

Co-UDlabs' legacy towards an international UD community

On 18th March 2025, the Co-UDlabs project held its final event in the premises of the Fundación Galicia-Europa in Brussels to present the achievements and advances of four years of work to the urban drainage and water management communities.

Since May 2021, Co-UDlabs has aimed to **integrate innovation and research activities in the field of Urban Drainage Systems (UDS)** through a network of seven Research Infrastructures offering free **transnational access** to 17 unique large and full-scale urban drainage experimental facilities. Co-UDlabs has provided high-quality laboratory and fields facilities, human resources, and improved data-sharing platforms to users, while implementing a series of key **joint research activities** for the sector and developing intense **networking and training activities**.



The key goal of Co-UDlabs was to provide an open and inclusive platform for the development of research and innovation in urban drainage and sewage management, a field which is facing massive scientific, technological, and societal challenges due to rapid urbanization, climate change, and public health and environmental risks.

One of the major achievements of the project is the **provision of free-of-charge Transnational Access (TA)** to its network of 7 Research Infrastructures, involving 227 users from 122 institutions in 26 countries, including 11 non-EU.

“Through this collaborative effort, our network has supported the urban drainage research community, water infrastructure operators, and regulators and local administrations in addressing the social, environmental, and economic sustainability challenges that are increasingly affecting the way UDS are designed, made and regulated”, says Jose Anta, the Co-UDlabs Coordinator.

The Co-UDlabs legacy stands also in the number of **innovative technologies** and tools resulting from its research activities (such as optical sensors and imaging devices for water quality and water quantity determination, a Urban Drainage Metrology Toolbox to assess data uncertainty, or a deep-learning based framework for the automated detection of in-pipe defects using closed-circuit television (CCTV) sewer images), a number of **free training and education activities** (6 webinars and 11 physical and online training sessions for urban drainage students and industry professionals were organised, gathering in total more than 500 participants) and several **publications and dataset** available in open access (see the [Co-UDlabs community in Zenodo](#)).

Emphasizing a **stronger science-to-policy link**, the project ensures that its four-year efforts translate into impactful results and benefits for urban communities worldwide. Co-UDlabs has been developing **3 Policy Briefs** (one on [Combined Sewer Overflow Spills](#), one on the role of Research Infrastructures and one on Permeable Pavements



Clogging), to provide policy recommendations and guidelines on these topics to European, national, and local policy-makers and regulators.

Moreover, Co-UDlabs proactively worked and contributed to propose a new international **Working Group** on Large Research Infrastructures -UDRAIN - that was established as a pioneering initiative under the IWA/IAHR Joint Committee on Urban Drainage (JCUD) with the aim to build the first global network of large Research Infrastructures (RI) focused on urban drainage systems. The group is already working on an Atlas of relevant urban drainage large Research Infrastructures and will work with JCUD to create more synergies across Working Groups.

“Looking ahead, Co-UDlabs aims to establish a pan-European network of research facilities dedicated to urban drainage systems, fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, training and innovation, all the while ensuring that Europe remains at the forefront of urban drainage research and technological development”, concludes Jose Anta, the project Coordinator.

For more information on the project, please visit the [Co-UDlabs website](#) or follow [Co-UDlabs on LinkedIn](#).

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