

IMPLEMENTING LEGAL VISUALISATION AND PLAIN LANGUAGE TO ENHANCE IMPRISONMENT REGIME PROGRESSION IN THE BRAZILIAN STATE OF CEARÁ

Iago Capistrano Sá / Welkey Costa do Carmo / Diogo Sasdelli

Legal Innovation Consultant, Ceará State Court of Justice (TJCE), LabLuz,
Av. General Afonso Albuquerque Lima, S/N, 60822-325 Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil
iago.capistrano@insightlab.ufc.br; <https://www.tjce.jus.br/labluz/>

Coordinator, Ceará State Court of Justice (TJCE), LabLuz,
Av. General Afonso Albuquerque Lima, S/N, 60822-325 Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil
welkey.carmo@tjce.jus.br; <https://www.tjce.jus.br/labluz/>

Senior Researcher, Universität für Weiterbildung Krems, Department für E-Governance in Wirtschaft und Verwaltung
Dr.-Karl-Dorrek-Straße 30, 3500 Krems an der Donau, AT
diogo.sasdelli@donau-uni.ac.at; <https://www.donau-uni.ac.at>

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Abstract: *The paper at hand presents a case study from the Brazilian state of Ceará on using plain language and legal visualisation techniques to improve prisoners' understanding of their obligations during imprisonment regime progression. In the study, explanatory leaflets combining simple language and visual aids were distributed to inmates in semi-open and open regimes. The pilot led to a 31.54% reduction in non-compliance regressions, indicating that clearer communication can significantly enhance compliance and support rehabilitation. Beyond outlining the methodology employed, the paper at hand presents quantitative and qualitative results, and discusses potential implications of the employed methods for access to justice.*

1. Introduction

So-called *imprisonment regime progression* in Brazil is designed to gradually reintegrate incarcerated individuals into society by allowing a gradual transition from *closed* to *semi-open* up to *open* incarceration regimes, the latter resembling a *work release* system in which the sentenced individuals are allowed to spend a considerable amount of time outside of prison facilities.¹ Following Art. 112 of the Brazilian Law of Penal Execution (Law 7.210/1984, henceforth LPE),² regime progression is contingent on the completion of a determined fraction of the imprisonment sentence – which varies depending on the particular circumstances of the crime, e.g., if it involved violence or led to the death of a person – and on so-called *good behaviour*. Furthermore, Art. 115 LPE allows the judge to determine *specific conditions* for the open incarceration regime; e.g., the sentenced individual might be required to attend specific appointments at court, to not leave the city in which they live without previous permission or to only leave for work during set time intervals. Generally, upon regime progression, courts hold admonitory hearings to explain the rules and conditions the prisoner must follow in the new, less restrictive regime. These hearings are critical: a clear understanding of these rules and conditions is essential for the sentenced individual to not inadvertently breach them and face a regression back to a harsher regime. Following Art. 118 LPE, a regime *regression*, e.g., from the open regime back to

¹ Cf. DE JESUS, Etapas da progressão e regressão da pena do sentenciado, Revista OWL 2023, 168, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.8423882.

² Available under https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/17210.htm (accessed 16.11.2025).

the semi-open or to the closed regime, can occur if a prisoner violates the specific conditions set for them or if they commit new offenses.

These admonitory hearings face a substantial challenge, rooted in the complexity of the legal language traditionally used during them, which is generally very difficult to understand for people without formal legal education – even for native speakers. This problem is further potentiated by social and educational inequalities; Following the report of the Brazilian *Secretaria Nacional de Políticas Penais* from the second semester of 2023³, Brazil's incarcerated population has a rather low educational attainment on average: nearly half of the individuals in custody (48.5 %) have not completed elementary school, and only about 13 % have finished secondary school. Functional illiteracy is a serious issue, with 2.4 % outright illiterate and the rest often only being capable of reading at very basic levels. These circumstances – as is argued in the paper at hand – lead to many prisoners not being able to comprehend the rules and conditions applicable to their incarceration regime, culminating in generally avoidable violations and, consequently, in regime regressions, thus hindering effective reintegration.

The paper at hand presents and discusses a project conducted by *LabLuz*, the innovation lab of the Ceará State Court of Justice, as an attempt to employ innovative methods such as legal visualisation and plain language to tackle these challenges, especially by simplifying the communication with sentenced individuals at the moment of regime progression. Section 2 discusses related work on legal visualisation and plain language, especially with respect to their relevance to access to justice. Section 3 then details the methodology employed by LabLuz, including the design of the used communication materials and data collection. Section 4 gives an overview of the obtained results. Finally, Section 5 concludes and refers to future work.

2. Related Work

2.1. Plain Language in Law and Criminal Justice

The so-called *plain language movement*⁴ in law argues that legal information should be communicated in a clear, straightforward manner that can be understood by so-called 'laypersons', i.e., individuals without specialized legal training.⁵ Internationally, plain language is increasingly seen as a crucial mechanism for increasing access to justice, transparency, and governmental efficiency,⁶ with many jurisdictions having embraced plain language requirements over the last decades.⁷ Overall, plain language proponents argue that simplifying legal language can be done without loss of substantive accuracy, by harmonising the communication to the needs of the audience;⁸ the goal is to remove any unnecessary complexity that often serves no purpose other than tradition or exclusion.

Plain language's importance is particularly pronounced in criminal justice settings, in which failure to understand rules or rights can have severe consequences. Low literacy and education levels among incarcerated

³ Secretaria Nacional de Políticas Penais (SENAPPEN), Relatório de informações penais. 2º Semestre 2023, 2023, <https://www.gov.br/senappen/pt-br/servicos/sisdepen/relatorios/relatorios-de-informacoes-penitenciarias/relatorio-2o-semester-de-2023.pdf> (accessed 16.11.2025): cf. in particular p. 89.

⁴ Cf. ADLER, The Plain Language Movement. In: Solan/Tiersma (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Law*, Oxford Academic 2012, pp. 67–83, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199572120.013.0006.

⁵ Cf. PIRES, Impactos da linguagem simples na compreensibilidade da informação em governo eletrônico: O caso de um benefício do INSS, Dissertação de mestrado, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro 2021.

⁶ MATOS, A linguagem compreensível como requisito e imperativo do acesso à justiça: Algumas considerações a partir da cooperação jurídica e das experiências jurídicas internacionais, *Revista de Direito Brasileira* 2022, 166, DOI: 10.26668/IndexLawJournals/2358-1352/2021.v30i11.5643.

⁷ Cf. ADLER, The Plain Language Movement. In: Solan/Tiersma (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Law*, Oxford Academic 2012, pp. 67–83, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199572120.013.0006.

⁸ Cf. CAPPELI/OLIVEIRA/NUNES, Linguagem simples como pilar da transparência, *Revista Humanidades e Inovação* 2023, 1.

populations worldwide exacerbate the problem. Recognising this, authorities have begun implementing plain language initiatives aimed at defendants and sentenced individuals. For instance, Belgium’s “Letter of Rights” (given to arrested persons) was notoriously verbose and confusing; in a 2020 project, it was redesigned in plain language – the new version is a short, pocket-sized leaflet focusing only on the essential information for the arrestee, written in simple terms with a reasonable structure.⁹

The plain language movement has also set foot in Brazil. In late 2022, the Brazilian state of Ceará enacted State Law 18.246/2022¹⁰, establishing a policy of plain language usage in public administration. This provided a supportive backdrop for LabLuz with respect to the project presented and discussed in the paper at hand, aligning it with an official mandate to simplify public communication.

Overall, with respect to imprisoned individuals, adopting plain language can be seen not only as a matter of communication efficiency, but also of human dignity and basic rights, since it helps ensure that people understand the rules and conditions for their incarceration and, thus, for their liberty. This can prevent inadvertent violations and build institutional trust, showing that the system is not trying to ‘trick’ sentenced individuals with hidden rules.

2.2. Legal Visualisation and Design

Beyond verbal language, visual information can also substantially contribute to communication and comprehension, especially when addressing people without formal legal education. *Legal visualisation* has a long tradition within the wider field of legal informatics, exploring how visualisations can be used to convey legal information in various scenarios,¹¹ including for communication with ‘laymen’¹² and children¹³, for legal education¹⁴ and for inter- and transdisciplinary communication¹⁵. More recently, the emerging field of *legal design* advocates using layout, graphics, icons, and other design elements to make legal materials more user-friendly.¹⁶

Generally, visual representations of legal procedures or rules can significantly improve understanding of complex legal concepts and phenomena:¹⁷ diagrams, flowcharts, or pictograms distil dense textual information into more digestible visual cues, leveraging the human brain’s strength at processing images.

Within criminal justice, visual law tools can be used to communicate rights and responsibilities to laypeople. For example, charts illustrating the steps in a criminal trial, or icon-based signage explaining courtroom rules,

⁹ Cf. COLS, Improving access to criminal justice, by rewriting the Belgian letter of rights, Clarity 2020; cf. also <https://www.droitsquotidiens.be/fr> (accessed 16.11.2025).

¹⁰ Available under <https://leisestaduais.com.br/ce/lei-ordinaria-n-18246-2022-ceara-institui-a-politica-estadual-de-linguagem-simples-nos-orgaos-e-nas-entidades-da-administracao-direta-e-indireta-do-estado-do-ceara> (accessed 16.11.2025.).

¹¹ Cf. MIELKE/KESSEL/WOLFF, 20 Jahre Rechtsvisualisierung – Bestandsaufnahme und Storytelling, Jusletter IT 2017; CYRAS/LACHMAYER, Essays on the Visualisation of Legal Informatics, Springer, Berlin 2023; ROSE, Visual Methodologies. An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles 2016.

¹² CARNEIN/QUIRING/HAACK/MÖHRING/BECKER, Laiengerechte Erzeugung von 3D-Animationen am Beispiel von textuellen Unfallbeschreibungen, Jusletter IT 2014.

¹³ KESSEL, Kinder finden das Gesetz: Transparentes Recht für Kinder – Child-friendly Justice dank Visualisierung, Jusletter IT 2014.

¹⁴ SASDELLI/TRIVISONNO, Normative Diagrams as a Tool for Representing Legal Systems. The Review of Socionetwork Strategies 2023, 217; STEFFES/SASDELLI, Alternative Darstellungsformen normativer Diagramme, Jusletter IT 2025, 293.

¹⁵ SASDELLI/STEFFES/HERRMANN/CHITASHVILI/WÜST, A Normal Form for Representing Legal Norms and its Visualisation through Normative Diagrams. In: Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Digital Government Research (dgo.2025), TU Delft, Delft 2025, DOI: 10.59490/dgo.2025.1036.

¹⁶ MURRAY, Diagrammatics and the Proactive Visualization of Legal Information, University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law Review 2021, 1; BRUNSCHWIG, On Visual Law: Visual legal Communication Practices and Their Scholarly Exploration. In: Schweighofer/Handstanger/Hofmann/Kummer/Primosch/Schefbeck/Withalm (eds.), Zeichen und Zauber des Rechts. Festschrift für Friedrich Lachmayer, Editions Weblaw, Bern 2014, 899–933.

¹⁷ Cf. PIRES/OLIVEIRA, Visual law no direito e na Justiça do Trabalho: Críticas e proposições sobre o uso adequado. Revista Trabalho, Direito e Justiça, 2023, 343, DOI: 10.37497/RevistaTDJ.TRT9PR.1.2023.23; CYRAS/LACHMAYER, Essays on the Visualisation of Legal Informatics, Springer, Berlin 2023.

help bridge literacy gaps. Legal visualisation can range from simple enhancements (using bullet points, spacing, bold headings) to sophisticated graphics. The key is that visuals should complement plain language, not replace it: together, they create materials that are easier to navigate and recall. A Brazilian study by Bolesina and Lemes described visual law as an emerging concept at the intersection of law and design, aimed at simplifying legal documents through “icons, schemas and colors that facilitate understanding.”¹⁸

In the project presented in the paper at hand, visual legal design principles were combined with plain language to develop leaflets to be given to inmates. In particular, the project employed pictograms (such as a house symbol for home confinement, a clock for curfew hours) and color-coding for important terms. The materials sought to transcend reading level and convey meaning at a glance. This approach resonates with broader human-centered design trends in law, which treat the end-users (citizens) as the focal point for designing legal communication.

2.3. Communication Barriers and Access to Justice

Access to justice is a multifaceted concept, but at its core is the idea that everyone, regardless of education or status, should be able to understand and exercise their legal rights. Complex, arcane language and opaque procedures are barriers to access to justice, particularly for marginalized groups such as those with low literacy or cognitive impairments. International bodies and scholars have increasingly called for reforms to address these barriers. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly includes access to justice in *Goal 16*, highlighting the need for inclusive institutions; in other words, clarity in communication is a part of making justice systems inclusive and effective.¹⁹

If a person cannot fully comprehend the rules they must follow upon release or partial release, their chance of succeeding diminishes. This creates a vicious cycle: low comprehension leading to violations, leading to re-incarceration (recidivism) not necessarily because of intentional crime, but sometimes because of technical failures. Incarcerated individuals are often among the most vulnerable in terms of literacy and communication. Overall, ensuring that legal requirements are communicated in a plain and understandable manner shifts some of the responsibility back onto institutions to communicate clearly, rather than placing the entire burden on individuals to decipher complex rules.

3. Methodology

This section provides details on LabLuz’ pilot on implementing legal visualisation and plain language to enhance the communication of rules and conditions concerning the imprisonment regime to sentenced individuals. The experimental pilot was conducted in *Icó*, a judicial district in the interior of Ceará, during mid-2023. The focus was on communication material given to inmates who were about to transition from a more restrictive to a less restrictive regime (either from *closed* to *semi-open*, or from *semi-open* to *open*).

3.1. Case Design and Context

The independent variable introduced was a new communication method: instead of relying solely on oral explanation by the judge using official legal language, which often contains rather difficult technical terms, each sentenced individual would receive an illustrated leaflet written in plain language, detailing their obligations and rights in the new regime. The core dependent variable was the rate of regime regressions due to non-com-

¹⁸ BOLESINA/LEMES, Visual law: Um conceito emergente do encontro entre direito e design. *Revista Thesis Juris* 2022, 155, DOI: 10.5585/rj.v11i1.20008.

¹⁹ United Nations, Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (accessed 16.11.2025).

pliance with rules and conditions related to the imprisonment regime (as opposed to new crimes). The pilot assumed that the usage of the leaflet would lead to a better comprehension of the respective rules and conditions; and the working hypothesis was that a better comprehension of the rules and conditions would lead to fewer inadvertent violations, thus reducing the rate of *regime regression* (as outlined above in the introduction).

To structure the planning of the pilot, the LabLuz team used its standard “Experiment Canvas” tool: a one-page framework that captures the key aspects of the experimental design in a visual layout.²⁰ This ensured that the experiment had clear metrics and alignment. It is worth noting that LabLuz conducts all its initiatives in an experimental, data-oriented fashion – new practices first undergo a trial phase and are proven in a relatively controlled environment before being scaled up. Hence, only upon seeing clear positive outcomes based on the data collected would the piloted practices be rolled out more broadly, which is indeed what happened as Icó’s promising results came in.

3.2. Development of Plain Language Visual Materials (Leaflet)

After the case design was settled, the team proceeded to develop the explanatory leaflets that would be given to the inmates. Two sets of leaflets were created: one set for sentenced individuals progressing into the semi-open regime and another one for those progressing into the open regime. This was necessary because the rules and conditions differ slightly between these regimes. The leaflets are shown below in Figures 1–4. Each set consisted of a concise front-and-back leaflet, roughly A5 size, designed to be easy to carry and refer to. To avoid confusion between the leaflets, the leaflets for the semi-open regime were printed with an orange background, while those for the open regime were printed with a dark blue background. The content was carefully curated based on the most frequent questions that inmates and their lawyers had asked in past admonitory hearings, thus drawing from the practical knowledge of the court staff. This should ensure that the leaflets addressed actual information gaps rather than abstract legal doctrine.

The writing process followed plain language guidelines: sentences were kept short and direct, legal jargon was replaced by common everyday words, and only essential information was included. For example, with respect to the curfew condition, commonly imposed in the semi-open regime, the leaflet simply states “You must stay at home every night from 6pm to 6am” (“*Ficar em casa todas as noites, das 18h às 6h*”). In addition, technical terms like “sentence commutation” or “precautionary home confinement” were avoided. The tone of the text was made as straightforward and respectful as possible, addressing the reader directly (“*voce deve...*”, i.e., “you must...”) and in an encouraging manner, emphasizing the benefits of compliance (i.e., avoiding regime regression).

²⁰ For details on this tool, cf. COSTA DO CARMO/CAPISTRANO SÁ, Experiment Canvas. A Data-Driven Framework for Evidence-Based Innovation in the Judiciary. In: Proceedings of the 26th International Conference on Digital Government Research (dg.o2025), TU Delft, Delft 2025, DOI: 10.59490/dgo.2025.1070.

VARA ÚNICA CRIMINAL - COMARCA DE ICÓ
Av. Josefa Nogueira Monteiro, s/n, Centro, ICÓ/CE



Tô indo para o semiaberto, e agora?

Agora não esqueça de que você está cumprindo uma pena e se não observar as regras, poderá ir para uma unidade prisional.

Você deve prestar bastante atenção a apenas duas coisas.

- 1- Suas obrigações e
- 2- Cuidados com a tornozeleira.

Fazendo tudo direitinho, ninguém precisa voltar para o regime fechado.



Qualquer dúvida, entre em contato:
88 35612061 85 981834369

TJCE Tribunal de Justiça do Ceará

Figure 1: Leaflet for the semi-open regime (front); originally with an orange background

VARA ÚNICA CRIMINAL - COMARCA DE ICÓ
Av. Josefa Nogueira Monteiro, s/n, Centro, ICÓ/CE

Minhas obrigações

- Usar a tornozeleira eletrônica (sempre ligada).
- Vir ao Fórum sempre que for chamado.
- Ficar em casa todas as noites, das 18h às 6h.
- E nos fins de semana, desde às 18h da sexta até às 6h da segunda.
- Não ir a bares, casas de shows, boates e nenhum local que venda bebida alcoólica.
- De mudança, a passeio, ou a trabalho, não sair do município de ICÓ sem a autorização do juiz.
- Sempre que mudar de casa, avisar ao juiz e à central de monitoramento eletrônico.

Cuidados com a tornozeleira

- Sempre que houver falha, comunicar imediatamente à central.
- Informar um telefone ativo.
- Assinar o termo de monitoração.
- Não retirar, quebrar, romper, violar, mudar ou danificar de qualquer forma, a tornozeleira e/ou o lacre.
- Receber visitas do servidor da monitoração, respondendo sempre que chamado e obedecendo suas orientações.
- Recarregar a tornozeleira todos os dias e não deixar descarregar nunca.

Qualquer dúvida, entre em contato:
88 35612061 85 981834369

TJCE Tribunal de Justiça do Ceará

Figure 2: Leaflet for the semi-open regime (back); originally with an orange background



Figure 3: Leaflet for the open regime (front); originally with a dark blue background

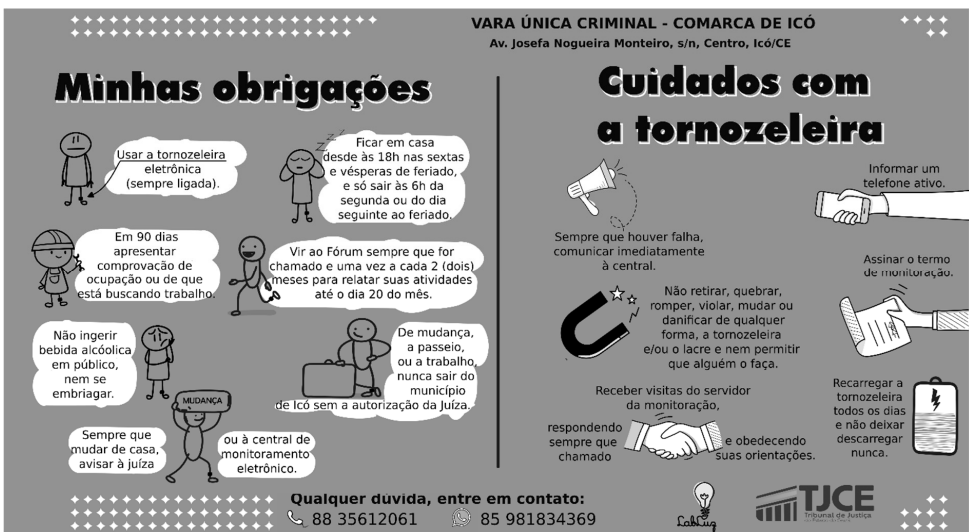


Figure 4: Leaflet for the open regime (back); originally with a dark blue background.

Importantly, the team incorporated visual elements to create what can be called a “legal design” product. Each leaflet used simple icons and layout strategies to enhance comprehension. For instance, next to the condition of wearing an electronic ankle monitor, a small illustration of the device was included. To ensure the leaflets were practical, their format was kept small and durable. They were printed on card stock, half-sheet size, so that inmates could fold and keep them in a pocket. The idea was that they might refer back to it later, since memory from the hearing alone might fade with time.

The development of the leaflets involved a few *co-creation*²¹ iterations: drafts of the leaflets were shared with colleagues, court-staff and with a few former prison inmates for evaluation and feedback. These iterations led to adjustments; for example, the first version of the leaflets was criticised for having too much text; further versions attempted to reduce the text down to only the most vital points. Overall, the LabLuz team was mindful of not overwhelming the target audience – the final version of the leaflets is brief (one leaflet front and back), avoiding cognitive overload. In the end, a balance was struck between completeness (covering all important obligations) and brevity (omitting extraneous legal details that, while true, would not affect day-to-day compliance for the inmate).

3.3. Pilot and Data Collection

The pilot began in July 2023. During admonitory hearings in Icó, whenever a prisoner was granted progression to the semi-open or to the open regime, the judge (or a court officer) would hand them the leaflet, verbally highlighting its key points, and allowing time for questions. In some cases, especially when multiple inmates were progressing at the same time, the court held a group orientation session: a collective admonitory hearing where the rules were explained to everyone in the group, using the leaflet as a guide. These group sessions were followed by brief one-on-one interactions, during which any individual questions were addressed, and each person received their personalised certificate of progression and copy of their respective leaflet. This hybrid approach (group explanation + individual clarification) became feasible because the leaflet, as a simple hand-out, provided a common reference that everyone could follow during the verbal explanations.

The experiment officially ran for an initial six-month cycle (from July to December 2023) in the Icó judicial district. During this period, every prisoner eligible for regime progression who came through the court received the new treatment (leaflet + verbal explanation). For ethical reasons, there was no “control group” in the sense of withholding the leaflet, as the aim was to provide the simplified information to all individuals equally; instead, the control comparison necessary to verify the effectiveness of the communication methods employed was made with historical data from comparable periods.

Key metrics were defined as follows:

- **Regression rate (non-compliance):** the number of regressions of regime due to violation of progression conditions, as a percentage of the total number of inmates in the semi-open or open regime. The primary goal of the pilot was to reduce this rate.
- **Regression rate (new crimes):** regressions due to new criminal offenses. Although these regressions were expected to be generally unaffected by the communication methods employed, this rate was also tracked. Overall, this could serve as a further control reference to verify that any change observed specifically affected non-compliance regressions.
- **Qualitative feedback:** the subjective responses of inmates, judges, and lawyers were collected informally through interviews and comment forms. While not as rigorously measured, these were important to gauge acceptance and perceived communication clarity.

Data on regime regression were gathered via the ‘Ceará State Prison Monitoring Centre’ (*Central de Monitoramento Carcerário do Estado do Ceará*), which keeps digital records of any changes in inmates’ status. LabLuz coordinated with this Centre to get a report every six months listing all regressions in that period, with reasons. Here, a new challenge emerged: the case coding employed by the state’s judiciary system did not distinguish between types of regime regression. All regressions (i.e., irrespective of whether due to a new crime or to non-compliance) were logged under a single code in the system, making it laborious to separate them. This limitation in data granularity became an impetus for a policy recommendation later formulated.

²¹ Cf., e.g., JARKE/KUBICEK, Co-Creation von digitalen öffentlichen Dienstleistungen. In: Klenk/Nullmeier/Wewer (eds.), *Handbuch Digitalisierung in Staat und Verwaltung*, Springer VS, Wiesbaden 2025, 387–397, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-658-23668-7_30.

For the experiment's purposes, the team manually reviewed the regression cases to classify which were due to non-compliance with conditions versus new criminal acts.

During the implementation, court staff observed the process closely; the magistrate in charge noted whether inmates appeared engaged and whether they asked fewer or more informed questions than before. Defence attorneys were also consulted – since they often have to explain the judge's words to their clients after hearings. Their perspective on whether the leaflet reduced confusion was particularly valuable.

Ethically, the pilot was considered as being a low-risk, high-benefit experiment: it was essentially an improvement in communication. Inmates were still receiving the same legal conditions; the difference was purely in how those conditions were explained. Thus, no ethical issues of unequal treatment arose. In fact, one could argue it would be unethical not to give someone the clearer information if it was available – which led us to opt for not having a “control group”. Nonetheless, the team sought and obtained the court's administrative approval for the project and ensured that the leaflets did not contain any misleading simplifications – all information in them was carefully formulated to be legally accurate, albeit phrased differently.

4. Results

The pilot in Icó yielded significant improvements in the key outcome measures. Most strikingly, in the six months following the introduction of the plain language visual leaflets, the court recorded *zero* cases of regime regression due to non-compliance, whereas such regressions had occurred regularly prior to the pilot. This strongly suggests that those who progressed and received the leaflets managed to successfully adhere to their conditions, at least in the short term. When comparing the overall regression statistics of 2023 with those of 2022, there was about a 31.54% reduction in the total number of regressions (of all types, i.e., either due to new crimes or to non-compliance) in that district – this percentage reduction means that nearly one third of otherwise expected regressions were avoided.²² Since most regressions occur due to non-compliance, this general reduction further corroborates the conclusion that the pilot was effective in preventing avoidable violations of rules and conditions of regime progression.

Notably, no similar decrease was observed in regressions due to new offenses. This corresponds to the expectation that the pilot only affected specific non-compliance violations. Indeed, one would generally not expect that the communication improvements based on the leaflets would have a meaningful influence on the occurrence of new crimes.

Qualitative results were also positive. The judge and court staff reported that the orientation process became more efficient, and that sentenced individuals appeared less bewildered during and after the admonitory hearings. One judge explicitly noticed that, after instituting the group briefings with the leaflet, “the inmates demonstrated better understanding during the hearings”. Lawyers, who often accompany their clients during the hearings, reported that the clarity of information improved their clients' confidence. Instead of leaving the courtroom with a confused expression or immediately asking their lawyers questions such as “what did the judge say I can and can't do?”, many inmates were observed carefully reading the leaflet and nodding in understanding. Some even thanked the judge for the brochure, which was seen as an unusual but welcome reaction.

From the perspective of the judicial system's efficiency, the reduction in regressions had a cascading benefit: a reduction in regime regression means fewer hearings and motions to handle violations, which frees up resources for other matters. Staff remarked that in the months following the change, they saw a lighter caseload in terms of violation reports. This is an important side-effect – it shows that improving communication is not

²² The total number of regression cases is seen by the state's Prison Monitoring Centre' as classified information and, thus, cannot be published here.

just good for the inmate, but also for the system, saving time and resources by avoiding unnecessary incarcerations due to misunderstandings.

5. Conclusion and Future Work

The results of the pilot described above indicate that the implementation of legal visualisation and plain language techniques through the leaflets enhanced regime progression outcomes (by leading to a reduction in regime regression due to non-compliance) in the judicial district of Icó, Ceará. The initiative aligns with a broader trend of modernising legal communication and provides a model that can be replicated widely. By reducing confusion, one can reduce non-compliance; by reducing non-compliance, one can promote successful re-entry and rehabilitation – clear communication thus becomes a tool of justice.

Following the positive results of the pilot, by the end of 2023, plans were set in motion to extend the practice to five more judicial units: including the larger execution court in *Fortaleza*, Ceará’s capital city, and the judicial district of *Juazeiro do Norte*. The data gathered within these expansions are still being analysed and evaluated. Overall, future research and practice should continue to bridge the gap between law’s complexity and people’s ability to understand it. A particularly promising approach would combine plain language and legal visualisation methods with technological solutions, e.g., legal chatbots, which are also a growing research topic within the field of access to justice.²³ These developments could ensure that the phrase “no one is above the law” is matched by an equally important notion: no one should be below *understanding* the law.

²³ Cf., e.g., WESTERMANN/BENYEKHEF, JusticeBot: A Methodology for Building Augmented Intelligence Tools for Laypeople to Increase Access to Justice. In: Proceedings of the Nineteenth International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Law (ICAIL 23), ACM, New York 2023, 351–360, DOI: 10.1145/3594536.3595166; KACZMARCZYK/LIBAL/SMYWIŃSKI-POHL, A Legal Assistant for Accountable Decision-Making. In: Savelka (ed.), Legal Knowledge and Information Systems (Proceedings of JURIX 2024). IOS Press, Amsterdam 2024, 378, DOI: 10.3233/FAIA241275.