

Making language needs in youth justice systems visible: COST Action YJustLang

While the prevalence of Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) and other language difficulties ranges between 7-10% in the general population, the scarce existing research- conducted in the UK and Australia- shows that it can be up to six times higher among children and adolescents in contact with the law. Language difficulties remain invisible and are hardly ever screened or monitored in youth justice systems, which puts this vulnerable population at a clear disadvantage in exercising their rights, since all proceedings in police stations and courts are critically verbal.

This COST Action aims at laying the basis for policies that tackle this problem directly with respect to the target population and the justice systems. It involves all sectors and professionals in the journey through justice (police, judges, lawyers, social workers, pediatricians, criminologists, etc.). Linguistic insights into late language development and language difficulties and their adequate assessment are shown to be crucial for youth justice systems that aim to guarantee the rights of young people in contact with the law.