

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #27

Reporting period: 01/09/2023 to 30/09/2023

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in Ukraine on 03 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. ETC SitReps are distributed every month.

Highlights

- On 19 September, the ETC restored the faulty VHF radio network in Kramatorsk, reconnecting the service to the Security Information Operations Centre (SIOC) in Kyiv. In eastern Ukraine, ensuring the enhanced safety and security of humanitarian responders is critical.
- The ETC finalized the new radio code-plug that covers the VHF radio network extension across 22 sites in 15 oblasts. The new code-plug is also compatible with the Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) solution. This activity was carried out with engagement from {TESS+} and the inter-agency community.
- Three 'Plain Language' sessions, focused on cash assistance, health, and protection, were delivered throughout September to 61 participants together with CLEAR Global and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group. Plain language is a communications discipline focused on clarity—the goal of the workshops is to help humanitarians connect with affected people as effectively as possible.



The ETC on mission in Kramatorsk on 19 September to debug the faulty VHF radio equipment. Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

The war in Ukraine continues to escalate with ongoing strikes and ground fighting destroying lives, livelihoods, and civilian infrastructure, impacting on rising humanitarian needs.

Since 24 February 2022—which marked the start of the conflict in Ukraine—the estimated toll has surpassed 27,449 civilian casualties, including 9,701 deaths and 17,748 injured as of 24 September 2023, according to the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#).

The [International Organisation for Migration \(IOM\)](#) reports that 5.1 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict as of 14 June 2023, and the [Office of the](#)

[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#) estimates the total number of Ukrainian refugees recorded globally at over 6.2 million as of 26 September 2023.

Impact on telecommunications

Reports continue to be received of severe disruptions to mobile and satellite telephony services in areas close to the frontlines. The ETC is testing a solution to provide responders deploying on frontline missions with communications services and equipment¹.

As the conflict escalates, cyber-attacks continue to occur. Some of these attacks impact the availability of services, while others focus on leaking data. The ETC continues to protect its connectivity services with advanced firewall protection set up by partners.

ETC Activities

Coordination

The ETC continued to work on the Ukraine 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP). This document includes cluster objectives, response strategy, costing methodology, and funding. It will be reviewed by the UN Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

The ETC participated in a full-day workshop on a Joint Review of Preliminary People In Need (PIN) and Severity organized by OCHA on 22 September. The aim of the workshop was to process the Cluster inputs and prepare the necessary content for the joint analysis. The clusters shared their presentations on the indicators used, sector severity phases, as well as PIN and severity overview with maps.

One of the two rapidly deployable VSATs prepositioned by ETC partner, the Government of Luxembourg, during the first phase of the response in 2022 was shipped back to in Luxembourg on 11 September. There remains one VSAT prepositioned in Lviv to provide back-up connectivity services, if needed.

On 26 September, the head of WFP office in Odesa and the ETC visited Mykolaiv to meet with local authorities.

Security communications (radio)

VHF radio network

The ETC and WFP—as cluster lead—signed the agreed contract with the Ukraine Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) on 14 August to install VHF radio equipment at BRT premises. This will expand the VHF radio network coverage for enhanced security communications services. The initial installation is planned for five locations—Kyiv, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Luch, and Lviv.

The ETC visited BRT premises in Kyiv on 19 September to assess the installation place for the cabinet and the antenna as well as communicate with the BRT Chief Engineer and technical team about the upcoming installation prerequisites. The ETC also visited the BRT location in Dnipro on 21 September and delivered the required equipment for the installation

¹ See information on the 'Remote Site on Vehicle' (RSoV) project below.

there. The ETC procured some additional equipment for the Kyiv BRT tower installation on 21 September and sent the equipment to the BRT Kharkiv office.

The ETC finalized the new radio code-plug that covers the VHF radio network extension across 22 sites in 15 oblasts. The new code-plug is also compatible with the Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) solution. This activity was carried out with engagement from {TESS+} and the inter-agency community.

On 19 September, the ETC restored the faulty VHF radio network in Kramatorsk, reconnecting the service to the Security Information Operations Centre (SIOC) in Kyiv. In eastern Ukraine, ensuring the enhanced safety and security of humanitarian responders is critical. The team also checked the power supply equipment at the site and configured radio and Cisco equipment.

Security & Information Operations Centre (SIOC)

On 06 September, UNDSS signed the contract for the new SIOC site location in Kyiv. The planning design for data connectivity, radio communications, and power back-up systems are finalized.

Radio programming

On 19 September, the cluster initiated a follow-up inter-agency survey on radio programming needs. The aim of the survey was to gather information on the needs and to have an overview of security communications compliance for field vehicles. The cluster already received 15 responses from ILO, IOM, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNDSS, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRCO, WFP, WHO, and the World Bank.

The cluster further supported radio programming needs as follows:

- Troubleshooting UNHCR VHF handheld radios and checking the settings compatibility with the UNDSS SIOC;
- Callsign creation and radio programming for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA);
- Reprogrammed two VHF mobile radios for FAO;
- Supported UNDSS by checking the battery and inverter in their office;
- In Kyiv, three vehicle VHF radios for World Bank Group (WBG) were reprogrammed on 08 September;
- Three vehicle VHF radios for OCHA were reprogrammed, as well one for FAO and one for the World Bank;
- The ETC supported WHO with antennas for vehicle docking stations.

ETC radio programming services can be requested through a ticketing system via email:

ukraine.etc servicedesk@wfp.org

Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project

The ETC continues to develop the RSoV project—a pilot mobile VHF radio solution that can provide secure communications in UN armoured vehicles deployed on mission in high-risk areas.

From 05 September to 08 September, the ETC assessed a fleet of Logistics Cluster trucks in Dnipro as part of the project to adapt the RSoV solution to trucks deploying in interagency convoy missions in high-risk areas. The cluster plans to prepare the cabling work on the trucks as the first step and is coordinating with three vehicle vendors in Ukraine to confirm a quotation.

The GPS tracking system on the trucks in Dnipro was synchronized following the assessment. One truck requires re-installation of the tracking system and other trucks require modifications such as the relocation of the SOS button to safer location within the vehicle.

IOM has engaged the ETC in planning for an assessment of IOM vehicles to install RSoV equipment for enhanced safety during inter-agency missions to high-risk areas. If the installation goes ahead, the ETC will provide technical support for the pre-cabling of the three IOM vehicles that are positioned in Odesa, Dnipro, and Kharkiv.

Capacity building

The ETC is planning to conduct new series of security communications trainings to build awareness and understanding of the set-up and channel usage of the new VHF radio network design for Ukraine. The new VHF license was received in July 2023.

Secure data connectivity

The ETC supports data connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in Odesa, Kharkiv, and Lviv. The cluster also supports the deployment of internet connectivity services in the new joint office premises of UNICEF and WFP in Mykolaiv.

ETC Helpdesk

ETC supported OCHA, IOM, and UNDSS with printing and audio-visual equipment in the UN common premises in Odesa.

The ETC also troubleshooted a printer issue in the UN common premises in Kharkiv on 27 September.

Services for communities

One application was received from an NGO in response to the call for interest to become an implementing partner in the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) call centre project in Ternopil. The project proposal is currently under evaluation and capacity assessment by the committee. The project objective is to support local authorities with two-way communication with affected populations. The implementing partner will be selected by mid-October.

The ETC continues to work with the UN Cash Working Group (CWG) on the development of a Chatbot. The ETC conducted online meetings with two potential suppliers, who will provide their proposals and cost of services. The CWG is preparing the structure and content of the Chatbot.

Three 'Plain Language' sessions focused on Cash assistance, Health, and Protection were delivered on 04 September, 26 September, and 29 September to a total of 61 participants together with CLEAR Global and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working

Group. Plain language is a communications discipline focused on clarity—the goal of the workshops is to help humanitarians connect with affected people as effectively as possible. There has been a total of nine Plain Language workshops held in 2023 with a total of 171 participants. Eight more workshops are planned in 2023.

On 26 September, the ETC and OCHA engaged the Global Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster about possible areas of collaboration in the Kharkiv region and Western Ukraine. The assessment of the collective sites' needs is ongoing.

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 completion of projects initiated in 2022.

Funding of US\$921,000 was received in May from the Government of Japan towards the cluster's 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.

The ETC and WFP USA continue to work on an application proposal for an in-kind equipment donation from Global ETC partner, Cisco Crisis Response. This equipment is planned to secure the VHF radio backbone network.

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 24 October 2023.

Contacts

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www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

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