

Creating a pan-European data infrastructure

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The Third EUDAT Conference will be held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from 24-25 September. iSGTW talks to Per Oster about the event and the progress EUDAT is making in realizing its vision of a collaborative data infrastructure. Oster is director of research infrastructures at Finland's IT Center for Science (CSC), which is the organization coordinating the EUDAT project.

What exactly is EUDAT?

EUDAT is an EU project with the aim of creating data services for research, particularly for pan-European research collaborations. Essentially, we want to support the revolution in science and information that's taking place today. It's important to do this so that knowledge can be created from all of the vast amounts of data out there.

We will continue to work closely together with research communities to build [services that are suited to their needs](#). Our goal is to make sure that our services can be put to use by researchers the very day that they go into production.

Why does Europe need a project like this?

E-infrastructures have been rapidly evolving across Europe for quite some time, but you could probably say they took an organized form about a decade ago when the European Commission made funding available for creating Europe-wide computing infrastructures. Thanks to organizations like [the European Grid Infrastructure \(EGI\)](#) and [Partnership for Advanced Computing in Europe \(PRACE\)](#) (as well as their forerunners) we now have very good computing infrastructures in place. However, we are still lacking the more general data services we need in Europe that will really enable researchers from pan-European projects to work freely with data across borders and academic domains. This is what EUDAT has started to address.

So, EUDAT will be almost three years old by the time the conference takes place. What, in your view, are the project's greatest achievements so far?

The greatest achievement has undoubtedly been our ability to successfully engage with excellent pan-European research communities. We've already been able to support them in their research and there is continuous and strongly user-driven development of all our services. It doesn't take even a minute to go to our website and start using the EUDAT services!

And what are EUDAT's plans for the future?

Next in line for release are even more versatile services for sharing and synchronizing data in an organized and structured way. To further support the creation of knowledge from data, a service for annotation and referencing will also soon be ready for release. In addition, the specialized needs of those working with dynamic data — that which changes constantly and needs to be acted upon instantly — is a subject for further service development. Here we enter an area where an even tighter collaboration with the computing infrastructures is necessary to provide integrated solutions.



EUDAT services. Click for large version. Image courtesy EUDAT.

Over the longer term, we also need to think about the sustainability of EUDAT. We're now preparing a project proposal for [Europe's Horizon 2020 funding scheme](#), but this can't go on forever, of course. To support the sustained operation of EUDAT in the future, we'll need to develop the revenue streams to maintain and evolve the development and reliable provisioning of data services for research.

Finally, what are your goals for the Third EUDAT Conference?

These events are vital for building a community and establishing trust with and between stakeholders. It's at these events that we can meet researchers and find out what their needs are. This is, of course, vital in enabling us to create services that really support researchers in the most efficient way possible. Meeting with the research communities and listening to their needs is very much the core of EUDAT. In that respect,

the third conference is business as usual: we will get feedback on the existing services, as well as ideas for new services.

The more general discussions are also important, such as those about how we can support open science and help to increase the societal impact of research. It is a pretty straightforward line of thought: By making the results of research discoverable and easy to access, researchers become more involved in the general debate. We will also see positive effects for innovation when it becomes possible to exploit the vast amount of data eventually available for everyone through EUDAT services.

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"We want to support the revolution in science and information that's taking place today," says Oster. Image courtesy CSC — IT Center for Science Ltd.

Andrew Purcell is the editor of iSGTW and is based at CERN, near Geneva.

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