

Social Research Call

Title:

Breaking Barriers to Enhance Criminal Justice Interactions and Safeguards for ASD in Portugal



Acronym: BEJUST

Project leader: Telma Sousa Almeida

Host organisation: William James Center for Research, Ispa – Instituto Universitário

Main purpose of the project: This project aims to investigate and address the unique challenges faced by autistic individuals within the Portuguese Criminal Justice System (CJS). By identifying systemic gaps and barriers, we seek to develop improved legal procedures and safeguards that promote inclusivity and justice for autistic individuals.

Design/methodology/approach: Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study integrates quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with police officers, legal professionals, and the autism community. This comprehensive methodology ensures a robust collection and analysis of data to inform targeted interventions and training programs.

Potential results: The project is expected to yield detailed insights into the experiences and challenges of autistic individuals within the CJS, leading to the development of evidence-based recommendations and targeted training programs. These programs will improve the skills of law enforcement and legal professionals, fostering more effective, empathetic, and equitable interactions with autistic individuals.

Social relevance of the research: This research tackles a critical social challenge in Portugal: creating an inclusive, equitable justice system attuned to neurodiversity. It offers actionable solutions expected to yield significant societal benefits, fostering a more inclusive CJS and contributing to a society that upholds the rights and dignity of all its members.

Originality/value of the project: This project is the first comprehensive study in Portugal to explore the intersection of autism and the CJS. It introduces innovative methods and analysis techniques, providing actionable insights for systemic improvements. The findings will provide actionable insights for systemic improvements, with the potential to influence global standards and practices, positioning Portugal as a model for neurodiversity inclusivity within the justice system.