

# Working towards a European collaborative data infrastructure through a new phase of EUDAT

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In late March, [Finland's IT Center for Science \(CSC\)](#) played host to people from all over Europe who gathered for the kick-off meeting for the next phase of [EUDAT](#), which will run until early 2018. EUDAT is now a bit over three years old. While this is still young for a pan-European infrastructure seeking to provide data-management solutions across research disciplines and national boundaries, much has already been achieved. EUDAT is already providing a suite of common data services supporting multiple research communities and individuals. These services are offered through a geographically distributed, resilient network connecting general-purpose data centers and data repositories for specific research communities. EUDAT's shared services and storage resources are distributed across 15 European nations, with data stored alongside some of Europe's most powerful supercomputers.

In practical terms, EUDAT connects to and interoperates with data e-infrastructures driven by research communities to steward data for the whole community of European researchers. This is important where there is no single underlying organization that deals with the full complexity of managing such data. EUDAT provides IT solutions that would be difficult for some research communities to provide on their own, thereby reducing their costs and enabling the communities to make investments in community-specific services and developments. It is important to emphasize that EUDAT operates in a European landscape of evolving research infrastructures. These infrastructures often have ready-developed solutions and tools for managing their data. The goal of EUDAT is not to replace these infrastructures but to support and enrich them by providing strong underlying components and generic services on which they can rely to build up their data-management strategies and e-infrastructure capacity.



Over 130 representatives from 35 European data centers, high-performance computing sites, and research communities met in Helsinki from 24-26 March to roll out their plans for the next three years of EUDAT. Image courtesy Anni Jakobsson, CSC.

[EUDAT's ultimate objective is to create a sustainable pan-European collaborative data infrastructure \(CDI\)](#); much remains to be done to achieve that. EUDAT recently received a further €19 million (approximately \$21 million) to continue laying the foundations for that data infrastructure. In the first project phase (which ran from 2012 to early this year), our priority was to determine which common data services were needed most and to build those services and get them running as soon as possible. Technically, we've made very good progress! The priorities for the next few months are to consolidate these services and also to develop the necessary policies and business models, as well as the organizational framework that will make it possible to provide these services in a cost-efficient and sustainable way.

We want to create a CDI that is open to all and which addresses the different needs of its users. Many users are researchers who just wish to share data with colleagues or collaborators, or to discover and reuse data as part of their ongoing research. These users can come from many different walks of life — researchers (from academia and industry), citizen scientists, policy makers, and members of the public. EUDAT is there for anyone wanting to share or reuse European research data in simple, powerful ways. Other EUDAT users are concerned with the management of research community data repositories and wish to join their repositories formally with the EUDAT CDI network, thus instantly benefitting from the persistence and resilience offered by the EUDAT partners. Users who are interested in joining the CDI are primarily interested in archiving, replicating, processing, and cataloguing data on behalf of a particular research community.

In this new phase, we will also reach out beyond our traditional sphere of influence to engage with a wider range of stakeholders and research communities. To this end, EUDAT has brought ten new organizations on board and plans to issue two calls for collaboration to engage effectively with research communities that are not presently part of the project consortium. Currently EUDAT interacts with and serves 29 research communities and plans to increase this interaction to over 50 communities in the next three years. EUDAT has, since its inception, been working on the principle that the research communities should not only be in the driving seat for selecting the main services, but that they should also directly participate in the design and development of these services. We expect that new requirements will emerge from these calls for collaboration and that we will consequently be able to foster new lines of activity. At present, we see a lot of interest in the area of semantics and big data analytics. We encourage all stakeholders interested in these topics to partner with us in building new components on top of the CDI.

EUDAT is in the process of creating an infrastructure that can act as a key pillar of [the European Research Area](#). Additionally, by identifying and proposing solutions to barriers to the development of an efficient e-infrastructure ecosystem, research e-infrastructures like EUDAT make concrete contributions to reinforcing the level playing field for researchers and data managers and eliminating barriers to investment in [the proposed European, connected 'digital single market'](#).

There are many reasons to be interested in EUDAT and to become concretely involved in this outstanding initiative! Follow us for more regular news and updates on our activities on <http://www.eudat.eu/>, and on social media such as [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). If you or some members of your research community would like to take up one or more of the EUDAT services, or join our pool of experts, please get in touch with us at [eudat-info@postit.csc.fi](mailto:eudat-info@postit.csc.fi).

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