

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #34

Reporting period: 01/04/2024 to 30/04/2024

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 monthly.

Highlights

- On 07 April, Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant—Europe’s largest and currently under the military occupation of the Russian Federation—was directly targeted in military action for the first time since November 2022.
- Further, on 22 April, the TV tower in Kharkiv was destroyed, partially disrupting telecommunications. Despite these challenges, ETC services remain operational.
- On 18 April, the ETC delivered critical Security Communications System (SCS) training for 20 UN staff in Mykolaiv to boost the safety and security of humanitarians operating in an increasingly volatile environment.



ETC Security Communications System (SCS) training in Mykolaiv for UN agencies. Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

On 11 April, speakers at the [Security Council Meeting](#) announced that since March, the large-scale coordinated attacks on critical infrastructure has destroyed or damaged more than two dozen energy facilities throughout the country, including the Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant. These attacks have disrupted access to electricity for millions of Ukrainians in large cities and in rural areas, as well as access to water supply in some locations.

The International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#)) reports that approximately 3.39 million people have become internally displaced in Ukraine as of 31 March 2024. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), as of 14 March, approximately 6.5 million refugees from Ukraine are recorded globally.

The humanitarian community estimates that 17.6 million people in Ukraine—40 percent of the country’s total population—and 4.2 million in refugee-hosting countries continue to need multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance.

Impact on telecommunications

On 07 April, Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant—Europe’s largest and currently under the military occupation of the Russian Federation—was directly targeted in military action for the first time since November 2022.

On 22 April, the [TV tower in Kharkiv was destroyed](#), partially disrupting telecommunications. Despite these challenges, the ETC equipment in this location is currently working.

Continuing reports highlight significant disturbances to mobile and satellite telephony services in regions close to the frontlines. In many regions throughout the country, the situation with electricity supply is worsening.

Amid the escalating conflict, cyberattacks persist with varying impacts, affecting service availability in some cases, and targeting the unauthorized release of data in others.

ETC Activities

Coordination

In cooperation with the International NGO Safety Organization (INSO), the ETC further surveyed the 13 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who previously expressed interest in joining the ETC Security Communications System (SCS) service. The ETC continues to engage with UNDSS and INSO to gather more data on NGO needs. Throughout April, there were no additional expressions of interest for Security Communications System (SCS) services from NGOs, with the total number remaining at 13.

The ETC collaborated with UNDSS to develop a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for communications, emphasizing standardization with the Security Information and Operations Centre (SIOC) and humanitarian convoy members. The SOP was endorsed by the Security Management Team (SMT) on 25 April and shared by UNDSS with all UN security officers and UN IT teams.

The ETC is assessing the request from the local health administration in Mykolaiv to support the remote health centres for enhanced communications in the Mykolaiv region.

Security communications (radio)

VHF radio network

Throughout April, the Ukrainian Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) focused on restoring infrastructure damaged by an airstrike, engaging a third-party supplier recommended by BRT. A preliminary technical assessment of new sites¹ has already been carried out and the procurement process for replacement equipment initiated. The collaboration with BRT demonstrates ETC efforts to restore critical broadcasting services in affected areas and continue support in existing areas².

The deployment of network equipment donated by partner Cisco Crisis Response to support and secure the VHF radio network in Ukraine is ongoing. This includes finalizing the testing of Cisco Meraki equipment and initiating the deployment of the Cisco firewalls at strategic locations. The four remote sites in Odesa, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kharkiv were migrated with

¹ Kehychivka, Kropyvnytskyi, Mykolaiv, Orly, Pokrovsk, Poltava, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia

² Existing VHF radio coverage provides secure communications services beyond the common operational areas of Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipro, Lviv, and key locations close to the frontline in Kramatorsk, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Luch, and Kherson.

the Cisco Meraki firewalls in April³. The ETC is planning to migrate with Cisco Meraki firewalls in Kramatorsk in May.

Radio programming

Radio programming was carried out during April—34 handheld VHF radios were programmed for ILO in Kyiv (14), IOM in Dnipro (8), and OHCHR in Kharkiv (12).

UN agencies are now performing radio checks with the UNDSS-managed SIOC and users from Kyiv, Odesa, and Dnipro have performed the scheduled radio checks. A high percentage (around 90%) of participants from WFP experienced good voice quality. The same radio check with VHF handheld users in Dnipro and Odesa was made on 24 April. It was found that some users in Odesa have issues with the quality of communication, so the ETC is investigating the possibility of improving the coverage there.

ETC radio programming services can be requested through a ticketing system via email: ukraine.etc servicedesk@wfp.org.

Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project

A total of 17 trucks managed by the WFP-led Logistics Cluster were pre-cabled and successfully tested with the RSoV solution (Starlink connectivity and radio VHF communication) in Dnipro.

The ETC conducted an RSoV refresher training on 11 April for three WFP drivers and four Logistics Cluster truck drivers in Odesa.

Capacity building

The ETC is organizing two Telecommunications Security Standards (TESS+) training sessions in Ukraine to take place from 13 to 17 May and from 20 to 24 May with 37 applications received from 12 UN agencies. After a rigorous selection process, all candidates were confirmed by their supervisors, ensuring full participation in the planned training sessions.

On 18 April, the ETC delivered SCS training for 20 staff in Mykolaiv—UNICEF (8), UNOPS (9), IOM (1), and UNFPA (2).

To book security communications training sessions, please use [this link](#).

Secure data connectivity

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

The ETC remains committed to safeguarding its connectivity services and employs advanced firewall protection implemented in collaboration with partner Cisco Crisis Response.

Services for communities

³ During the project, the equipment has been deployed also in the UNDSS-managed primary SIOC in Kyiv and back-up Remote Security Operations Centre (RSOC) in Lviv.

The ETC is conducting a pre-assessment in response to a request made in March by the Education Department to support schools in the Odesa region with internet connectivity services in the shelters in schools. The ETC met with the Education Department on 18 April to discuss the needs.

Dashboard

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

Funding

In 2024, the ETC in Ukraine has a budget requirement of US\$1.5 million to continue to deliver vital communications services. The ETC is currently 73% funded out of this total with a US\$1.1 million balance from funding received in 2023.

Funds received by the ETC in 2023 were carried over to complete critical projects, including US\$921,000 received in May 2023 from the Government of Japan and a US\$500,000 in-kind equipment donation received in February 2024 from Cisco Crisis Response to secure the VHF radio backbone network in Ukraine.

Challenges

The escalating security situation in eastern and southern areas of Ukraine hampers ETC efforts to expand the VHF network.

The risk of cyber-attacks is considered high in the region.

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

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