

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #28

Reporting period: 01/10/2023 to 31/10/2023

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

- The cluster installed the new repeater in Kyiv on 25 October to expand VHF radio signal coverage as part of a wider collaboration with the Ukrainian Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) for the expansion of the VHF radio network across five locations.
- The ETC is rolling out a new radio programming plan with new additional frequencies for all handheld devices and vehicle radios in Ukraine for UN agencies. The plan was informed by data received from a survey conducted with UN partners on radio programming needs. The cluster reprogrammed 221 VHF handheld radios and 44 VHF mobile radios for WFP, IOM, WHO, UNHCR, OCHA, RCO, UNDP, UNDSS, and OHCHR.
- The ETC assessed bunkers and invincibility points in Mykolaiv oblast on 24 October to discover key information from community members and local representatives on the status of communications in their area of residence.



The ETC specialists install VHF radio repeater in Kyiv on 25 October to expand radio coverage in the city. Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

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

Since 24 February 2022—which marked the start of the large-scale attack on Ukraine—the estimated toll has surpassed 27,768 civilian casualties, including 9,806 deaths and 17,962 injured as of 08 October, according to the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#).

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

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 leaked data. The ETC continues to protect its connectivity services with advanced firewall protection set up by partners.

ETC Activities

Coordination

In early October, UNOCHA reviewed the first submission of the ETC narrative for the Ukraine 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP). The cluster's critical needs, objectives, response approach, activities, targets, and funding requirements to be included in the HNRP were presented by the ETC at an OCHA workshop on 24 October.

The ETC in Ukraine launched the 2023 user satisfaction survey from 03 to 24 October. A total of 52 participants responded. The ETC is analysing the results and will publish a report by end of November to identify areas of improvement, better understand the needs of humanitarians, and how to enhance ETC services and activities in 2024.

Security communications (radio)

VHF radio network

The ETC continues to collaborate with the Ukrainian Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) for the expansion of the VHF radio network coverage for enhanced security communications services in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Lviv, and Luch (covering Mykolaiv and Kherson city areas).

The new repeater was installed in Kyiv on 25 October. The ETC is mapping the coverage of the new repeater.

Security & Information Operations Centre (SIOC)

ETC continues to support UNDSS to operate the SIOC and its relocation to a permanent location in Kyiv.

The cluster troubleshooted the Iridium docking station at the SIOC on 12 October.

SIOC services were enhanced by the deployment of a new network router.

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

Radio programming

The ETC is rolling out a new radio programming plan with new additional frequencies for UN agencies. The plan was informed by data received from a survey conducted with UN partners on radio programming needs and satellite phone assets.

In partnership with {TESS+} and the interagency community, the ETC finalized the new radio code-plug with new additional frequencies for the expanded VHF radio network services across all operational locations.

The ETC is now rolling out its plan to reprogram all handheld and vehicle radios in Ukraine for all UN agencies, as follows:

- **Kyiv:** 10 VHF handheld radios and one mobile radio for the UNRCO. Six handheld VHF radios for IOM and staff trained in radio programming. 25 VHF handheld radios and two VHF mobile radios for UNHCR and security telecommunications training for 18 staff.
- **Dnipro:** 126 handheld and 34 vehicle radios in total for WFP, IOM, WHO, UNDSS, and UNDP. Radio programming training provided for OCHA and UNHCR to build skills and knowledge to re-program staff radios.
- **Odesa:** 48 handheld and nine vehicle VHF radios.
- **Lviv:** 31 handheld radios for WFP and 11 VHF handheld radios for IOM.

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.

The ETC team received four new RSoV kits from the local vendor. The system consists of the modified Starlink terminal and the RSoV kit box with radio and electrical equipment to get the solution running.

The ETC provided technical support to WFP to pre-cable the third vehicle that will be positioned in Dnipro. The pre-cabling of the vehicle for Odesa was finished on 11 October and on 26 October, the RSoV kit was installed in the vehicle.

The ETC also supported IOM, OCHA, and UNFPA with a technical assessment of their vehicles for possible RSoV cabling and modified Starlink installation at the local vehicle workshop in Kyiv. The cluster supported UNDSS to pre-cable seven of their vehicles.

Capacity building

The ETC is developing the security communications training plan for Ukraine following the finalization of the new VHF radio network design and obtaining new additional licenses in July. The cluster is conducting a 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.

On 11 October, the ETC held a radio training for 18 UNHCR staff in Kyiv and on 23 October, the cluster conducted a security telecommunications training for 24 IOM staff in Dnipro.

Secure data connectivity

The ETC continues to support data connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in Odesa, Kharkiv, and Lviv.

ETC Helpdesk

The ETC supported UNDSS colleagues with IT-related maintenance issues on 06 October in the Odesa UN common premises.

On 09 October, the ETC supported colleagues from WFP, OCHA, and UNFPA with audio-visual equipment during their meetings in the UN common premises in Odesa.

Services for communities

The ETC visited Mykolaiv oblast on 24 October for an initial assessment of bunkers and invincibility points. The assessment aimed to discover key information from community members and local representatives on the status of communications in the area they stay, including how they are receiving or sharing information, locations with telephone coverage, and locations that have or need additional power and internet connectivity.

On 03, 10, and 17 October, the ETC together with CLEAR Global and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) Working Group conducted three sessions of 'Plain Language' session of 2023, focusing on Protection. 52 participants—five from UN agencies, 29 from international non-government organizations (INGOs), and 18 from local NGOs. 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 continues to work with the UN Cash Working Group (CWG) on the development of a Chatbot. The ETC sent additional questions to the potential suppliers. These suppliers have a global Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with WFP.

The ETC finalized the plan of the operation and project indicators for the Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) call centre project in Ternopil. The call centre project—dedicated to support local authorities to communicate with the affected population—awaits a final review from the WFP Cooperating Partner Committee (CPC).

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 finalized 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.

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