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Bacterial genomics in Spain

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Spanish scientists, dissatisfied with the efforts of policymakers in the area of bacterial genomics, have created their own research network that aims to achieve results in areas they feel government agencies have ignored.

The [Network of Bacterial Genomics](#) (RGB), made up of 41 research teams at universities, hospitals, and centers of the Higher Research Council, will allow scientists to share human and technical resources in an effort to understand the genetic roots of bacterial pathogenicity and utility.

The network, whose creation was announced last week (March 23), aims to create a critical mass of researchers in the field to allow them, among other things, to apply for joint research projects. Fellows and senior researchers will move freely among the different centers to build their skills not only in the lab but also in bioinformatics. It is planned to organize periodical meetings and congresses of Spanish and foreign researchers.

Central to the initiative is the collaboration of five biotech companies - [Biomeda](#), [Progenika](#), [Noraybio](#), [Bioalma](#), and [Newbiotech](#) - which will provide the necessary genetic and bioinformatics tools to the scientists.

The RGB idea emerged in February in a meeting at the Valencia-based Institute of Cytologic Research. In the meeting, "it became clear that Spain has the capacity to start projects of bacterial genomics," [Andrés Moya](#), head of the University of Valencia's Institute Cavanilles for Biodiversity and Evolutionary Biology, told us. "It's a pity that, given our potential in this area, we can say that our country has contributed to the sequencing of only two microorganisms out of dozens sequenced so far."

It was Moya's team that sequenced the genomes of *Buchnera aphidicola* and *Blochmannia floridanus*. Moya argues that there is the "wrong perception by managers of national research programs that work in genomics ends with the sequence of a model genome."

Comparative genomics analysis, sequencing, and bioinformatics should be added to the "key words already applied to national programs," he adds.

[Francisco Rodríguez-Valera](#), at Universidad Miguel Hernández in San Juan de Alicante, notes that in Spain, sparse genomics resources have been almost exclusively devoted to human genomes and plants.

"The important community of Spanish microbiologists, who have done competitive, international research has been left totally marginalized," he told us. The first meeting of RGB, he says, will be held in October in Granada, where research teams will explain their lines and funds will be sought.

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