

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #19

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

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) was activated in Ukraine on 3 March 2022 following the escalation of armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. ETC SitReps are distributed every month.

Highlights

- The ETC assessed the coverage of the VHF radio communications network that is now accessible to UN staff in Dnipro, Kyiv and Odesa, and is working to expand and improve the network.
- 10 Starlink satellite connectivity terminals were received in Kyiv and are being distributed to the ETC's field locations, where they will be deployed for back-up internet connectivity for ETC services and in the new Crisis Coordination Hubs (CCH) that are being set up across the country by OCHA.
- The ETC conducted technical assessments in Lviv oblast and Ternopil from 23–26 January for a project to support the local authorities with the establishment of an inter-regional call centre.



The ETC Coordinator meets with a local NGO in Ternopil.

Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

The estimated toll of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine surpassed 17,994 civilian casualties, including 6,919 deaths as of 02 January, according to the [Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#).

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reports that 5.9 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 Ukrainian refugees recorded across Europe at over 7.9 million.

Impact on telecommunications

The continued attacks on national infrastructure across Ukraine have led to significant damage to national telecommunications infrastructure, resulting in severe communications blackouts across the country. In many cases, disruption to electrical power supplies supporting telecommunications equipment has resulted in service failures, including of ETC services.

Activities

Coordination

The ETC coordinator and Information Management Officer participated in the annual Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) retreat hosted by OCHA from 31 January to 1 February.

Security communications

Since deploying VHF radio networks in Dnipro, Kyiv, and Odesa for UN security communications, the ETC has conducted coverage assessments in all three locations to assess and improve the quality of the network. Tests have shown adequate coverage in central areas of all three cities, however, there is room for improvement in the coverage and audio quality of the network.

To boost the coverage of the network across all three existing sites, as well as the planned locations for VHF network expansion (Lviv and Mukachevo), the ETC submitted requests to Ukraine's Broadcasting and Radio Telecommunications Concern (BRT) to install repeaters on their towers. So far, positive responses have been received from BRT's regional directorates in Lviv, Mukachevo, and Dnipro. The ETC will submit a new VHF license request to the authorities for the installation of new repeaters on the BRT towers. The request will also include the allocation of frequencies for I/NGO use on the VHF network, which is currently only accessible to UN agencies.

The ETC continues to expand the existing VHF network to Lviv and Mukachevo and link all locations to UNDSS' main Security Information Operations Centre (SIOC) in Mukachevo through the Remote SIOC (RSIOC) system. Further assessments have been conducted at a potential site for the installation of a VHF repeater at the University of Lviv and a request has been submitted for the use of the site. Further, approval was obtained for the export of a shipment of VHF equipment from the WFP FITTEST warehouse in Dubai that will be used to set up the RSIOC system. In the meantime, the cluster is installing VHF base stations in the UNDSS offices in all locations to enable monitoring of the network until the RSIOC is established and all networks can be monitored remotely from Mukachevo. So far, base stations have been installed in the UNDSS office and WFP warehouse in Dnipro.

In January, the ETC programmed 47 radios for IOM, UNDSS, UNFPA and WHO in Lviv and Kyiv.

Secure data connectivity

The ETC is supporting data connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in Dnipro and Odesa and in the UNDSS backup SIOC in Lviv. There are 294 registered users from 14 agencies on the network.

The ETC connectivity network was extended to the fifth floor of the building hosting the inter-agency workspace in Odesa. In addition, tablets equipped with the ETC Meeting Room Booking System (MRBS) were installed in the meeting rooms in the hub. The MRBS allows staff from all agencies to book the conference rooms when connected to the ETC internet network.

In December 2022, the ETC received 10 Starlink satellite connectivity terminals in Kyiv. Terminals have since been distributed to the ETC's field locations in Dnipro, Lviv, and Odesa, where they will be deployed for back-up internet connectivity.

The cluster is engaging with OCHA in the process of identifying and assessing sites for the establishment of Crisis Coordination Hubs (CCH) across the country. The hubs—which will be equipped with independent power provided by the Logistics Cluster and independent satellite connectivity and communications equipment provided by the ETC—will serve as a workspace for critical staff in case of a major incident or evacuation.

The ETC is preparing the concept note for the development of a Connectivity on Wheels (CoW) solution for mobile ETC services deployment in newly accessible areas.

Services for Communities

The ETC Coordinator and Services for Communities Project Manager conducted technical assessments in Lviv oblast and Ternopil from 23–26 January for a project to support the local authorities with the establishment of an inter-regional call centre. During the mission, a local NGO in Ternopil with the capacity to support the implementation of the project was identified. The cluster is planning to support enhancements to the Lviv regional call centre after meeting with the director of the centre.

The ETC is also developing a plan to pilot internet services for the affected population and assist with the automation of registration procedures at a volunteer coordination centre for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Stryi, Lviv oblast.

A total of 17,731 users have accessed information relating to humanitarian assistance through the ETC Chatbot, vBezpetsi, since its launch.

As of 31 January, users of the ETC Chatbot most frequently used the service to access information on humanitarian aid (74%), hotlines and referral methods (17%), human rights (5%) and other useful information (4%). When seeking information on humanitarian aid, users most frequently consulted categories related to general cash assistance and to WFP assistance, accessing the information on how to register for assistance and the eligibility criteria.

Dashboard

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

Funding

The ETC in Ukraine is 100% percent funded out of the required US\$1.4 million.

Challenges

Security issues in the newly accessible locations in eastern Ukraine are a major constraint in the ETC's ability to implement telecommunications solutions in eastern Ukraine.

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 **02 March 2023**.

Contacts

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www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

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