

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #21

Reporting period: 01/03/2023 to 31/03/2023

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. ETC SitReps are distributed every month.

Highlights

- A new VHF frequency license application was submitted to the national government authorities on 15 March to expand the VHF radio network in newly accessible locations in eastern Ukraine. Enhanced security communications services in these new areas are critical.
- On 6 March, the VHF radio system equipment was installed in the newly accessible location of Kramatorsk. The system will be operational once the new VHF license is received.
- The ETC conducted a survey from 22 to 30 March with UN agencies to identify their radio programming needs. The survey identified the need to programme or re-programme 51 VHF mobile radios and 62 VHF handheld radios.



The ETC continues to optimize installed Starlink VSAT terminals in Ukraine for greater performance. Photo: WFP

Overview

The [International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#) reports that 5.4 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict as of 23 January 2023, and the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) estimates the total number of Ukrainian refugees recorded across Europe at over 8.2 million as of 28 March 2023.

Impact on telecommunications

The continued attacks on national infrastructure across Ukraine have led to significant damage to national telecommunications infrastructure, resulting in severe communications blackouts across the country. Disruption to electrical power supplies supporting telecommunications equipment impacts on ETC services.

Several reports have been received of severe disruptions to satellite telephony services in areas close to the frontlines. The ETC is exploring solutions to provide responders deploying on frontline missions with services and equipment.

Activities

Security communications

The ETC has so far deployed the VHF radio network for improved security communications services for UN agencies in three locations—Dnipro, Kyiv, and Odesa. The Remote Security Operations Centres (RSOCs) set up in these three locations are all connected to the main SOC based in Mukachevo. Since deploying the network, the ETC has conducted coverage assessments in all three locations to assess and improve the quality and coverage of the network. Further, the ETC submitted a request to the national government authorities on 15 March to implement improvements to the VHF coverage in the three established locations.

The ETC also submitted a request to the national government authorities to request the availability of a new VHF frequency license to expand the network in newly accessible locations in eastern Ukraine. Enhanced security communications services in these new areas are critical. On 6 March, the VHF radio system equipment was installed in the newly accessible location of Kramatorsk. The system will be operational once the new VHF license is received.

The service agreement with the Ukraine Broadcast and Radio Telecommunications Concern (BRT) is being finalized to facilitate the installation of repeaters for improved VHF radio coverage in the operational areas.

The ETC conducted a survey from 22 to 30 March with UN agencies to identify their radio programming needs. The survey identified the need to programme or re-programme 51 VHF mobile radios and 62 VHF handheld radios. Further, there are an additional 198 VHF mobile radios and 1,382 handheld VHF radios being imported by UN agencies into Ukraine to support the response.

The progress of the VHF radio network deployment was presented to the Area Security Management Team (ASMT) on 29 March as part of the effort to increase awareness of the service among UN agencies.

In March, the ETC programmed 168 VHF radios for UNDSS, UNICEF, UNESCO, IOM, OHCHR, OCHA, WHO, FAO and WFP in the operational areas. Radio programming services can be requested via the new ukraine.etc servicedesk@wfp.org ticketing system.

Secure data connectivity

The ETC is supporting internet connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in Dnipro and Odesa. The ETC data connectivity network is secured with a cyber-security setup provided by ETC partner Cisco Crisis Response. Since the launch of the services, 309 users from 14 agencies have registered on the network.

The ETC is deploying back-up connectivity services to ensure the continuity of communications services during emergencies and black-out. All the VHF radio networks will be linked to the main SOC in Mukachevo via Starlink and BGAN satellite devices. A Starlink VSAT will also be installed to provide back-up connectivity for the planned Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) call centre based in Ternopil when the services of national providers are down.

Services for communities

The ETC is planning the implementation of the CFM call centre project in Ternopil, following approval of the concept note. The identified local vendor is currently being profiled to establish a service agreement with the cluster.

Clear Global finished their planned scope of work which included the use of plain language for the ETC Chatbot improvement, content curation, and language services such as translation, professional revision, and editing terminology consistency.

A total of 18,901 users have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance through the ETC Chatbot since its launch. As of 31 March, users of the ETC Chatbot most frequently used the service to access information on humanitarian aid (73%), hotlines and referral methods (16%), human rights (6%), and other useful information (5%). When seeking information on humanitarian aid, users most frequently consulted categories related to general cash assistance and to WFP assistance.

Dashboard

See the [ETC Dashboard](#) for an overview of service locations.

Funding

The ETC in Ukraine continues to utilize funds received in 2022 for the projects approved in 2022 with no cost extension.

No new funding has been received to meet the US\$1.4 million funding requirement to carry out activities in 2023. These activities include the expansion of the VHF radio networks to the frontlines in eastern Ukraine.

Challenges

Security issues in the newly accessible locations in eastern Ukraine are a constraint in the implementation of telecommunications solutions.

The risk of cyber-attacks in Ukraine is considered high.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **6 April 2023**.

Contacts

NAME	POSITION	LOCATION	CONTACT
Mohamedou Ndiath	ETC Coordinator	Kyiv	Ukraine.ETC@wfp.org
Maryna Andrusikova	ETC Information Management Officer (IMO)	Kyiv	Ukraine.ETC@wfp.org

Further information related to ETC operations can be found on the website:

www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list please contact:

Ukraine.ETC@wfp.org