



LAB TOUR 2026: A project that combines science and culture, debuts in Soria

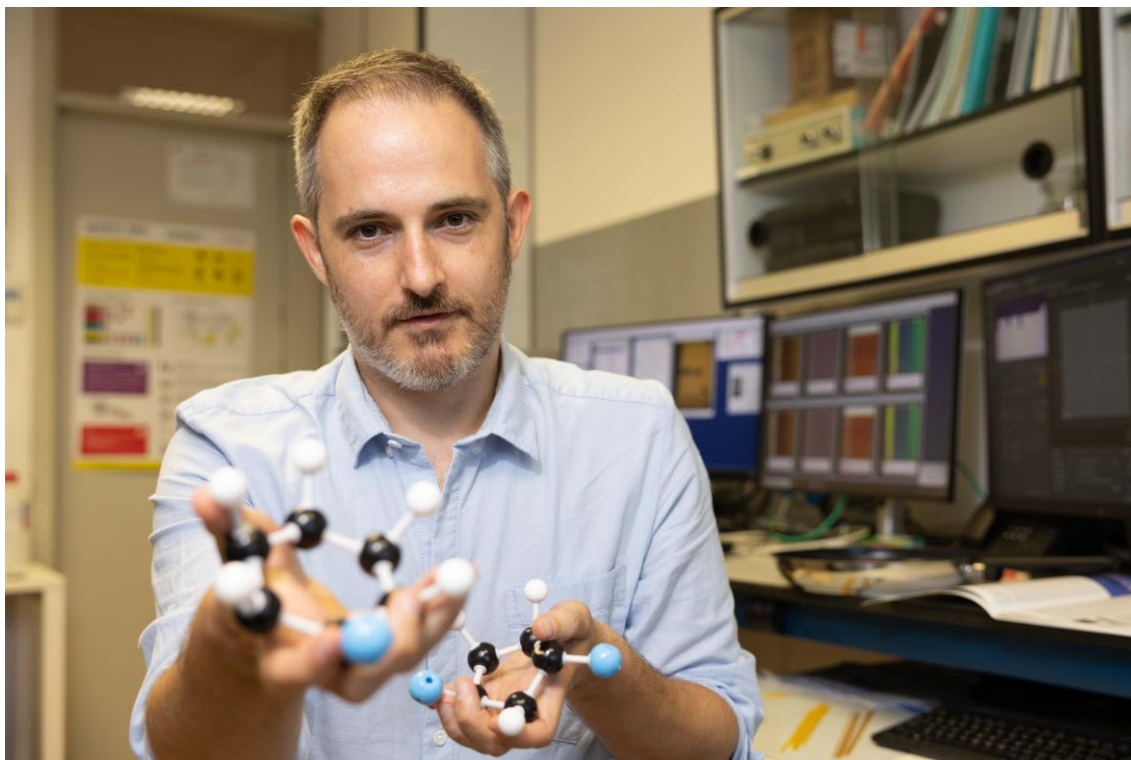
- The FECYT-funded project by Sorian researcher Daniel Martín Jiménez, from the Institute of Materials Science of Barcelona (ICMAB-CSIC), was born from the idea of bringing science and technology to depopulated areas.
- The tour of science outreach activities in schools and media stations across Soria will take place in the spring of 2026.
- The initiative aims to spark reflection on the issue of depopulation, weaving together personal stories, culture, and science.

LAB TOUR is the name of ICMAB's new outreach project, created with the intention of bringing science and technology to depopulated areas. This first edition will take place in the province of Soria, a region known as part of "Empty Spain". The location was chosen due to the Sorian roots of researcher Daniel Martín Jiménez, the project leader at ICMAB.

"I was born in a province with few opportunities, limited cultural offerings, and very little science accessible to the public," says Martín Jiménez. "At 18, I had to move away to study the degree I wanted and to pursue what truly inspires me." That personal experience was the starting point for shaping this initiative. "When I came up with the idea, I thought about sharing what I do and what I know with the people from my

homeland, and also showing my colleagues the rural landscapes of Soria and the challenges of living there."

The central activity of the LAB TOUR project will be a tour by scientific staff from ICMAB to Soria in spring 2026. The tour will include visits to six local village schools known as Colegios Rurales Agrupados (CRA) to carry out outreach activities, as well as interviews on local radio and television to discuss science, society, and culture.



Daniel Martín Jiménez in the lab | Credit: © Fundación BBVA

This route will be complemented by other activities, such as a public presentation of the project at the Casino of Soria on September 26, 2025, during the European Researchers' Night, a science talk at the Casa de Soria in Barcelona on November 15, 2025, during Science Week, the creation of a photo and memory album of the tour, and an open presentation at ICMAB to showcase the project and pass the album on for future editions.

The project team is made up of ten researchers and technical staff from ICMAB, who will coordinate different tasks including organization, communications, and preparation of outreach activities.

Connecting science and culture: migration and Romanesque art

Beyond being the birthplace of Daniel Martín Jiménez, Soria is also a symbolic and meaningful place to start talking about depopulation and science. Despite its rich

historical and cultural heritage, the ongoing migration from the area represents a demographic and territorial challenge—and consequently, a barrier to science, which remains heavily centralized in urban areas. For this reason, the project includes a preliminary survey to identify people from Soria or their descendants at ICMAB and understand their stories.

In addition, Romanesque mural paintings will be used as a way to blend history, culture, and the science of pigments, and a portion of the outreach activities will explore this theme.

We encourage you to follow the activities of the project, which aim to inspire reflection on the relationship between human migration, culture, and science through its website (labtour.icmab.es) and ICMAB social media channels. The project is designed to continue in future editions and be adapted to other regions facing similar challenges.

Project partners

LAB TOUR 2026 has received funding from the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) under the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. Since 2006, these grants have supported science communication projects aimed at increasing scientific culture, improving the dissemination of publicly funded research results, making socially relevant topics more accessible to the public, and encouraging society's active participation in science outreach activities. The 2024 call awarded a total of €4,500,000 to around 200 projects.

In addition, the project is supported by two private entities from Soria. The Provincial Council of Soria, through its Department of Culture and Youth, actively collaborates in this initiative aimed at schools in the rural areas of the province. Meanwhile, Ruralia — the holding company of businesses affiliated with Caja Rural de Soria— reaffirms its commitment to regional development by joining the project, supporting initiatives that create value, promote innovation, and strengthen the economic fabric of Soria's rural environment. The project currently has the support of Casino Círculo Amistad Numancia of Soria, the Casa de Soria in Barcelona, and artist Pilar Porras Ramos.

We invite you to the project presentation in September in Soria. See you there!