Ukraine

ETC Situation Report #11
Reporting period: 16/07/2022 to 31/07/2022

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Highlights

- The ETC is supporting the setup and maintenance of five physical and remote UNDSS-managed Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in Ukraine. The ETC is working with UNDSS to review to the locations of the remote SOCs in Ukraine.
- Since 16 April, the ETC is providing secure internet connectivity and ICT helpdesk services to 261 staff from 12 humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies and INGOs, in two interagency workspaces in Dnipro and Lviv.
- Since the launch of the ETC Chatbot – vBezpetsi – a total of 9,271 users in Ukraine have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance. The ETC continues to explore channels to boost the visibility of the Chatbot among UN agencies in Ukraine.
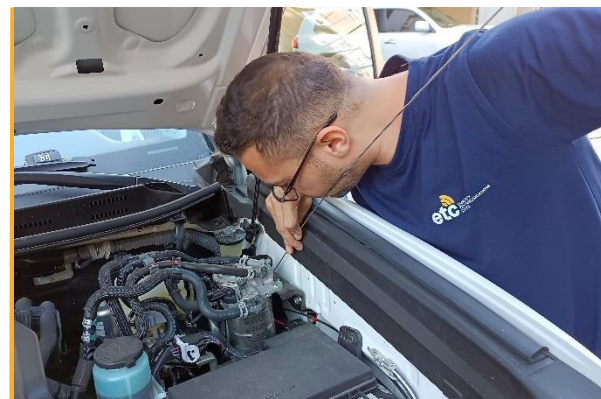
A WFP FITTEST Specialist installing a satellite docking station to aid security communications for WFP drivers in Lviv.
Photo: WFP/David Pickering

Overview

Five months into the hostilities in Ukraine, concerns about the impact of the conflict on global food supplies are growing, with key ports for the export of grain blocked.

The estimated toll of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine surpassed 12,272 civilian casualties, including 5,237 deaths as of 25 July, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 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, and Kharkivska oblasts.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that 6.27 million people are internally displaced in Ukraine due to the conflict, and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) puts the total number of refugees having crossed international borders at 10.35 million.

Impact on telecommunications

Telecommunications infrastructure remains operational throughout most of Ukraine, however, there are reports of hacking and jamming of telecommunications channels 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 cyber-attacks on Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been observed to have caused a significant reduction in internet speeds. Additionally, phishing attacks targeting humanitarian workers have been reported.

In response, the ETC is deploying cybersecurity solutions to provide secure networks and backup connectivity to humanitarians, while working with UNDSS to obtain approvals for the establishment of radio security communications. The ETC is also collaborating with partners to increase accountability towards affected populations, in part through the launch of the ETC Chatbot that allows affected populations to access information about humanitarian assistance.

Activities

Coordination

The ETC team is present in four locations in Ukraine – Dnipro, Kyiv, Lviv and Odesa. The ETC coordinator is based in Kyiv.

A coordination meeting was held with OCHA in Lviv and Odesa on 28 July to understand the OCHA coordination plan for Ukraine and the sub-cluster coordination strategy. Ukraine coordination is moving to Kyiv from Lviv while Lviv, Odesa, and Dnipro will function as sub-cluster coordination units.

The ETC team on the ground comprises the ETC Coordinator and the ETC Information Management Officer (IMO), as well as two IT & Telecommunications specialists, two Telecommunications specialists, and an Administration and Logistics specialist from WFP's Fast IT & Telecommunications Emergency & Support Team (FITTEST).

The ETC attended a meeting with the United Nations Resident Coordinators Office (UNRCO) in Kyiv to follow up on the UN's request for a Very High Frequency (VHF) license as the backup means of telecommunications in the country. A similar engagement meeting was held with UNDSS in Lviv on Security Communications Services (SCS).

The ETC met with the OCHA Data Responsibility team that is on a mission to Ukraine to address data protection and cyber security issues.

Data connectivity

Since 16 April, the ETC is providing secure internet connectivity and ICT helpdesk services to 261 staff from 12 humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies and INGOs, in two interagency workspaces in Dnipro and Lviv. The secure network protects humanitarian data from cyber threats.

In Dnipro, the ETC access point has been relocated for better coverage and to eliminate channel interference. Two BGAN connectivity devices were tested and training was provided for WFP security personnel going on a field mission.

In the inter-agency location in Odesa, the ETC has established the IT infrastructure to deploy data connectivity services within the cybersecurity solution designed by ETC partner Cisco Crisis Response.

The ISP contract for this service is being finalised and the service is expected to be installed tentatively within a week.

The ETC is exploring options to restructure its data connectivity infrastructure and equipment in Lviv, following the decision by many UN agencies to relocate from the Dnister Hotel. This restructure will involve the rearrangement connectivity assets to provide better service for the remaining UN agencies in the Dnister hotel.

Security communications

The ETC team is closely following up with the UNRCO and UNDSS to liaise with the Government of Ukraine on the UN's request for a VHF licence[1] as the backup means of telecommunications in the country.

The ETC is supporting the setup and maintenance of five physical and remote UNDSS-managed Security Operations Centres (SOCs) in Ukraine. Physical SOCs are based in Lviv and Mukachevo while Kyiv, Dnipro and Odesa will be connected the secure communications system remotely. The ETC is working with UNDSS to review the locations of the remote SOCs in Ukraine.

The team is prepositioning telecommunications equipment in Kyiv and Odesa and developing a plan to establish security communications systems for interagency use.

To improve the safety and security of UN personnel in the field, the ETC has checked the configuration of security communications systems in 55 armoured and/or soft-skin vehicles from five UN agencies in three locations – Dnipro, Lviv, and Mukachevo – since activation in March.

The ETC team facilitated several training sessions on security communications protocol in Lviv and Dnipro for 53 security staff and drivers from seven UN agencies (namely IOM, FAO, WFP, OCHA, UNHCR, UNDSS, and UNICEF) between 16 – 31 July. A total of 77 personnel have received ETC training since activation in March.

Services for Communities

The ETC Chatbot, available on [Telegram](#) and [Viber](#), is a tool for communications between humanitarian responders and the affected population. In Ukraine, the Chatbot goes by the name vBezpetsi (вБезпеці in Ukrainian), which translates to "safe spaces".

Since the launch of vBezpetsi, a total of 9,271 users in Ukraine have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance, which represents an eight percent increase from the figure reported in the last sitrep.

The latest statistics of the monitoring tool are available to help analyze the performance of vBezpetsi using anonymous statistics.

The ETC continues to explore channels to boost the visibility of the Chatbot among UN agencies in Ukraine. A poster campaign is being developed with partner WFP.

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[1] The ETC's recommendations on the use of VHF as a back-up means of security communications in case mobile networks are compromised have been drafted in consultation with WFP's [Telecommunications Security Standards {TESS+}](#) team and formally endorsed by the Ukraine Security Management Team (SMT).

Funding

The ETC is 97% funded out of the US$3.72 million required to implement the ETC Chatbot and to provide security communications services, SOC setup, data connectivity, and helpdesk services in five locations until the end of August 2022.

So far, the ETC has received a total of $3.62 million from the following donors:

Funding Sources	US$	%
Two UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) envelopes	1,100,000	30
ICANN	1,000,000	28
United States	1,000,000	28
Ukraine Humanitarian Fund	248,000	7
Cisco	150,000	4
Tableau	125,000	3
Total	3,623,000	100

Challenges

The risk of cyber attacks in Ukraine is considered high.

Security issues and access to some locations in eastern Ukraine is a major constraint in the ETC's ability to implement telecommunications solutions within Ukraine.

The ETC is facing major challenges in acquiring a VHF license in country.

Meetings

The next Global ETC Partners Teleconference on the Ukraine response will take place on **25 August 2022 at 13:00 UTC**.

Contacts

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https://www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

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