active hostilities in Ukraine, these programmes are not enough for comprehensive reintegration of war veterans in Ukraine, given that most of them are still at war, and after its completion, every 5 Ukrainians will need assistance and adaptation, it is necessary to develop and scale reintegration programmes at the national level.

**Conclusions.** Based on the analysis of the current state of reintegration of war veterans in Ukraine and the identification of future challenges to improve this process, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. The study of reintegration programmes in leading countries of the world has shown that it is impossible to fully apply the experience of any of them in Ukraine due to numerous peculiarities that need to be taken into account when developing a state strategy for the reintegration of war veterans.

2. The study of Ukrainian legislation found that a war veteran is a general term that covers all participants in the Russian-Ukrainian war or other conflicts, regardless of their status during service. Veterans can be combatants or war participants. A combat participant directly participates in combat operations, while a war participant serves during a conflict but does not take part in combat operations. The same person can have both statuses. This terminology is important when implementing reintegration programmes for war veterans and understanding the target audience of a particular programme.

3. The process of reintegrating war veterans in Ukraine is complex and long-term, depending on many factors, such as the duration of the war, which increases the number of veterans in need of rehabilitation; the lack of respect for veterans by society, which requires a long-term state strategy; and a complicated legal framework that makes it difficult to implement support programmes. Effective reintegration requires simplification and optimisation of legislation, taking into account the specific needs of veterans.

4. The process of reintegration of war veterans in Ukraine includes psychological support, social integration, economic reintegration, medical care, legal support, educational programmes, housing, support for veterans' families, public initiatives and information support, which together contribute to their return to a full life in society.

5. The process of reintegration of war veterans in Ukraine is complex and multi-component, requiring systematic and large-scale support from the state and international organisations. There are national and international programmes, such as the IREX reintegration programme, the eRobota and Ukrainian Veterans Foundation projects, the eOselia programme, new pilot projects by the government, and support from the EU and IOM. These programmes are aimed at providing comprehensive support to veterans, including employment, vocational training, psychosocial and physical rehabilitation, access to housing and legal assistance. However, given the number of veterans and the continuation of hostilities, these programmes are not sufficient and need to be expanded and scaled up nationally to ensure effective reintegration.

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**Oleksandr Nestulia**, Ph.D. Candidate, Poltava University of Economics and Trade. **Reintegration of war veterans into peaceful life in Ukraine: current state and future challenges.**

A review of the reintegration programmes of leading countries has revealed that it is not feasible to apply the experience of any of them directly to Ukraine, due to the existence of numerous specific factors that must be taken into account when developing a state strategy for the reintegration of war veterans. A review of Ukrainian legislation reveals that the term "war veteran" is a general designation that encompasses all individuals who participated in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict or other armed conflicts, regardless of their status during service. Veterans may be either combatants or war participants. A combatant is defined as a military personnel who engages directly in combat operations. In contrast, a war participant is a military personnel who serves during a conflict but does not engage in combat. An individual may simultaneously hold both statuses. The aforementioned terminology is of significant importance for the implementation of effective veteran reintegration programmes and for the comprehension of the target audience of each programme. The process of reintegrating war veterans in Ukraine is complex and long-term, dependent on a number of factors. These include the duration of the war, which increases the number of veterans requiring rehabilitation; the insufficient level of respect for veterans from society, which requires the formation of a long-term state strategy; and the complicated regulatory framework, which complicates the implementation of support programmes. In order to facilitate effective reintegration, it is essential to streamline and optimise legislative processes, with due consideration given to the specific requirements of veterans. The reintegration process encompasses a range of support services, including psychological assistance, social integration, economic reintegration, medical care, legal counsel, educational programmes, housing provision, support for veterans' families, community initiatives, and informational support. Collectively, these services aim to facilitate the return of veterans to a full life in society. The reintegration process of war veterans in Ukraine is complex and multifaceted, necessitating comprehensive and large-scale support from the state and international organisations. A variety of national and international programmes are in operation, including the reintegration programme from IREX, the "eRobota" projects and the Ukrainian Veterans Fund, the "eOselia" programme, new experimental government projects, as well as support from the EU and IOM. The objective of these programmes is to provide comprehensive support for veterans, encompassing a range of services including employment, vocational training, psychosocial and physical rehabilitation, access to housing, and legal assistance. Nevertheless, in light of the considerable number of veterans and the ongoing nature of hostilities, these programmes are inadequate. It is thus imperative to expand and scale them up nationally in order to guarantee effective reintegration.

**Keywords:** veterans, reintegration, war veterans, combatants, war participants, the process of war veterans' reintegration, war veterans' reintegration programmes in Ukraine.

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**Реінтеграція ветеранів війни в мирне життя в Україні: сучасний стан та майбутні виклики.**

Дослідження реінтеграційних програм провідних країн світу показало, що в Україні неможливо повністю застосувати їхній досвід через численні особливості. Масштабність та жорстокість війни в Україні просто вражає і потребує абсолютно безпрецедентних підходів до реінтеграції ветеранів війни в мирне життя, оскільки маєде кожен пятий відноситиметься до цієї категорії населення, і жодна країна світу не має такого досвіду адаптації військових у післявоєнний період. Ветеран війни – це загальний термін, що охоплює всіх учасників російсько-української війни чи інших конфліктів. Ветерани можуть бути учасниками бойових дій або учасниками війни, і одна й та сама особа може мати обидва статуси. Ця термінологія важлива для реалізації програм реінтеграції. Визначено, що процес реінтеграції включає психологічну підтримку, соціальну інтеграцію, економічну реінтеграцію, медичну допомогу, юридичну підтримку, освітні програми, забезпечення житлом, підтримку сімей ветеранів, громадські ініціативи та інформаційну підтримку, що сприяє їх поверненню до повноцінного життя в суспільства. Процес реінтеграції ветеранів війни в Україні є складним і довгостроковим, залежним від багатьох факторів, таких як тривалість війни, недостатній рівень поваги до ветеранів з боку суспільства та ускладнена нормативно-правова база. Для ефективної реінтеграції необхідно спрощувати та оптимізувати законодавство, враховуючи специфічні потреби ветеранів. Процес реінтеграції включає психологічну підтримку, соціальну інтеграцію, економічну реінтеграцію, медичну допомогу, юридичну підтримку, освітні програми, житлове забезпечення, підтримку сімей ветеранів, громадські ініціативи та інформаційну підтримку. Існують національні та міжнародні програми, такі як програма реінтеграції від IREX, проекти «Робота» та Український фонд ветеранів, програма «Оселя», нові експериментальні проекти уряду, а також підтримка від ЄС та МОМ. Ці програми спрямовані на комплексну підтримку ветеранів, включаючи працевлаштування, професійне навчання, психосоціальну та фізичну реабілітацію, доступ до житла та юридичну допомогу. Проте, враховуючи кількість ветеранів та продовження бойових дій, цих програм недостатньо, тому їх необхідно розширювати та масштабувати на національному рівні для забезпечення ефективної реінтеграції.

**Ключові слова:** ветерани, реінтеграція, ветерани війни, учасники бойових дій, учасники війни, процес реінтеграції ветеранів війни, програми реінтеграції ветеранів війни в Україні.