

Ukraine – conflict

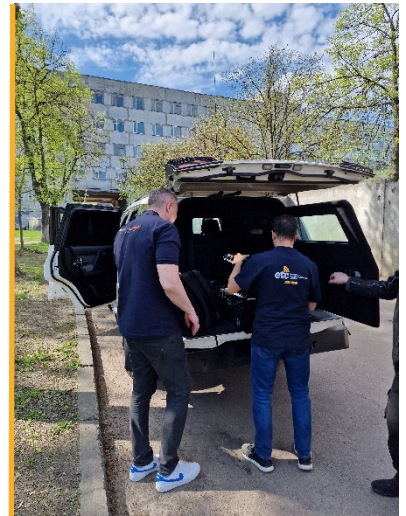
ETC Situation Report #22

Reporting period: 01/04/2023 to 30/04/2023

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

- The ETC finalized the service agreement with the Ukraine Broadcast and Radio Telecommunications Concern (BRT) to expand the VHF radio network in Kyiv, Dnipro, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Luch.
- The ETC started working on Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project - a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armored vehicles on mission in high-risk areas. After modifying a Starlink kit with a local telecommunications company, the ETC was assisted by a vehicle workshop to install and configure telecommunications equipment in the armored vehicle. The communication tests with the Remote Security Operations Centre (RSOC) for both Starlink connectivity and radio signal showed very good results. The team continues testing and tuning the power bank setup.
- The ETC conducted a survey on 28 April for UN agencies to propose time slots for security communications training sessions. The survey will be ongoing in May to plan further VHF radio trainings in Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa and Lviv.



The ETC testing the Remote Site on Vehicle (RsoV) solution in Ukraine.
Photo: WFP/ETC

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 25 April 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 VHF Remote Sites (RS) set up in these three locations are all connected to the main Security Operations Centre (SOC) based in Mukachevo. The ETC continues to communicate with Ukrainian State Centre of Radio Frequencies (UCRF) on further VHF network expansion and received the verbal acknowledgement of providing the same frequencies for 15 oblasts and finalizing of the technical part of the license. The team also raised procurement requests (PR) for security communications equipment for the upcoming VHF network expansion.

To facilitate the installation of repeaters for improved VHF radio coverage in the operational areas, the ETC finalized the service agreement with the Ukraine Broadcast and Radio Telecommunications Concern (BRT). The list of locations for the first part of the VHF coverage expansion project was specified - Kyiv, Dnipro, Lviv, Kharkiv, and Luch. The cluster received the quotations from BRT Concern and will continue with procurement plans and requests for the specified locations.

The ETC started working on Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project - a pilot mobile VHF radio solution for UN armored vehicles on mission in high-risk areas. After modifying a Starlink kit with a local telecommunications company, the ETC was assisted by a vehicle workshop to install and configure telecommunications equipment in the armored vehicle. The communication tests with the Remote Security Operations Centre (RSOC) for both Starlink connectivity and radio signal showed very good results. The team continues testing and tuning the power bank setup.

The ETC conducted a mission to Mukachevo—where the main SOC is based—to expand RSOC capacity to host two additional VHF RSs for the VHF RS in Lviv and the RSoV project.

During the mission to Kramatorsk on 14 April, the ETC installed a Starlink terminal and other telecommunications equipment to link the VHF network to the RSOC. Following the mission, the team tested the failover mechanism for the Kramatorsk VHF RS and set up and checked all remote connections for internet connectivity. The site will be fully operational as soon as the UCRF finalizes the technical part of the license.

On 27 April, the ETC in Odesa conducted an assessment in Mykolaiv to monitor coverage of Iridium, GSM, and VHF radio (from the ETC repeater in Odesa) in the region to examine full functionality of the system and to test the communication quality with RSOC, as well as to check possible locations for UN hubs and assess the installation of VHF repeaters there.

The ETC conducted a survey on 28 April for UN agencies to propose time slots for security communications training sessions. The survey will be ongoing in May to plan further VHF radio trainings in Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa and Lviv.

The cluster is engaging with UNDSS on the process of independent satellite connectivity and telecommunications equipment installation in the Crisis Coordination Hub in Lviv. The hub will serve as a workplace for critical staff in case of a major incident or evacuation.

In April, the ETC programmed 233 VHF radios for UNDSS, UNDP, IOM, OCHA, WHO 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, 310 users from 14 agencies have registered on the network.

The ETC team worked on the server room back-up power inverter system for the UN common premises in Odesa and Dnipro to ensure uninterrupted data connectivity services.

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.

ETC ICT Helpdesk

The ETC team continues to support UNDSS, IOM, OCHA, and the Security Management Team (SMT) in Odesa and Dnipro with audio-visual equipment, installation of telecommunications equipment, as well as assessing of IT equipment.

Services for communities

The ETC signed a waiver with the local NGO to implement the CFM call centre project in Ternopil. The ETC participated in a Technical Review and Assessment Committee (TRAC) meeting to check the NGO's financial capacity and assess risks and currently is working with the Partnerships Unit to establish a Field-Level Agreement (FLA).

The service for communities Project Manager took part in a workshop hosted by Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) on "Perceptions of Aid in Ukraine" in Kyiv on 20 April. Ground Truth Solutions is an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) that helps people affected by crisis influence the design and implementation of humanitarian aid. This workshop was facilitated by the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group Coordinator. The service for communities Project Manager also took part in a working session facilitated by the AAP Working Group in Kyiv on 26 April covering topics such as low-tech communication with conflict-affected communities and CFM-related communications.

A total of 19,198 users have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance through the ETC Chatbot, vBezpetsi, since its launch.

As of 30 April, 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. The exit strategy and closure of the chatbot is on the stage of checking and approval.

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 **16 May 2023**.

Contacts

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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:

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