

Speaker: *Gilda Santos*

Presentation title: Early Developmental Prevention Programs: The importance of a comprehensive evaluation effort

Co-authors: *Cândido Agra* (FDUP/UL-N/CEJEA,Portugal) and *Carla Cardoso* (FDUP/UNL/CEJEA,Portugal)

In the last decades, we have experienced a boom in the field of early developmental prevention programs, which mainly aim at preventing the development or growth of children's antisocial or delinquent behaviors. Since that, researchers, policy-makers and practitioners have highlighted the need of distinguishing valuable social programs from the ineffective ones, thus focusing on program evaluation. Therefore, the main goal of the current research was to conduct the impact evaluation of the universal developmental prevention program ZARPAR – Educational Program for Cognitive and Behavioral Development. To perform this evaluation, a randomized controlled trial design combined with multi-method and multi-informant approaches were used. Given that the scientific literature appeals to the adoption of complementary strategies, that allow a deeper understanding of impact evaluation's results, this study also comprised the development of a process evaluation in order to understand how well the program was delivered and received in the specific intervention context. To do so, different data gathering strategies were used, being among them a session monitoring report sheet, interviews and focus group with key-informants. The results of this study could be grouped in four major conclusions: first, the results mainly suggested that the program had null and, for some dimensions, even negative effects; furthermore, this study also demonstrated that the results observed varied depending on the informant, namely teachers and parents; in the third place the results revealed a variation over the different evaluation phases, both according to parent and teacher reports; finally, it was also shown that variables other than the intervention (baseline behaviors, IQ, or parental practices) constituted alternative factors in the explanation of the observed results. The results obtained are analyzed and discussed in the light of the criminological literature in the context of the evaluation of developmental prevention programs and considering the data driven from the process evaluation.