

# Luleå Prison - Sweden

## Introduction



Luleå Prison is recognized as a medium-security correctional facility (security level 2<sup>1</sup>). It is situated in Luleå, the largest city in northern Sweden, and was established in 2002. The prison falls under the jurisdiction of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service (Kriminalvården). Its vision is to facilitate transformation rather than just ensuring secure custody. This means that residents are motivated to change their lives when they have completed their sentences. This facility is

known for its use of therapy dogs.

## Scale

At the time of the visit, this was a small-scale prison with a capacity for twelve young people in nine rooms. Six of them stayed in a double room. It was explained, however, that the facility's capacity would expand in September 2023 to 52 rooms for 62 people, including 10 double rooms. After this expansion, this facility can no longer be considered small-scale, according to the definition used in this report.

### RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

## Differentiation

### *Target group:*

This facility accommodates adult males aged 18 to 24, although specific demographic have changed. Today, juveniles are also housed at Luleå Prison. To be admitted to Luleå Prison, people must have a criminal conviction. Once convicted, they can be placed in Luleå Prison right from the beginning of their sentence and must stay there for at least four months. There are no contraindications regarding criminal offenses.

---

<sup>1</sup>In Sweden, there are three security levels: one is the highest and three the lowest.

Although people committed for sex crimes have their own prisons and can only be placed at Luleå prison at the end of their sentence.

### *Forms of security:*

Relational security plays an important role in Swedish prisons, as it does in Luleå Prison. This type of security involves staff building rapport with residents through both formal and informal conversations. Regular meetings are held to review and discuss the previous week's events. In addition, staff use tokens as positive reinforcement for the residents. Their approach is to prevent escalations by prioritizing communication and looking for the underlying reasons behind situations.

Static and procedural security measures are also strong. Luleå Prison is surrounded with fences and there are bars in front of the windows. Camera surveillance is present everywhere around the facility. Walking around the facility requires a key to open many doors. Residents do not have a key to their room. In addition, they make use of strip searches, drug testing and handcuffs.

Swedish prisons typically follow a standard guideline where residents spend twelve hours within their rooms, while the remaining twelve hours are dedicated to various activities such as work, education, and other programs. Residents do not have unrestricted movement within the facility, and a strict zero tolerance policy is upheld against drug use. The use of computers or game consoles is allowed, but there is supervision. These rules are just a few of the many rules in place.



### *Activities:*

Although residents in Luleå Prison are mainly not in control of their own schedule, the facility offers a range of activities aimed at both rehabilitation and personal growth for its residents. Then the residents can choose which activities they want to do. The facility places a strong emphasis on work, education, and recreation to foster positive change in the lives of the residents. In terms of work, residents can engage in maintenance, cleaning and carpentry. Work is mandatory and they receive a wage for it (13 crowns/ an hour). Residents can join a rehabilitation program as well.

Furthermore, Luleå Prison attaches great importance to education and offers courses for adults from primary to upper secondary education. The curriculum includes Swedish language courses for immigrants, as well as literacy training tailored to the construction industry. Participants will receive introductory knowledge in the areas of woodworking, concrete, painting and tiling, as well as a window into possible career paths. The latest development concerning education is a two year cheftraining program.

The facility also offers a range of options for filling in free time. They have many physical activities such as yoga, spinning, a ball field, a small workout room, a ping pong table and in the winter they even have a hockey rink. Residents in Luleå Prison have the chance to receive visits from family or friends, although the permitted number of visitors is restricted. Due to the prison's secluded setting, residents do not experience regular visitation. Nonetheless, residents have the option to take leaves for the purpose of visiting their families.



Luleå prison is also known for its use of therapy dogs. This is a pioneering initiative in the Swedish prison system in which specially trained dogs provide emotional support and companionship to people in detention during 30-minute sessions. Both staff and residents find support and comfort in the presence of the dogs. Currently there are already two trained dogs and two more are being trained.

## Community-integration

### *Location and architecture:*

Luleå Prison is located at a prison site next to the university in Luleå. Luleå is a city near the coast of Northern Sweden. It is the capital of the northernmost county in Sweden, Norrbotten County and it has about 78 549 inhabitants (2020).<sup>2</sup> The facility is accessible by public transport. At the time of the visit, Luleå Prison consists of only one unit, but with the expansion of the prison, four units will be established.

**First impression of a visitor:** "High security, quite red, bars in front of the windows, fences, surrounded by trees, and the construction site of the new building..."

<sup>2</sup>Localities in Luleå (Norrbotten, Sweden) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map, Location, Weather and Web Information. (2020). *City population*. Retrieved August 15th, 2023, from [https://www.citypopulation.de/en/sweden/norbotten/2580\\_\\_\\_/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/sweden/norbotten/2580___/)

Most of the residents have their own room, but some residents have to share a room with someone else. There is also a shared living room, kitchen and walking area. With the expansion of the prison they also create a space with animals. The facility has a prison atmosphere, although the staff tries to make it more homely by adding some decoration.

*Interaction with the community:*

As residents are restricted from departing Luleå Prison, any form of interaction between them and the local community is absent. No structural services are offered to the community either.

**Luleå prison**

Founded: 2002

Capacity: 62

Security level: Medium

Nearest city/town: Luleå  
(Sweden)

Nature of interaction: Visited  
by RESCALED (19/01/2023)

**Publicity/ read more**

- About Luleå prison at the official website of Kriminalvården (Swedish Prison and Probation Service):

Anstalten Luleå #kriminalvarden. (n.d.). *Kriminalvården*. Retrieved August 15th, 2023, from <https://www.kriminalvarden.se/kontakt/hitta-till-oss/verksamhet/anstalt/lulea/#kontakt>