

Ukraine

ETC Situation Report #5

Reporting period: 13/04/2022 to 26/04/2022

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. The ETC is deploying cyber security solutions and VSATs to provide secure networks and back-up connectivity to humanitarians, while working to obtain approvals for the establishment of radio security communications.

Highlights

- In order to better support the deployment of services in Ukraine, the ETC team have relocated from Krakow, Poland, to Lviv in western Ukraine. Equipment prepositioned in the warehouse in Rzeszow Poland has been shipped to Lviv and Dnipro.
- On 16 April, the ETC deployed a cyber security solution designed by its partner Cisco Crisis Response at an interagency humanitarian workspace in Lviv. Approximately 52 humanitarians have registered on the secure network.
- The ETC Coordinator and two WFP FITTEST IT & Telecommunications Specialists arrived in Dnipro on 25 April, where they will secure the network at an interagency office established by OCHA and UNHCR with the Cisco solution, and install emergency.lu's RANGER VSAT to provide back-up connectivity.



The emergency.lu GATR VSAT is loaded onto a truck headed to for Lviv (22 April). Photo Credit: Krste Ropajkov

General Situation and Context

As of 20 April the toll of the ongoing conflict is estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have reached 5,264 civilian casualties, including 2,345 civilian deaths. The OHCHR has stated that actual numbers may be significantly higher as many reports of casualties are still awaiting corroboration. The most intense hostilities continue to take place in Donetska, Luhanska, Kharkivska and Khersonska oblasts.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that 7.7 million people have been internally displaced since the start of the conflict, and UNHCR puts the total number of refugees having crossed international borders at 5.2 million. The latest refugee and displacement figures are available here: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

Impacts on Telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure remains operational throughout most of Ukraine, however, there are reports of hacking and jamming of telecommunications means in the country and localised outages in areas of heavy fighting. Although reports of 3G and 4G mobile network coverage continue to be positive along the Ukrainian borders, there may be localised saturation of the network in some areas due to the influx of refugees.

A high volume of Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) attacks on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been observed to have caused a significant reduction in internet speeds. Additionally, phishing attacks targeting humanitarians have been reported.

Activities

Movement of Staff and Equipment

The ETC team that were based in Krakow, Poland, began to relocate to a new base of operations inside Ukraine on 15 April, with the arrival of the interim ETC and WFP IT emergency coordinator in Lviv. An ETC Information Management Officer, a second WFP FITTEST IT & Telecommunications Specialist, and a FITTEST Administration and Logistics Specialist also joined the team in Lviv over the last week.

Another wave of ETC staff arrived in Krakow on 23 April, including the incoming coordinator for the overall ETC and WFP IT response, as well as a new coordinator who will be dedicated to the rapidly expanding cluster response. On 24 April, the new dedicated ETC Information Management Officer hired for the Ukraine response also arrived in Krakow.

In order to better support the deployment of services in interagency humanitarian sites identified in Ukraine, the ETC equipment that had been prepositioned in Rzeszow, Poland, is being sent into Ukraine. A shipment that included a rapidly-deployable VSAT provided by emergency.lu and cyber security hardware provided by Cisco Crisis Response is due to be dispatched to Dnipro on 26 April, where it will be deployed at an interagency humanitarian workspace. The remainder of the ETC equipment that was prepositioned in Poland arrived at a WFP warehouse in the outskirts of Lviv on 23 April.

Data Connectivity

On 16 April, the ETC deployed a cyber security solution designed by ETC partner Cisco Crisis Response to protect the network being used by UN Agencies and INGOs at an interagency office in Lviv. The solution, which includes both hardware and software components and a user registration system, was designed by Cisco to be deployed with ETC networks in Ukraine to protect humanitarians' data from cyber threats. The ETC team also engaged with the building management to upgrade the speed of the internet connection.

After the initial installation, a WFP FITTEST IT & Telecommunications Specialist extended the secure network to cover additional conference rooms on another floor of the building on 21 April, and provided support to users with the one-time registration required to access the network. So far 52 humanitarian users have registered on the network. The recruitment process has been initiated for three local Ukrainian IT assistants who will provide user support at interagency locations where ETC connectivity services are deployed in Ukraine.

The next planned location where the ETC will provide connectivity services is an interagency site in Dnipro, a major hub for humanitarians serving the conflict-affected areas of Luhansk, Donetsk, and Kharkiv in the east. The site, which was identified by an ETC Services for Communities advisor on her assessment mission in Ukraine from 6 to 20 April, is being set up by OCHA and UNHCR to serve as a common office location for humanitarians.

On 24 April, the ETC & WFP IT emergency coordinator departed Lviv with two FITTEST IT & Telecommunications Specialists who will meet a shipment of equipment from Rzeszow, Poland in Dnipro. The team will deploy the Cisco solution to secure the network at the interagency site, while the emergency.lu RANGER VSAT will be set up as a back-up connection in case the connection through the local Internet Service Provider (ISP) fails.

Services for Communities

An ETC Services for Communities Advisor carried out assessments in Lviv, Vinnytsia, Kropyvnytski, and Dnipro during her mission from 6 to 20 April. In addition to identifying interagency locations for the provision of ETC connectivity services to humanitarians, she engaged with local NGOs and clusters to assess the opportunities for the ETC to provide services to the affected population inside Ukraine.

The Protection cluster and WFP requested that the ETC establishes a hotline and feedback management platform to serve as an interagency Common Feedback Mechanism (CFM) in Ukraine. The CFM would provide a coordinated channel for beneficiaries to request information and provide feedback on the services they receive, increasing the accountability of the humanitarian response to the affected population and providing valuable insights to inform decision-making. The ETC is engaging with OCHA to further assess the interest of other clusters in participating in a CFM administered by the ETC and outline the respective roles of OCHA and the ETC in coordinating and implementing the mechanism.

A channel for one-way communication with beneficiaries has already been established through the ETC Chatbot. The Protection Cluster is using the Chatbot to provide information to the affected population on their rights and the services offered by the cluster. Beneficiaries can access useful links, referrals, and information on the locations where humanitarian assistance is being offered through the Chatbot. While in Lviv from 17 to 20 April, the ETC Services for Communities advisor engaged with other clusters who have expressed interest in using the Chatbot to disseminate information on assistance being provided by their cluster.

The Chatbot is now available on Telegram and will be promoted under the name `vBezpetsi_bot` (вБезпечі in Ukrainian), which translates to “safe spaces”. According to an [Information Needs Assessment](#) conducted by the ETC, Telegram is one of the most trusted sources of information in Ukraine. This finding was validated by the [Rapid Needs](#)

[Assessment Report](#) published by REACH on 6 April, which found that Telegram was the most commonly used source of information about humanitarian assistance, after friends, family and neighbours. The Chatbot will also be launched on Viber as an additional option, as it is also widely used in Ukraine.

Security Communications

The ETC is working with UNDSS to obtain approval from the Security Management Team and UN Designated Official in Ukraine for a set of recommendations on security communications systems. The recommendations include the use of VHF radio as a back-up means of security communications in case mobile networks are compromised. The ETC is working with UNDSS on an official request to the Government of Ukraine for a frequency license for the establishment of a VHF network for humanitarians.

In the meantime, the ETC is preparing for the establishment of radio communications networks in Ukraine by pre-positioning equipment in Lviv and Dnipro and assessing potential locations for the installation of radio repeaters. The ETC is also supporting UNDSS to program the radio communications systems in their armoured vehicles. A WFP FITTEST Telecommunications Specialist has programmed the radios in 8 UNDSS armed vehicles in Ukraine to date, in preparation for the establishment of the radio network and to allow vehicles to communicate in convoys over simplex frequencies.

The ETC is also preparing to support with the setup of four UNDSS Security Operations Centres (SOC), beginning with the priority location of Mukachevo. The three other SOCs will be established in Lviv, Vinnytsia, and Dnipro.

Funding

The ETC has received a contribution of US \$1 million from the United States, and US \$400,000 and US\$ 700,000 from two Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) envelopes.

The ETC funding requirement for the Ukraine emergency operation was revised from the initial budget of US \$2.9 million, which covered three locations for a period of six months, to US \$3.72 million, which will now cover security communications, Security Operations Centre (SOC) setup, data connectivity, and helpdesk services in five locations until the end of August 2022, as well as the implementation of the ETC Chatbot.

Based on the revised budget of US \$3.72 million, the ETC is 56% funded.

Challenges

Security and access is expected to be a major constraint in the ETC's ability to implement telecommunications solutions within Ukraine.

There risk of cyber attacks is considered to be high in this response.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **27 April 2022 at 13:00 UTC**.

Contacts

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

<https://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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