

Ukraine – conflict

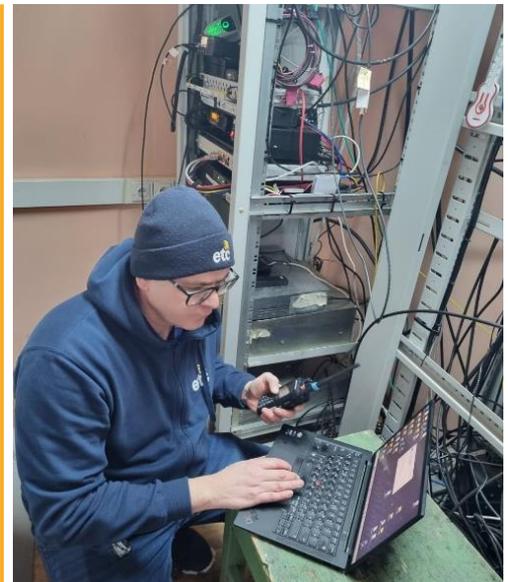
ETC Situation Report #43

Reporting period: 01/01/2025 to 31/01/2025

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 Situation Reports are distributed monthly.

Highlights

- The ETC successfully pre-cabled and tested nine United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Armoured Vehicles (AVs) for the plug-in Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) kit to enable secure communications and data connectivity during humanitarian convoy missions.
- On 23 January, the cluster installed and integrated a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) radio communications channel into the existing ETC Very High Frequency (VHF) infrastructure at the Sumy remote site to enable a secure, dedicated, and reliable Security Communications System (SCS) for the humanitarian responders.
- The ETC set up the new design and configuration of the backup Security Information and Operations Centre (SIOC) at the new Lviv United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) premises.



The ETC configures the NGO channel in the ETC VHF infrastructure in the Sumy remote site.
Photo: WFP/ETC

Overview

The ongoing conflict continues to cause immense suffering, displacements, and destruction of the country's infrastructure. Daily strikes continue to cause fatalities and disruption of essential services that include electricity, heating, gas, and water, further complicating life for those in conflict zones in the east and south of Ukraine.

Since January 2024, 8.5 million people have been determined to need humanitarian aid. The close cooperation of all clusters has reached 8.4 million people as of January 2025, and their efforts are continuing to assist the remaining people¹.

Throughout January, intense airstrikes and shelling continued targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure and vulnerable cities and regions: Kyiv, Kherson, Sumy, Dnipro, Donetsk, Kramatorsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Ivano-Frankivsk, striking civilian and critical infrastructure such as industrial

¹ [2024 UKR Humanitarian Response](#)

facilities, and residential buildings, causing casualties, significant damage, and power cuts, affecting millions of people².

On 01 January, in the interests of national security, the transportation of Russian natural gas through the territory of Ukraine was suspended³.

On 08 January, an industrial facility in the eastern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia was hit by two aerial bombs, resulting in the deaths of 13 civilians and leaving 110 others injured⁴.

On 16 January, as the war in Ukraine nears its fourth year, the United Nations, in collaboration with the Government of Ukraine and humanitarian partners, unveiled the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) and the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP). The appeal seeks \$3.32 billion to assist 8.2 million people affected by the conflict within Ukraine and across its borders⁵.

Impact on telecommunications

Ukraine's telecommunications infrastructure faced significant challenges in January due to ongoing conflict and cyber threats. Ukrainian telecoms infrastructure in occupied territories was targeted, disrupting media access and hindering information flow, further exacerbating communication challenges. Key impacts included widespread physical damage to infrastructure and power cutoffs.

On 20 January, Ukrainian government registries were restored after an alleged Russian large-scale cyberattack that disrupted online services for registering marriages, vehicles, births, and changes of residence⁶.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates that Ukraine's ICT infrastructure has been hit by more than \$2 billion worth of damages⁷.

Despite the ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine has achieved remarkable digital progress, relocating public data assets to international cloud platforms, ensuring uninterrupted connectivity through satellite links, and leveraging partnerships with Microsoft, Amazon, SpaceX, and Palantir for innovative solutions in reconstruction, landmine clearance, and war crime prosecution, positioning itself as a resilient digital leader⁸.

ETC Activities

Coordination

On 07 January, the ETC participated in the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) meeting, where discussions focused on the Kyiv visit by the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator—Tom Fletcher—and the 11th United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—Filippo Grandi; the need for a January gap analysis to define clusters' priorities; and updates on the 2025 HNRP. The ETC is a critical supporting cluster during humanitarian missions and convoys in Ukraine.

² [Aljazeera_power cuts](#)

³ [Aljazeera_Gas supply](#)

⁴ [UN Press Releases_Zaporizhzhia](#)

⁵ [UN Press Releases_Stay with Ukraine](#)

⁶ [NV_Ceberattack](#)

⁷ [DCD_Ukraine's telecoms infrastructure](#)

⁸ [UN E-Government Survey 2024](#)

On 07 and 21 January, the ETC participated in the Inter-Cluster Working Group (ICWG) South meetings, where key discussions included updates on the humanitarian situation in Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions, challenges with winterization efforts, and requests from local authorities for construction materials to install modular bomb shelters to protect the population from shelling attacks, emergency material stock replenishment in Kherson, and solar panel requests for critical infrastructure in Mykolaiv. During the meetings, the Logistics Cluster shared an update on their inter-agency convoy to the Kherson region (Antonivka, Dariivska, and Stanislavska communities) using 5MT (metric tons) commercial fleet trucks on 17 January. The ETC supported the mission by loaning the cluster handheld VHF radios and providing SCS training for the drivers to enhance staff safety and security.

On 16 January, the ETC attended the joint launch of the 2025 HNRP for Ukraine and the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP). The event aimed to raise awareness of Ukraine's humanitarian crisis and garner support for the affected populations. This high-level event was held in the presence of Mr. Tom Fletcher—the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Filippo Grandi—the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with remarks from Ms. Iryna Vereshchuk—Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, representatives from NGOs, and Mr. Matthias Schmale—the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine.

On 23 January, the cluster attended the General Coordination Meeting (GCM) for the Kherson region. Discussions highlighted the extensive damage to educational institutions, many of which have been either wholly or partially destroyed due to ongoing drone attacks and the region's proximity to the front line. The growing destruction of civilian infrastructure, widespread landmines, and the urgent need for clean drinking water were also key issues addressed during the meeting.

Security communications (radio)

VHF radio network

The ETC has a total of 15 priority sites throughout Ukraine⁹. The Ukrainian Broadcasting, Radiocommunications & Television Concern (BRT) hosts each site. The cluster monitors all operating equipment in the remote sites through an online system. UN agencies staff and all other humanitarian responders in all 15 sites can communicate directly with the UNDSS SIOC in Kyiv using the ETC VHF radio network.

From 10 to 16 January, the ETC identified and addressed an issue with the software-based server that runs and manages the NGO VHF radio integration application into the existing ETC VHF infrastructure. The team successfully troubleshooted and resolved the issue.

On 22 January, the ETC integrated the power backup system at the Sumy remote site into the Victron Monitoring portal, enabling real-time monitoring of national grid power outages. On 23 January, the ETC commenced a mission to the Sumy remote site to integrate an NGO radio communications channel into the existing ETC VHF network infrastructure, enabling separate and secure communication for the NGO humanitarian responders.

Security & Information Operation Centre (SIOC)

On 03 January, the ETC completed the design and configuration of the backup SIOC for UNDSS in Lviv's new premises, aligning with the incorporation of a software-based operational monitoring system. All 15 remote sites were connected to the backup SIOC.

On 20 January, the ETC team in Kyiv troubleshooted and resolved the issue with the SIOC radio monitoring laptop.

Remote Site on Vehicle (RSoV) project

⁹ The following sites: Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Mykolaiv, Luch, Poltava, Sumy, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Orly, Pershotravensk, Kramatorsk, Kehychivka, and Kropyvnytskyi.

In response to the 08 October 2024 request from WFP management, the ETC successfully pre-cabled and tested nine WFP AVs for the plug-in RSoV kit. The RSoV kit provides a secure and reliable communications and data connectivity platform during convoys and humanitarian missions.

On 06 January, the ETC successfully tested the new cable adapter that will be used with the RSoV kit, Starlink high-performance kit, and the flat high-performance kit in Kyiv. The cable adapter allows the RSoV kit to be interoperable with the two versions of Starlink devices.

On 20 January, the cluster team in Kyiv contacted UNDSS to follow up on the activation of Starlink data connectivity for testing, validating, and installing five RSoV kits that were configured and delivered in December last year.

On 20 January, the ETC installed the RSoV kit transferred from the WFP Kharkiv Field Office (FO) to the WFP Dnipro FO on a WFP AV. Currently, the WFP Dnipro FO is equipped with three RSoV kits—two allocated for the AVs and one designated for the truck fleet.

On 21 January, the cluster performed a maintenance check on the RSoV cabling, VHF antennas, and radio equipment installed on the WFP AV in Odesa. The inspection followed the UN SCS technical maintenance checklist for vehicles equipped with RSoV kits and the pre-cabling checklist. The VHF antennas were tuned, and all equipment was confirmed to be fully operational.

On 22 January, the ETC supported UNDSS by inspecting the RSoV equipment on the UNDSS AV ahead of the UNDSS mission to the Kherson region. The check ensured functional ETC data connectivity and RSoV VHF radio communication with the SOC.

Radio programming

During the reporting period, the ETC programmed the following VHF handheld radios:

- two VHF handheld radios for the Logistics Clusters fleet in Odesa;
- three VHF handheld radios for WFP in Kyiv;
- 26 VHF handheld radios for the UNDSS in Kyiv;
- one mobile VHF radio for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Kyiv.

Radio check exercises were continually conducted throughout January to verify the functionality and reliability of the programmed radios.

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

Capacity building

On 07 January, the ETC provided SCS training for three WFP fleet drivers and one UNDSS driver on using the RSoV kit in Odesa.

On 13 January, the cluster team conducted SCS training for 10 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) colleagues in Dnipro.

On 14 January, the ETC team shared with the WFP the updated call sign list to be updated in the different internal security systems.

On 29 January, the cluster team conducted SCS training for seven colleagues from WFP in Kyiv.

The ETC offers VHF radio use capacity-building sessions to UN agencies to ensure staff are informed and equipped to respond to security incidents in the field. To book security communications training sessions, please use [this link](#).

Data connectivity

The ETC provides data connectivity services in the inter-agency hubs in four common operational locations—Odesa, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, and Lviv—and part of the SCS infrastructure to support the VHF

radio network.

On 22 January, the ETC faced a data connectivity downtime on the Orly remote site, which was immediately troubleshooted and resolved by the ETC team in collaboration with the Internet Service Provider (ISP).

On 24 January, the ETC Meraki network was configured to accommodate the network device for the Sumy remote site as part of VHF network integration to the NGO.

During January, the ETC data connectivity service supported 115 unique clients, with an average of 55 clients per day and an average data usage of 7.1 GB per client. In total, 820 GB of data was transferred, comprising 585 GB downloaded and 235 GB uploaded. The ETC Helpdesk recorded 36 tickets in January, 30 of which were resolved, and the remaining six are in progress, representing an 83% support rate.

Services for Communities

The ETC continues to support the humanitarian Cash Working Group (CWG) in creating a chatbot as a one-way communication tool with affected communities in Ukraine to enhance information dissemination on humanitarian Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA). During January, ETC, supported by the WFP TEC team and the Chatbot developer, provided a demo version of the Chatbot for internal use. On 20 January, the key deliverables for the chatbot, including its logo, content updates, and feedback form, were completed. From January 24 to 28, the ETC launched the Chatbot testing phase in the Telegram messenger with 26 participants. The testing showed that most participants found the Chatbot services insightful, easy to use, and helpful. The feedback responses will be reviewed to guide technical improvements followed by a second testing phase after implementing the necessary adjustments.

On 22 January, the ETC joined the Accountability to Affected People (AAP) WG meeting to discuss the role of clusters in mainstreaming AAP, focusing on assessments, information, and aid accessibility, elevating concerns and feedback from affected people, coordinating with local actors, and localization priority. The ETC Chatbot project is aligned with this priority by developing the project with a local Ukrainian supplier.

Dashboard

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

Funding

The ETC in Ukraine is 30 % funded out of a 2025 budget requirement of US\$1.3 million to continue delivering vital communications services. The ETC currently has a balance of US\$913,000 to cover cluster activities in Q1 of 2025.

Funds received by the ETC in 2023 were carried over into 2024 to complete critical projects. US\$921,000 was received in May 2023 from the Government of Japan, and a US\$500,000 in-kind equipment donation was received in February 2024 from Cisco Crisis Response to secure the VHF radio backbone network in Ukraine. A further US\$402,000 was received in July 2024 from UNDSS to fund the extension of the VHF radio network, the re-designing of the SIOC, and the implementation of the RSoV solution for UNDSS vehicles. In December, HQ credited US\$ 422,000 as a part of one of WFP's donor grants.

Challenges

Expanding VHF coverage and data connectivity in locations close to the frontline is becoming more challenging and dangerous for the ETC engineers.

On 22 January, the ETC faced a challenge with the data connectivity on the Orly remote site. It was an interruption of six hours due to a cut and damaged fiber cable. The issue was resolved the same day.

Limited operational time in very high-risk areas such as Sumy results in scheduling numerous missions to contact all the necessary maintenance activities.

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

Contacts

| NAME | POSITION | LOCATION | CONTACT |
|------------------|------------------------------------|----------|--|
| Mohamedou Ndiath | ETC Coordinator | Kyiv | Ukraine.ETC@wfp.org |
| Maksym Khmeliuk | ETC Information Management Officer | Kyiv | Ukraine.ETC@wfp.org |

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

www.etcluster.org/emergency/ukraine-conflict

For more information or to be added or deleted from the mailing list, please contact:

Ukraine.ETC@wfp.org