

Ukraine – conflict

ETC Situation Report #35

Reporting period: 01/05/2024 to 31/05/2024

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

- The ETC coordinated two [Telecommunications Security Standards {TESS+}](#) training sessions which took place from 13 to 17 May and from 20 to 24 May with 36 participants from 12 UN agencies. The objective of the training was to build capacity and provide in-depth induction into UN security communications systems (SCS) for technical UN personnel. Participants gave positive feedback, noting critical new practical skills which will help organize their work in the field offices of UN agencies, especially in regions where UN operations and missions are particularly active.
- The deployment of network firewall equipment donated by partner—Cisco Crisis Response—to support and secure the VHF radio network in Ukraine was completed in May. This has improved the security of the VHF radio network as well as real-time monitoring of all the remotes sites including Odesa, Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kharkiv. The only remaining site is Kramatorsk, where security challenges has entirely restricted access. The ETC will deploy the network equipment in Kramatorsk once the security situation is improved there.
- From 07 to 08 May, in response to an urgent request from local authorities in Odesa, the ETC set up temporary internet connectivity services for registration points and tents in Odesa opened by the local authorities for support to people affected by intensified shelling. The ETC used its existing Remote Site on Vehicle (RsoV) and satellite solutions to deliver the service. By 09 May, all community members were registered using the new network and the ETC service concluded.



Two telecommunications Security Standards {TESS+} training sessions were held in Kyiv for UN agencies. Photo: WFP/ETC

Situation Overview

In 2024, Ukraine has faced intensified attacks, resulting in increased civilian casualties and devastation in front-line areas and across the country, notably in the northeast.

On 14 May, speakers at the [Security Council meeting](#) condemned the intensified attacks on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure which has caused extensive damage to energy facilities, compromising water supply in certain areas, and disrupting electricity access for millions of civilians.

Attacks on the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant continue and are causing major safety concerns. Two hydroelectric power plants in Ukraine have been decommissioned following a major attack on 08 May.

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

The TV tower in Kharkiv, which was destroyed during a strike on 22 April, is planned to be restored only after the end of hostilities.

Throughout May, the Ukrainian Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) continued to prioritize the restoration of sites where tower infrastructure was damaged by airstrikes between 16 to 22 March.

Continuing reports highlight significant disturbances to mobile and satellite telephony services in regions close to the frontlines.

Cyberattacks persist with varying impacts, affecting service availability in some cases, and targeting the unauthorized release of data in others. In May, Ukraine's Kyivstar allocated US\$90 million to deal with the aftermath of the major cyberattack on telecommunications infrastructure that occurred in December 2023, which damaged infrastructure and disrupted mobile phone signals for millions of Ukrainians.

ETC Activities

Coordination

The ETC coordinated two [Telecommunications Security Standards {TESS+}](#) training sessions which took place from 13 to 17 May and from 20 to 24 May with 36 participants from 12 UN agencies. The objective of the training was to build capacity and provide in-depth induction into UN security communications systems (SCS) for technical UN personnel. Participants gave positive feedback, noting critical new practical skills which will help organize their work in the field offices of UN agencies, especially in regions where UN operations and missions are particularly active. A video will be released on the training soon.

Security communications (radio)

VHF radio network

Equipment is being procured to expand the VHF radio network across eight priority sites—Kehychivka, Kropyvnytskyi, Mykolaiv, Orly, Pokrovsk, Poltava, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia. A preliminary technical assessment of these eight sites has been carried out. The collaboration with BRT aims to restore critical broadcasting services in affected areas and continue support in existing areas¹.

A joint mission was held from 29 to 30 May to the BRT tower site in Sumy, which was severely damaged in airstrikes on 07 March. The ETC, UNDSS, and WFP confirmed that significant restoration of the site has taken place, and it is now ready to host the ETC's VHF radio network.

The deployment of network firewall equipment donated by partner—Cisco Crisis Response—to support and secure the VHF radio network in Ukraine was completed in May. This has improved the security of the VHF radio network as well as real-time monitoring of all the remotes sites including Odesa,

¹ 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.

Mykolaiv, Dnipro, and Kharkiv². The only remaining site is Kramatorsk, where security challenges has entirely restricted access. The ETC will deploy the network equipment in Kramatorsk once the security situation is improved there.

During the power cuts experienced in Kyiv in May, the ETC verified the resilience of the power back-up system provided to the Remote Security Operations Centre (RSOC). The results and monitoring tools confirmed that the SOC radio and internet connectivity set-up remained operational throughout the power cuts. Similarly, mitigation actions were taken in Kharkiv on 21 May to improve the reliability of the security communications system during power cuts. The mission included upgrading the power back-up system for remote site equipment, which now can sustain up to 20 hours in case of a power cut.

The ETC raised the height of the VHF radio repeater antenna in Odesa to expand coverage within the city. Additionally, VHF coverage was assessed in the Odesa warehouse area where there is a repeater to seek recommendations to enhance base radio access. Unfortunately, there was no coverage improvement in the warehouse area after extending the antenna. Further actions are being explored.

Finally, the ETC resolved the VHF interference issues at the BRT radio repeater site in Dnipro.

Radio training & programming

On 09 May, the ETC conducted two SCS training sessions for 20 UNICEF and 14 IOM personnel in Odesa.

On 30 May, UNHCR and ETC delivered SCS training for 15 IOM personnel in Chernivtsi.

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

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 is working to establish a Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with a local supplier to standardize the procurement process and facilitate Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) procurement for the ETC and its partners in Ukraine. Offers have been received, and a technical evaluation is underway.

With ETC support, UNFPA has completed one Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) kit. The ETC will support with kit testing and user training. The UNFPA kit will be deployed in the eastern operational UNFPA sites in Ukraine and it will also be used for inter-agency convoys.

The ETC tested and deployed one WFP armoured vehicle RSoV kit and one OCHA armoured vehicle pre-cabled with RSoV to cover SCS needs for inter-agency missions in Kharkiv. The cluster trained WFP and OCHA personnel on how to operate the solution.

The RSoV pre-cabling of the 18th Logistics Cluster truck is finalized and tested.

Telephony

Throughout May, the ETC conducted several tests on satellite phones in areas where they are used by humanitarians as part of the security communications system in Ukraine.

Low reliability of the Iridium network in Kyiv, Dnipro, and Odesa has been escalated to the network provider by the ETC. Up to 10 attempts were needed to register and perform calls on the network.

² 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.

High reliability of the Inmarsat network was found on the road from Kyiv to Kharkiv. More tests are planned—the ETC will provide a final report and recommendations to UN partners on the use of Inmarsat satellite phones in Ukraine.

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

From 07 to 08 May, in response to an urgent request from the local authorities in Odesa, the ETC set up temporary internet connectivity services for registration points and tents in Odesa opened by the local authorities for support to people affected by intensified shelling. The ETC used its existing RSoV and satellite solutions to deliver the services. By 09 May, all community members were registered using the new network and the ETC service concluded.

On 20 May, a field assessment was initiated by the ETC in shelters in schools in Yuzhne, Odesa, to determine the reported gaps in internet connectivity services. This comes in response to a request made in March by the Education Department to support this activity in the Odesa region.

In response to a request from the local authorities, a need for enhanced communication tools and internet connectivity was identified in the Mykolaiv region. The aim is to link mental health and rehabilitation centres with local medical and social services, particularly for the affected population including displaced persons in remote communities. Assessments are ongoing to establish telecommunications services to facilitate health care access and support. On 20 May, a meeting was held with local IT specialists in Mykolaiv regarding the network infrastructure.

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.

There is no reliable satellite phone network across the whole country.

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

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www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

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