



# GRANULAR

## LIVING LABS CROSS VISIT DOSSIER

### Spain: Ourense



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# Ourense

## ABOUT THE CROSS VISIT

This Post-Cross Visits Spain Dossier documents the cross visits of the GRANULAR project at the [Living Lab in Ourense \(Galicia\)](#), funded by the European Union, with support from UKRI. Held on May 28 and 29, 2025, they involved experts, institutions, and local communities in “Ourense Rural Bites” sessions.

Day 1 of the Cross Visits focused on Territorial innovation. The second day focused on rural well-being.

This Cross Visit highlights the diversity of San Xoán (depopulation), Allariz (revitalisation), and Ribadavia (wine sector).

This document is useful for decision-makers with data-driven methodologies and AI. It also criticizes overloaded itineraries. Its impact aims at social innovation in rural Galicia.

Location
Topic
Territorial innovation & rural well-being
Number of participants
32 participants
Contacts
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Related work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Catalogue</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Practice Abstract</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">More information</a></li> </ul>

## DAY 1: Overview of Activities

The first day of the cross-visit was held on 28 May 2025 in Ourense. It was a particularly productive day that fostered collaboration and knowledge sharing between experts, institutions and local communities. The day began with a trip from Ourense to San Xoán de Río, where the session 'Ourense Rural Bites I' was held, focusing on experiences in rural energy communities, digital governance, sustainability and social empowerment. Notable speakers included Miguel Morgado (Ecorés Servicios Energéticos), Xabier Simón (University of Vigo), Eva Castro (Ourense Rural Vida), Mayor Xose Miguel Perez and the Mujeres de Río collective.

The group then travelled to Allariz for the second session, 'Ourense Rural Bites II', which addressed issues related to sustainable urban planning, gardens as spaces for well-being, childcare in rural areas and the role of the university in territorial revitalisation. The day ended with a walk around the town and a group dinner. This first day allowed for the creation of valuable synergies between the academic, institutional and community spheres, strengthening the project's international cooperation and highlighting the transformative potential of social and territorial innovation in rural Galicia.

## DAY 2: Overview of Activities

The second day, held on 29 May 2025, was devoted to exploring the social, health and environmental dynamics of rural well-being in Ourense, consolidating the ties forged during the previous day.

The day began with a departure from the Barceló Hotel to Ribadavia, where participants were welcomed with coffee and a guided tour of the village before moving on to a local winery. There, the 'Ourense Rural Bites III' session took place, focusing on health and quality of life in rural environments, with presentations by Chema Failde and María Dapía (Uvigo and Sociedade Galega de Xerontoloxía e Xeriatría) on longevity, Breixo Martins (Uvigo) on rural telecare, the Official College of Pharmacists of Ourense on community support in mental health, and Rubén Riós (Claqueta Coqueta) with the project 'Centenar10s: The Century Lives'. After lunch, 'Ourense Rural Bites IV' was held, where key issues on social and health innovation, thermalism and climate change were discussed, with contributions from Antonio Acevedo Prado (Regional Ministry of Social Policy and Equality), Javier Novoa (ThermEcoWat), Ana Ladeiras (Around Europe Advisors) and José Juan Cerdeira (Ourense Provincial Council).

The day concluded with a team-building experience in the surroundings of a reservoir (the event was originally planned to take place in thermal waters but was modified due to extreme weather conditions). The event ended with a dinner at a monastery, where activities for reflection and socialising were held.

Overall, this second day was highly enriching, strengthening cooperation networks between European institutions, local administrations and rural communities, and demonstrating the positive impact of knowledge exchange in building more resilient, inclusive and sustainable territories.

## INSIGHTS & LEARNINGS

As organisers, we consider that the opportunity to showcase the diversity of the Living Lab territory was a success. Along the itinerary, three sites were visited that represent contrasting types of territorial development and allow for a comparative analysis of the structural heterogeneity of the Galician rural environment.

Firstly, San Xoán de Río is a paradigmatic example of a municipality with a rapidly ageing population, low population density and marked socio-economic fragility. This territory shows the cumulative effects of depopulation and the loss of human capital, but also the emergence of local initiatives aimed at energy sustainability, digitalisation and community participation as ways of reversing the functional marginalisation of the environment.

In contrast, Allariz is a success story in terms of territorial revitalisation, characterised by comprehensive management of urban-rural space that has allowed it to diversify its economy by strengthening the service sector, enhancing its heritage and incorporating criteria of environmental sustainability and social well-being into local policies. Finally, Ribadavia represents an intermediate reality where rural identity coexists with a consolidated productive dynamic, linked mainly to the wine sector and the articulation of local business networks. Together, the three experiences provide an empirical view of the Galician rural mosaic, highlighting the need for differentiated territorial approaches, multi-scale policies and collaborative governance mechanisms that promote resilience, innovation and social cohesion in European rural areas.

Although we had many field visits, contact with companies, mayors and other sectors of the local community, a large number of technical and academic talks were planned. Excessively packed itineraries reduce the groups' overall ability to concentrate.

## USEFULNESS FOR DECISION MARKERS

The visit proved highly enriching for local policy makers, especially the mayors of San Xoán de Río, Allariz and Ribadavia, who actively participated in the itinerary's activities. The meeting facilitated a direct exchange between public decision makers, researchers and social agents on the use of new methodologies and data applied to rural territorial development.

In San Xoán de Río, the presentation of digital tools for local governance (such as the use of artificial intelligence in municipal management or planning based on sustainability indicators) offered local representatives a concrete example of how technological innovation can facilitate decision-making in low-density populations.

In Allariz, the dialogue focused on evidence-based management and the use of socio-economic and environmental data for urban planning and the promotion of well-being, consolidating a reference model in sustainable territorial governance. In Ribadavia, methods of productive and social analysis were explored that allow for the integration of information on the wine sector, employment and community services, strengthening the capacity of local governments to design strategies adapted to their economic structures.

Overall, the experience promoted the transfer of knowledge between science and policy, fostering a more informed, analytical and collaborative vision of rural development based on data, evidence and multilevel cooperation.

# PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS





# GRANULAR

GRANULAR is a four-year multi-disciplinary and transnational project. It aims at generating new datasets, tools and methods to better understand rural diversity and to promote place-based rural policies.



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