**GIMM is advertising a vacancy to recruit a PhD student under an employment contract – Reference GIMM/CT/25-2026**

**Marie Skłodowska-Curie Doctoral Network DECODES: "Deciphering the Splicing Code in Human Disease" – PhD Position**

GIMM – the Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine – is a pioneering Portuguese private research foundation with an ambitious vision for fundamental scientific exploration and its profound impact on global health and well-being. Founded in 2023, GIMM is the result of the merger of two leading research institutes: the João Lobo Antunes Institute of Molecular Medicine (iMM) and the Gulbenkian Institute of Science (IGC), which is dedicated to unravelling the fundamental mysteries of life and aims to be at the forefront of transdisciplinary research.

**About the DECODES Network**

Alternative splicing (AS) is a fundamental post-transcriptional mechanism that enables a single gene to generate multiple protein isoforms, dramatically expanding proteomic diversity. Dysregulation of AS is now recognized as a hallmark of human disease, contributing directly to cancer progression, neurodegeneration, metabolic syndromes, and numerous rare genetic disorders. Despite major technological advances, the translation of AS biology into clinical benefit remains limited by critical gaps in mechanistic understanding and by the absence of an integrated framework capable of driving discoveries from molecular insight to therapeutic intervention. DECODES has been conceived to meet this challenge. It unites leading European scientists with highly complementary expertise to establish a coherent, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral research programme that bridges fundamental RNA biology with clinical and industrial translation. At its core, DECODES is a high-level doctoral program that will provide advanced, multidisciplinary training spanning computational genomics, structural biology, disease modelling, RNA biochemistry, medicinal chemistry and pharmacological screening. Embedded in a fully international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral (3I) environment, the program will equip 15 Doctoral Candidates with state-of-the-art research expertise, comprehensive transferable skills, and entrepreneurial competencies through structured coursework and immersive industrial secondments. By integrating these diverse disciplines into a unified pipeline for the discovery of pathogenic isoforms and the development of precision splicing-targeted therapies, DECODES will push the boundaries of RNA splicing research and train a new generation of scientists uniquely prepared to become future leaders in academia, biotechnology, and translational medicine.

**PhD Project at the Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine (GIMM), Portugal**

One of the 15 PhD positions within the DECODES network is hosted by the Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine (GIMM) in Portugal. The specific project available at GIMM is:

**DC4: Decoding and correcting splicing in cancer predisposition genes.**

- Host Institution: Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine (GIMM), PT
- Supervisor: Prof. Maria Carmo-Fonseca
- Project Duration: 36 months

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- Project Description:

  The general aim is to investigate and therapeutically target BRCA1/2 splice-altering variants of uncertain significance (VUS) in breast cancer: (i) Characterize how BRCA1/2 splice-altering VUS disrupt pre-mRNA splicing and impact BRCA protein function. (ii) Develop allele-specific functional assays to assess the DNA-repair competence of BRCA1/2 VUS. (iii) Identify and evaluate small-molecule splicing modulators capable of restoring functional BRCA1/2 isoforms. (iv) Establish a framework linking variant-induced splicing defects to BRCA dysfunction, supporting improved clinical classification and therapeutic exploration.

**What GIMM is looking for:** GIMM is seeking to recruit a **PhD student** for the RNA & Gene Regulation Laboratory, coordinated by Maria Carmo-Fonseca, as part of the research project "**DECODES: Deciphering the Splicing Code in Human Disease**" (101312753), funded by European Commission, to carry out the activities listed below, under the supervision of Maria Carmo-Fonseca:

a) Characterize how BRCA1/2 splice-altering variants of uncertain significance (VUS) disrupt pre-mRNA splicing and impact BRCA protein function;
b) Develop allele-specific functional assays to assess the DNA-repair competence of BRCA1/2 VUS;
c) Identify and evaluate small-molecule splicing modulators capable of restoring functional BRCA1/2 isoforms;
d) Establish a framework linking variant-induced splicing defects to BRCA dysfunction, supporting improved clinical classification and therapeutic exploration.

**Candidate Profile:**
To be eligible for a PhD position within the DECODES network, candidates must meet the following criteria:

- Hold a master's degree in a relevant academic field or possess a degree that qualifies them to pursue a PhD;
- Demonstrate excellent English proficiency;
- Not already possess a doctoral degree at the date of recruitment;
- Comply with the **mobility rule**: Candidates must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of their chosen host institution (for the GIMM position, this is Portugal) for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately preceding their recruitment (i.e. the starting date indicated in the employment contract/equivalent direct contract).

Please note that the accepted candidate will not start working at GIMM before January 2027 and will be asked to register at the CAML PhD programme, from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Lisbon.

**What GIMM offers:** GIMM offers excellent working conditions, including a full-time, unfix-term contract due to start on January 2027 and lasting for the period required to complete the work plan.

**Terms of Employment**: 36-month employment contract;
The project covers the following grants for the total amount of the contract:

- Living allowance – 135.265,32 € (includes the basic monthly salary, meal allowance, holiday and Christmas bonuses, occupational accident insurance and all contributions paid by the employer including compensation for termination of contract if applicable)
- Mobility allowance (an additional monthly contribution to cover private mobility-related costs (e.g., relocation, travel)– 25.560 € (including fees)
- Family allowance (a monthly allowance for researchers with family obligations)– 23.760 € (if applicable)

The salary and allowances are gross amounts and are subject to taxes and other mandatory deductions under Portuguese law, including income tax withholding and the employee's social security contributions, and are subject to the applicable Portuguese tax and social security legislation. The net amount received will depend on the candidate's tax and personal circumstances.

The terms of employment and salary are in accordance with the local and national rules and in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down by the European Union's Horizon Europe Marie Sklodowska-Curie Action Doctoral Network. Exact salary will be confirmed upon appointment.

**Submission of applications:**
Applicants must submit their application **exclusively in English** as **one single merged PDF file**.
The application must be sent by email to the People & Culture Department at positions@gimm.pt, from 12th of June until 15th of August, 2026. The email subject must include the reference: GIMM/CT/25-2026. The merged PDF file must include the following documents, in this order:

1. Copy of the identity card/citizen card/passport;
2. Applicant's Curriculum Vitae (2 pages maximum);
3. General Motivation Letter (Maximum of 5000 characters);
    - Should answer the following questions:
        - What was the specific moment or project that convinced you that a PhD in Life Sciences – specifically at an institute like GIMM – was your next step?
        - How does a PhD at GIMM specifically bridge the gap between your previous experiences and your long-term career goals?
        - What does 'scientific excellence' mean to you personally, and how will you pursue it during your doctoral studies?
4. Project-Specific Motivation Letter (Maximum of 5000 characters);
5. Academic degree certificates.

In addition to the application PDF, candidates must ensure that GIMM receives a minimum of 2 reference letters by the application deadline. Reference letters must be written in English and sent to positions@gimm.pt, with the email subject including the reference GIMM/CT/25-2026. Each reference letter must:

- Be written on official letterhead, including basic information about the referee's professional status;
- Include the referee's contact information;
- Be signed and submitted in PDF format;
- Be sent either directly by the referee from their official email address, or by the candidate with the referee in CC.

All reference letters must be received by the deadline. Applications and supporting documents must be submitted exclusively in English.

***Note:*** *Candidates who submit their applications incorrectly or who fail to provide evidence of the requirements set out in this competition within the deadlines specified herein will be excluded from the competition. In cases of doubt, the selection panel reserves the right to require any candidate to provide supporting documents for their statements.*

**Non-discrimination and equal access policy:** GIMM promotes a non-discrimination and equal access policy, wherefore no candidate can be privileged, benefited, impaired or deprived of any rights whatsoever, or be exempt of any duties based on their ancestry, age, sex, sexual preference, marital status, family and economic conditions, instruction, origin or social conditions, genetic heritage, reduced work capacity, disability, chronic illness, nationality, ethnic origin or race, origin territory, language, religion, political or ideological convictions and union membership.

**International environment and experience:** Diversity is a fundamental aspect of the essence of GiMM, where researchers and non-researchers of different nationalities, backgrounds and areas of study work together, promoting the exchange of experiences and interactions, contributing to the personal and professional development of each person and to the existence of an international, inclusive and stimulating environment.
Pursuant to Decree-Law nr 29/2001 of 3rd February, disabled candidates shall be preferred in a situation of equal classification, and said preference supersedes any legal preferences. Candidates must declare, in their honor, their respective disability degree, type of disability and communication / expression means to be used during selection period on their application form, under the regulations above.

**Assessment Criteria:** Applications will be assessed by a panel comprising Prof. Maria Carmo-Fonseca, Dr. Joel Perez Perri and Dr. Noélia Custódio, in accordance with the following methods:

The selection process for this PhD position will occur in two stages:

a) First stage – Application assessment
   The first stage is eliminatory, and each application will be reviewed in detail by the 3 members of the selection committee. The evaluation considers the candidate's merit and motivation, assessed based on the documents submitted in the application. Subsequently, the committee will meet to deliberate. Applications considered admissible will be scored on a scale of 1 to 20 in each of the following evaluation criteria:
   - **Criterion A (50%)** – CV that reflects academic, scientific and professional background;

- **Criterion B (35%)** – Motivations letters. The evaluation of the motivation letter considers the motivation to apply for the PhD Programme and to work on the specific scientific project; how the Programme may contribute to the individual career development, and the alignment between the candidate's professional objectives and GIMM's objectives.

- **Criterion C (15%)** – Recommendation letters. The evaluation of letters of recommendation focuses on the candidate's intellectual curiosity and scientific commitment, academic curriculum and experience, and research competence.

b) Second stage – Interview

Successful candidates from the first stage (scoring 14 or above) will move to the second stage. This stage entails an individual interview conducted by the three members of the selection committee. The committee evaluates candidates based on the following criteria:

- **Criterion A (30%):** Academic, scientific, and professional merit, and its alignment with the applicant's chosen topic.

- **Criterion B (25%):** Motivation, initiative and originality;

- **Criterion C (35%):** Ability to discuss and critically analyze scientific work. Specific knowledge in the candidate's area of study. Broad scientific knowledge, with a specific focus on GIMM's core research areas.

- **Criterion D (10%):** Proficiency in English, including fluency and clarity of communication

Applications will be ordered according to the weighted average obtained in each of the 4 criteria above, translated into the formula: Documental classification = (0.30 × A) + (0.25 × B) + (0.35 × C) + (0,10 × D).

**Results:** The list of successful and unsuccessful candidates, as well as the final ranking list, will be sent by email to all successful candidates.

**Preliminary Hearing and Final Decision Deadline:** After notification, all candidates have 10 working days to respond. Panel's final decisions are pronounced within a period of 90 days, from application deadline.

The present call is exclusively aimed at filling the indicated vacancy and may be terminated until the homologation of the final candidates' ranking list and expires with the respective occupation of the position on offer.

**Lisbon, June 9th, 2026**

Funded by the European Union

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