

Statement
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Statement on mental health and the freedom of science and research in the USA

The German Society of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, Psychosomatics and Neurology voices serious concern regarding the current political developments in the USA, which will have a direct negative impact on the health, including mental health, of the population, as well as on science and research.

The DGPPN views with dismay the anticipated decline in the quality of care for people with mental illnesses in the USA. In addition to budget cuts impacting medical service providers, the politicization, stigmatization, and instrumentalization of mental illness also play a role. Mental illness is either downplayed or demonized in public discourse, and the question of who is considered healthy or sick is increasingly becoming the subject of political considerations and interests. The DGPPN views this increasing disregard for the medical-scientific evaluation of illnesses with great concern and condemns the stigmatization of people with mental illnesses in the strongest terms possible. Access to adequate medical care for these people is becoming increasingly difficult under these conditions.

Furthermore, The DGPPN expresses grave concern over political interference with the independence of science and research. The DGPPN strongly expresses its solidarity with scientists in the USA. Both the announced and already implemented budget cuts for research projects will negatively affect independent research and healthcare both in the short and long term – not only in the USA, but also in Europe and Germany. The DGPPN therefore expects the new German government to take a clear stance on free science and research.

The tense global political situation is having an impact everywhere, including on the German population. In addition to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, the ongoing war in Ukraine and domestic political challenges, the unpredictability of American politics can add to a feeling of instability. Especially for people with mental illness, this can reinforce feelings of uncertainty and instability. As a specialist psychiatric society, the DGPPN is committed to protecting and supporting this particularly vulnerable group of the population. This self-understanding of the DGPPN is also deeply rooted in its unique historical responsibility as a German professional society, shaped by the involvement of psychiatrists in the crimes of National Socialism.

Prof. Dr. med. Euphrosyne Gouzoulis-Mayfrank, President of the DGPPN:

"We are deeply concerned about the recent health policy developments in the USA. Naturally we are very critical of the cuts to important research funding and the resulting impact on international research projects. However, what is at least as important and worrying to us as psychiatrists is the lasting negative impact this societal development will have on the population's mental health and their health care – not just in the USA, but across the globe. Against the background of our German past, we as a psychiatric society see the need to take a stand: especially when it comes to the increasing stigmatization of people with mental illness and the freedom of science and research."

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