

(Special) Education in Youth Prisons: Inclusion, Autonomy and Coercion

Stockholm University, Department of Special Education, June 8-9, 2026.

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Conference Programme

08.06.2026	Day 1:
10.00-10.30	Keynote 1 Wieland Wermke, Ulrika Norburg, <i>Stockholm University</i> , <i>Welcome, Conference theme and rationale and the current Swedish situation</i>
10.30-11.10	Keynote 2 Frieder Dünkel, <i>University of Greifswald</i> , <i>Youth imprisonment in Europe – legal conditions and standards</i> <i>Moderator: Tobias Ringeisen (University of Applied Sciences in Law and Economics Berlin)</i>
11.30-12.10	Keynote 3 Ulrike Fickler-Stang, <i>Humboldt University Berlin</i> & Julian Knop, <i>Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin</i> , <i>The educational mandate in youth prisons in Germany – theoretical foundations, normative frameworks, and empirical insights from within</i> <i>Moderator: Wieland Wermke (Stockholm University)</i>

12.30-13.30	Lunch
13.30-14.00	<p>Panel 1: European perspectives <i>Annika Krause, University of Oldenburg, Jens Borchert, University of Applied Sciences Merseburg, The European Network "Youth Prisons and Education."</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Ulrika Fickler-Stang (Humboldt University Berlin)</i></p>
14.15-15.30	<p>Panel 2: Nordic perspectives</p> <p>Sofie Amalie Poulsen & Linda Kjaer, University of Southern Denmark, <i>Youth in Danish prisons: Everyday practices, coercion, and the right to education.</i></p> <p>Lise Jones, University of Bergen, <i>Norwegian prison service for incarcerated young people</i></p> <p>Paula Alanen, Tampere University <i>The right to education: case of underage and young prisoners in Finland</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Ulrika Norburg (Stockholm University)</i></p>
15.30-16.30	Coffee
16.30-17.15	<p>Panel 4: Students at risk or matching clients?</p> <p>Martin Hugo, University of Borås, <i>Hope, Wonder and Uncertainty – Being a Student with Intellectual Disability in the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SiS)</i></p> <p>Antigone Estratoglou, Open Hellenic University, <i>The Prison School as Refuge? What It Takes for Education to Be Reparative Expanding Roles and Fragile Boundaries in Youth Prisons</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Pär Widén (Malmö University)</i></p>
17.30-18.30	<p>Keynote 4: Sabina Vaught, University of Pittsburgh & Damien Soyoner, University of Irvine California, What is an Abolitionist Perspective?</p> <p><i>Moderator: Wieland Wermke (Stockholm University)</i></p>
19.00	Dinner

09.06.2026	Day 2
8.30-9.10	<p>Keynote 3 <i>Bo-Kyung Elizabeth Kim, UCLA, The Promise of Evidence-Based Practice and Policy: Equity and Justice First</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Tobias Ringeisen (University of Applied Sciences in Law and Economics Berlin)</i></p>
9.15-10.30	<p>Panel 5: <i>The youth prison as educational institution</i></p> <p><i>Stephanie Ernst, Germany, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, The "Educational Concept" on Paper: Pathways to Youth Detention and Youth Penalty in German Juvenile Law</i></p> <p><i>Johanna Schmid, Land Berlin, Dep. director State of Berlin Youth Prison, The "educational concept" behind bars: Guidelines and objectives defined in the Berlin Juvenile Penalty Act</i></p> <p><i>Janet Langer, Rostock University, Education and Relationship in Juvenile Detention</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Julian Knop (Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences Berlin)</i></p>
10.30-11.00	Coffee
11.00-11.45	<p>Panel 6: <i>Historical accounts 1</i></p> <p><i>Bengt Sandin, Linköping University & Rebecka Andersen, Marie Cederskjöld University, A Third Way? Education, Labour, and Coercion in Swedish Youth Reformatories, 1905–1948</i></p> <p><i>Dennis Albertsen, Malmö University. To be willing, and able: Learning through labour at the Swedish reformatory Bona, 1905–1947.</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Pär Widén (Malmö University)</i></p>
11.45-12.30	Panel 7: <i>Historical accounts 2</i>

	<p><i>Viktor Englund, Uppsala University, Learning from the past – prison as a deprivation punishment and the importance of affordance</i></p> <p><i>Ellen Ceder Henriksson, Södertörn University, Putting Truants in Their Place: Institutional Responses to Truancy</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Ulrika Norburg (Stockholm University)</i></p>
12.30-13.30	Lunch
13.30-14.45	<p>Panel 8: Critical pedagogy perspectives</p> <p><i>Susanne Leitner, University of Applied Sciences Ludwigsburg, Repoliticising Trauma in Youth Detention? Tensions Between Trauma Pedagogy and Critical Pedagogies under conditions of coercion</i></p> <p><i>Pär Widén, Malmö University, A Theoretical Problematization of Youth Incarceration Facilities and Civic Education as a Biopolitical intervention Project</i></p> <p><i>Moderator: Tobias Ringeisen (University of Applied Sciences in Law and Economics Berlin)</i></p>
14.50-15.00	<p>Conference closing</p> <p>Wieland Wermke & Ulrika Norburg, Stockholm University</p>

Presentations in alphabetical order

<p>Alanen, Paula</p>	<p>Finland, Tampere University</p>	<p>The right to education: case of underage and young prisoners in Finland</p> <p>In Finland, the responsibility of organising education in prisons is under the jurisdiction of education and culture. Thus, prisons cooperate with the local municipalities and educational institutions that implement basic and vocational education. The average yearly share of young persons (under 21 yrs) is approximately 2 percent in Finnish prisons. In 2021 the Finnish Prison and Probation Service carried out a study about young persons in Finnish prisons (Muurinen, 2021). The report recommended several points for improving the situation in accordance with international agreements. The report revealed the poor conditions of prison education. Due to lacking resources many young people are left alone with their studies and only minimum teaching is provided. The Parliamentary Ombudsman have inspected the situation in 2025 and given further recommendations.</p>
<p>Albertsen, Dennis</p>	<p>Sweden, Malmö University</p>	<p>To be willing, and able: Learning through labour at the Swedish reformatory Bona, 1905–1947.</p> <p>The project examines the <i>State Reformatory at Bona</i> (1905–1947) with a focus on its educational functions and how the boys at Bona were prepared for life outside the institution. This paper analyses what can be understood as Bona’s vocational education. By using Gert Biesta’s three educational domains: qualification, socialisation and subjectification, the study shows how labour at the institution was shaped to teach how to navigate a life characterised by wage labour, responsibility and impulse control. The analysis highlights how education at Bona was shaped by the institution’s specific historical conditions: production for the institution’s internal needs was constantly balanced against the ambition to shape competent adults. The study also shows how work underwent a pedagogization over time. From resembling traditional learning through participation, demands on the foremen’s pedagogical competence increased, gradually shifting work practice towards something resembling a contemporary vocational school. The motivation for theoretical instruction simultaneously changed from promoting socialisation: job satisfaction and professional identification to qualification: the strengthening of the students’ professional competence.</p>

		Together, the results show how Bona constituted a complex learning environment, where education and work had to be integrated in ways that differ radically from other learning environments, both historical and modern.
Borchert, Jens & Krause, Annika	Germany, University of Applied Sciences Merseburg and University of Oldenburg	The European Research Network on Education in Prison Education in prison is widely recognized as a key factor for successful rehabilitation and reintegration, and recent EU initiatives have strengthened the political and institutional framework for improving learning opportunities in correctional settings. Building on this shared European momentum, the network brings together a diverse community of researchers and practitioners, uniting a broad range of academic and professional expertise to create an interdisciplinary space for examining the complex realities of teaching and learning behind prison walls. The presentation will highlight the importance of education in prison and outline how the network has developed in response to European developments, before presenting its current stage of progress.
Ceder Henriksson, Ellen	Sweden, Södertörn University	Putting Truants in Their Place: Institutional Responses to Truancy The presentation draws on research from my ongoing doctoral project on school truancy in Sweden around the turn of the twentieth century. It examines how truancy was defined and managed through institutional responses, focusing on three institutions for truant boys in Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg. These institutions were created to deal with children who repeatedly stayed away from school by removing them from harmful environments and placing them in more controlled settings structured around routines, supervision and work. Drawing on archival material, the presentation highlights everyday practices within these institutions and reflects on how they sought to transform children by reshaping their environment.
Düinkel, Frieder	Germany, University of Greifswald	Keynote: „Youth imprisonment in Europe – legal conditions and standards” Youth imprisonment – according to international human rights standards – should be a sanction of last resort and as short as possible. The Council of Europe’s recommendation on European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measures of 2008 give an orientation for legal conditions of reactions depriving young offenders of their liberty. They address the problems of restricting pre-trial

		<p>detention as well as imprisonment of sentenced offenders. They also provide minimum standards for the regime inside institutions independent of their justice or welfare oriented nature. In Europe, the legal conditions of both (imposition of youth imprisonment and regulation of the “educational” regime inside youth prisons) vary considerably. The threshold for imposing youth imprisonment, the age groups and the length of respective sanctions are a major problem of comparative criminal justice. Youth imprisonment can mean a maximum penalty of one or two years (Netherlands) up to 10 years (Germany), the respective age groups of young offenders in youth prisons may range from 10 to 17 years (England and Wales) to 14-24 years (Germany). Unclear is the situation of young offenders in welfare institutions, who often are not counted as prisoners, but suffering indefinite periods of deprivation of liberty under unsatisfactory conditions.</p> <p>There is a need for further comparative research identifying possible successes of specific rehabilitative efforts and the risks, failures and violations of human rights standards inside youth prisons. The presentation will try to find answers to these questions.</p>
<p>Englund, Viktor</p>	<p>Sweden, Uppsala University</p>	<p>Learning from the past – prison as a deprivation punishment and the importance of affordance</p> <p>In the second half of the 19th century, Sweden gradually built up a prison system based on the Philadelphia system. The foundation of this prison model is the total isolation of prisoners from each other. By studying how prisoners adapted to this form of punishment, I have developed a concept of prison as a deprivation punishment. In the harsh living conditions prisoners used strategies to make their situation more endurable. In this presentation I will develop our understanding of those actions through the concept affordance.</p>
<p>Ernst, Stephanie</p>	<p>Germany, Fulda University of Applied Sciences</p>	<p>The "Educational Concept" on Paper: Pathways to Youth Detention and Youth Penalty in German Juvenile Law</p> <p>This talk introduces the German juvenile justice sanction system from a legal perspective. It outlines the range of graduated sanctions, from "supervisory measures" to "youth penalties", focusing on those involving the deprivation of liberty.</p> <p>The presentation highlights the "educational concept" of the system and prepares the audience for subsequent discussions about the importance of education in enforcing these sanctions.</p>

<p>Estratoglou , Antigone</p>	<p>Greece, Open Hellenic University</p>	<p>The Prison School as Refuge? What It Takes for Education to Be Reparative Expanding Roles and Fragile Boundaries in Youth Prisons</p> <p>This presentation begins with a brief story about Asal, a young Afghan refugee, who describes the Second Chance School operating in the women’s prison of Thebes as “the only place on earth that feels like home”. Taking this claim seriously leads to an uncomfortable starting point: we cannot talk about education in prison without confronting prison itself—and the unequal trajectories through which certain groups of young people are systematically drawn into it. Yet, in everyday practice, educators are often expected—or compelled—to “close the door” and teach as if the prison were not there.</p> <p>Drawing on nearly a decade of teaching experience and three years of ethnographic research in Second Chance Schools operating inside prisons, this presentation examines what this “closing of the door” obscures, within a context shaped by increasing punitiveness, systemic understaffing, and the erosion of support structures. In Greece, minors and young people are held in conditions that fail to meet their most basic needs, while education is implicitly expected to compensate for institutional deficiencies that extend far beyond its formal mandate.</p> <p>The presentation unfolds through short, often unspoken moments from practice: a student asking for help with a court document instead of homework; a group negotiating whether it is “safe” to speak; someone looking for a place to grieve. These moments point to a broader reality, where unmet needs—legal, linguistic, emotional—are routinely redirected toward the school. Teachers engage with these needs in ways that exceed their formal responsibilities, not only by offering practical support, but by sustaining forms of relationality that cannot be reduced to institutional roles. At the same time, institutional rules and professional norms frame such involvement as risky or inappropriate.</p> <p>Working with young people in confinement thus brings into sharp focus a tension at the heart of prison education: the more meaningful the educational relationship becomes, the more it unsettles the limits imposed on it. Rather than resolving this tension, the presentation foregrounds the voices of young people in confinement, who reflect on why the school inside prison came to “win them over”, in contrast to earlier schooling experiences that had already “lost them.” It invites discussion of this tension: What counts as “too much” involvement—and who gets to decide? What do professional boundaries do—and whom do they protect? What kind of school do young people in confinement say they need, when given the space? And what might their experiences reveal about what matters most in education, both within and beyond prison?</p>
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<p>Hugo, Martin</p>	<p>Sweden, Borås University</p>	<p>Hope, Wonder and Uncertainty – Being a Student with Intellectual Disability in the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (SiS).</p> <p>Our research examines education for children with intellectual disabilities (ID) placed in compulsory care within the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care’s school system. The study is based on a nationwide survey of SiS school principals, fieldwork at eight secure youth care institutions, and interviews with students, principals, and teachers. The goal is to explore how education is organized and experienced by children with ID, and what conditions support school attendance, learning identity, and future planning. Many students have faced socially vulnerable situations and fragmented schooling. They describe a lack of recognition in earlier education, which is understood as epistemic injustice. In contrast, students within SiS schools report being listened to and receiving personalized instruction, fostering a more positive learning identity. Teachers highlight continuity, small groups, structure, repetition, and practical tasks, while principals focus on pacing, mentoring, and consistent adult collaboration. The study concludes that children’s life chances are shaped by how institutions organize education, coordination, and recognition.</p>
<p>Jones, Lise</p>	<p>Norway, University of Bergen</p>	<p>Norwegian prison service for incarcerated young people</p> <p>The presentation provides an overview of the Norwegian prison service for incarcerated young people. They are divided into two groups: the juvenile group, aged 15-18, and the young adult group, aged 18-24. The presentation will describe how correctional services provide education for both groups in prison. For over 20 years (2004-2026), Bergen Cognition and Learning Group at the University of Bergen has conducted national surveys of the prison population focusing on demographics, educational needs, learning difficulties, motivation, and barriers to education. As there are very few juveniles incarcerated (approx. 20 places), the research data will mainly focus on the age group between 18 and 24 years.</p>

<p>Kim, Bo-Kyung Elizabeth</p>	<p>USA, UCLA</p>	<p>Keynote: The Promise of Evidence-Based Practice and Policy: Equity and Justice First</p> <p>The history of the juvenile justice system in the United States is a continuation of a pendulum swing between punishment and rehabilitation. Many reforms and policy changes toward rehabilitation have been based on scientific evidence. In this presentation, I share 40 years of evidence showing that young people’s mental, emotional, and behavioral health problems – much like physical health problems – can, in fact, be prevented. The uncovering of the adolescent brain through neuroscience has changed numerous juvenile justice policies and practices. I share findings from my own work with schools to present important lessons learned about education and the juvenile justice system. Central to this work is prioritizing equity and justice first. In the United States, we have seen that media can easily sway the public with fear and indignation. When emotion speaks louder than evidence, we ultimately deepen inequities endemic to the juvenile justice system. This presentation seeks to foster further dialogue on how proactive decision-making driven by evidence, rather than reactive decisions driven by fear, can help dismantle inequity.</p>
<p>Knop, Julian & Fickler-Stang, Ulrike</p>	<p>Germany, Humboldt University Berlin and Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences</p>	<p>Keynote: The educational mandate in youth prisons in Germany – theoretical foundations, normative frameworks, and empirical insights from within</p> <p>This presentation addresses the educational mandate within youth prisons in Germany from an interdisciplinary perspective. From a theoretical standpoint, it addresses, first, the legal and pedagogical foundations of the educational mandate. In this context, particular attention is given to the areas of tension faced by educational practitioners that arise from the institutional specificities of the juvenile correctional system. Second, the presentation discusses research findings on the actual implementation of the educational mandate in the practice of a youth prison. These findings emerged from a research-practice collaboration between the Department of Special Education at Humboldt University of Berlin and a youth prison in Germany.</p>
<p>Langer, Janet</p>	<p>Germany, Rostock University</p>	<p>Education and Relationship in Juvenile Detention</p> <p>Education and development inherently occur through relationships and cannot be realized without supportive pedagogical relationships. This paper investigates how such relationships are constituted and experienced within the context of juvenile detention. Drawing on qualitative research (Langer, Link, Fickler-Stang & Zimmermann, 2021; Zimmermann, 2023), the findings reveal that pedagogical relationships are often perceived by staff as emotionally risky, leading to strategies of professional distancing. While these strategies help sustain institutional functioning, they simultaneously</p>

		constrain educational processes. The paper discusses these dynamics from a special education perspective, emphasizing professional competencies for education under coercive structural conditions.
Leitner, Susanne	Germany, University of Applied Science, Ludwigsburg	Repoliticising Trauma in Youth Detention? Tensions Between Trauma Pedagogy and Critical Pedagogies under conditions of coercion. My initially trauma-sensitive perspective on education in youth prisons has been transformed by insights from critical pedagogies (Giroux, 2020; hooks, 1994; Schneider-Bertan, 2024). They prompt a critique of trauma discourse's "(neuro)liberal" (Fuchs 2017) tendencies of individualising misfortune and demanding self-optimisation, thereby depoliticising structural violence and inequality (Zembylas, 2023). Against this background, I ask whether education in youth prisons can be conceptualised as a site of repoliticised, critical, emancipatory trauma pedagogy, and what it might mean to think and practise such a pedagogy under the specific conditions of youth imprisonment today and in relation to existing institutional arrangements more broadly.
Norburg, Ulrika & Wermke, Wieland	Sweden, Stockholm University	Keynote: Conference theme and rationale, and the current Swedish situation
Poulsen, Sofie Amalie & Kjaer, Linda	Denmark, University of Southern Denmark	"Youth in Danish prisons: Everyday practices, coercion, and the right to education." In Denmark, minors convicted of serious offences may be placed in prison despite the general rule that under 18s should be assigned to social institutions. One prison receives under 18s. Our presentation centers on everyday practices concerning these incarcerated youths. They are subjected to a strict duty to work or study, and refusal results in disciplinary sanctions. Consequently, we critically examine tensions between children's best interests and incarceration. Youths under 18 who serve long sentences and are sentenced to deportation are, upon turning 18, transferred to Ringe Prison, where deportation status severely limits access to education. Thus, the issue concerns not only coercion but the right to education.
Ringeisen, Tobias	Germany, University of	Moderator

	Applied Sciences in Law and Economics Berlin	
Sandin, Bengt & Andersen, Rebecka	Sweden, Linköpings Universitet & Marie Cederskjöld University	<p>A Third Way? Education, Labour, and Coercion in Swedish Youth Reformatories, 1905–1948</p> <p>This contribution examines two Swedish reform institutions for young offenders – Bona for boys and Viebäck for girls – established following the 1902 penal reform, which introduced reformatory treatment as a “third way” between punishment and protection. Focusing on the relationship between education and coercion, the paper analyses how institutional practices differed along gendered lines. Our overall research project aims to analyse the relationship between punishment and protection in everyday urban police practices and court considerations, as well as government enquiries and the landscape of institutions for delinquents (below 15 and between 15 to 18) between 1864 and ca 1950. It is a period in which the central transformation of notions of children and young people was codified in criminal legislation and social welfare law (fattigvård, barnavård), but there is little information on the governmental practices that shaped the mundane lives of children and youth over a longer period.</p> <p>The contribution argues that these differences reveal distinct configurations of the education–coercion nexus. While boys were governed through pedagogical assessment and disciplinary surveillance, girls were shaped through moral evaluation and domestic norms – highlighting how gender structured both educational practices and coercive control within early twentieth-century youth reform institutions. The ultimate explanation for the difference in practices can be understood as a result of the fact that Bona (boys) was a state-run institution, while Viebäck (girls) was a philanthropic endeavour, which needs to be scrutinised further.</p>
Schmid, Johanna	Germany, Land Berlin, Dep. Director of Berlin Youth Prison	<p>The "educational concept" behind bars: Guidelines and objectives defined in the Berlin Juvenile Penalty Act</p> <p>Following a landmark decision by the German Federal Constitutional Court, specific legislation on juvenile penalty has been in force in Germany since 2008. This presentation examines how the principles of education and mentoring are embedded in the Berlin Juvenile Penalty Act and how they are implemented in practice. It also provides insights into selected educational and treatment approaches within Berlin’s youth prison.</p>

<p>Vaught, Sabina & Soyoner, Damien</p>	<p>USA, University of Pittsburgh and University of Irvine California</p>	<p>Keynote: What is an Abolitionist Perspective?</p> <p>Considering the contemporary conjunctural context in Sweden’s educational and carceral institutional, ideological formations, we offer introductory abolitionist possibilities. We draw from Black US abolitionist traditions to pose questions around areas such as reform to encourage local development of principles and practices. As ethnographers in both educational and carceral contexts, we will share anecdotes to illustrate key considerations.</p>
<p>Widén, Pär</p>	<p>Sweden, Malmö University</p>	<p>A Theoretical Problematization of Youth Incarceration Facilities and Civic Education as a Biopolitical intervention Project</p> <p>Foucault traced the historical emergence of new human sciences spearheaded by psychological disciplines (Rose, 1985; Foucault 1984). In liaison with economic, legal, and religious discourses, these knowledge disciplines facilitated for the use of new technologies of power within modern institutions. This directly affected the conditions for institutionalization and incarceration of Children in prisons. Thus, institutional discourses and practices changed in the name/ wake of humanization, liberalism and democratization processes (Foucault 2008). Concurrently, more efficient, widened and intensified mechanisms for ensuring social discipline were developed. Modern notions of the human Child subject were thus in effect constructed through operations of various institutional techniques of individualization and normalization (Widén, 2010). These societal reforms and changes occurred simultaneously and could be observed in hospitals, psychiatric clinics, prisons and schools, leaving both architectural, organizational and pedagogical traces. In spite of Foucault’s highlighting of the significance of these historical changes towards a modern society's "all-encompassing and strict institutions," (Foucault, 2015), his observations have been largely left unnoticed (Valverde 2017)both in research and political debates on Child imprisonment and the re-education of young offenders. The scientific knowledge invoked in contemporary society for the initiation, organization, and re-educational design of juvenile prisons, still remains unclear. This article sets out to examine/explore how the problem of Child prisons has been defined in Swedish policy. What research based knowledge/scientific knowledge has been used to legitimize the Child prisons? What methods of interventions for re-educating delinquent Children were suggested and what knowledge experts were to govern and administrate the new Child prisons?</p>

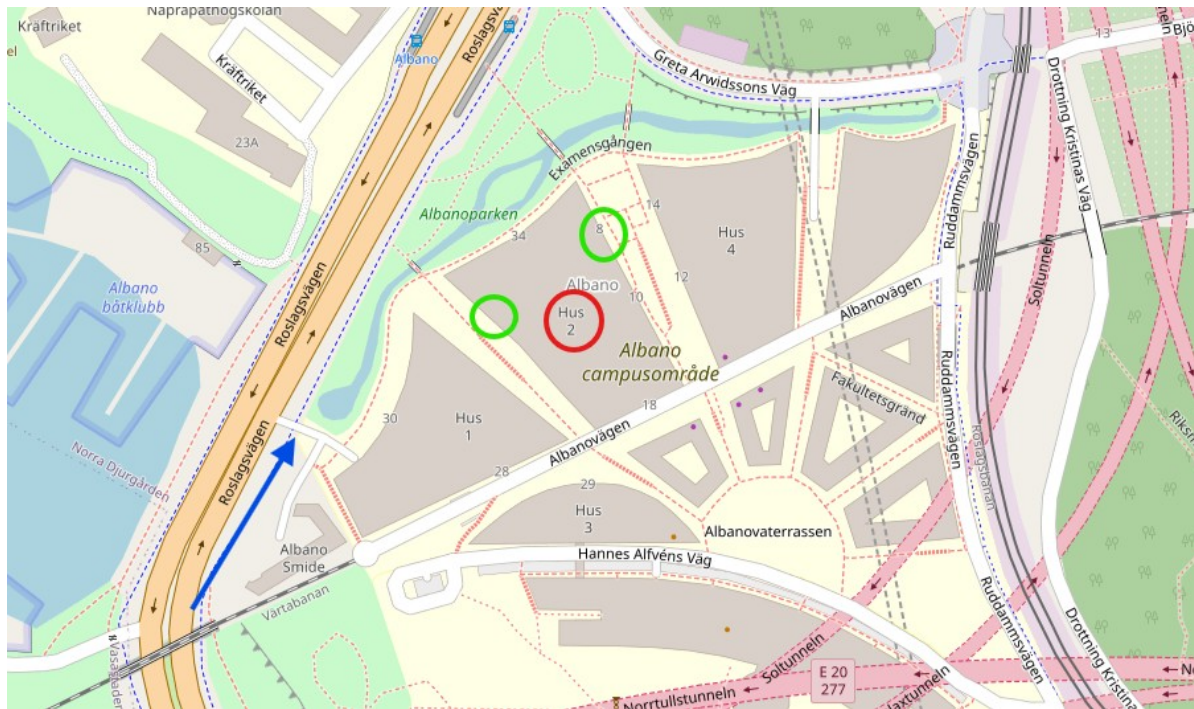
Conference Venue

ALB Lecture Hall 4, Albano House 2, Floor 2

Link with walking directions from Elite hotel Arcadia to Roslagsvägen 34, Campus Albano, House 2: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/DrgLE2NNuR8WDNSY9>

Your direction, see **blue arrow**

Entrance to house 2, see **green marks**



Venue of the Conference: Lecture Hall 4 (“Hörsal 4”) see arrow below



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