Executive Summary – strategy paper HELIX

The international landscape of Life Science and Health is changing. Scientific and technological capabilities are emerging in new places, while advances in research, healthcare and industry are creating new opportunities for collaboration and innovation. For universities and their partners, this raises a strategic question: how can established international relationships continue to deliver value while also helping institutions recognise and pursue opportunities that could not have been anticipated?

HELIX is a three-year Sweden–Brazil initiative in Life Science and Health, supported by the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT). Building on substantial research relationships, complementary scientific and clinical environments, and longstanding institutional connections, it offers the two countries an opportunity to explore this question together. Its initial programme combines research, education and mobility across three thematic areas: Data-Driven Health & AI Integration, Translational & Clinical Integration Pathways, and Health Resilience & Demographic Transformation. The programme also seeks to strengthen connections between academia, healthcare, the public sector and industry, recognising that new opportunities often emerge through interactions across these environments.

Building on this established programme, the initiative has **two mutually reinforcing objectives**: 1) to strengthen cooperation through research, education and mobility, and 2) to explore how Swedish and Brazilian partners can become better at identifying emerging opportunities, combining capabilities and developing new forms of collaboration.

These objectives build on one another. Existing activities provide scientific substance and opportunities for interaction, while the knowledge and relationships they generate may reveal possibilities beyond their original purposes. HELIX offers a setting in which such opportunities can be recognised, explored and, where appropriate, taken forward.

HELIX was formally launched at a conference in Stockholm in September 2026, which also included an initial Discovery Workshop. The exploratory discussions brought forward promising connections between research capabilities, clinical needs and institutional environments, alongside obstacles that can prevent such connections from developing into productive collaboration. Four challenges emerged: making relevant capabilities and opportunities visible; creating workable conditions for joint activity; ensuring reciprocal value and influence over priorities; and sustaining collaboration while adapting to changing circumstances.

Together with the broader strategic considerations informing HELIX, these initial observations highlight the importance of distinguishing between search, discovery and activation. *Search* helps identify known capabilities for recognised needs. *Discovery* involves recognising possibilities that have not yet been formulated, often through encounters across established boundaries. *Activation* concerns the practical and institutional conditions needed to move promising opportunities towards action. *By developing shared capacities for discovery and activation, HELIX could enable participating researchers, institutions, companies and other partners to identify and pursue joint research, clinical and business opportunities that might otherwise remain unexplored.* At a time of rapid scientific, technological and institutional change, the ability to recognise and act on such opportunities may become increasingly important in **driving future developments rather than merely responding to them**.

For this contribution to become a shared strength, Swedish and Brazilian participants must be able to **shape and pursue opportunities together**. This requires more than balanced representation or participation in joint activities. Partners on both sides need the ability to introduce questions, influence priorities, connect relevant expertise and take initiatives forward. Developing this bilateral agency is central to HELIX's wider ambition: to help build a community that can generate and pursue new opportunities through its own interactions, rather than depend solely on initiatives defined in advance.