

DGPs Statement on the APS justification for the dismissal of Klaus Fiedler

The Executive Committee of the German Psychological Society (DGPs) has thoroughly examined the Association for Psychological Science's (APS) statement of reasons dated December 15, 2022, as well as the process that led to the forced resignation of our DGPs member Klaus Fiedler from his role as editor-in-chief of the journal "Perspectives on Psychological Science". In light of this, the committee issues the following statement.

On December 15, 2022, the Association for Psychological Science (APS) updated its statement on the ouster of Professor Klaus Fiedler as the editor-in-chief of the journal "Perspectives on Psychological Science" and specified the reasons for the dismissal (<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/news-release/2022-december-editorial-statement.html>). The Executive Committee of the German Psychological Society (DGPs) has thoroughly examined this statement as well as the process that led to the dismissal of our DGPs member (see also our statement dated 9 December 2022, <https://www.dgps.de/aktuelles/details/statement-des-dgps-vorstands-zu-den-vorwuerven-gegen-mitglied-klaus-fiedler/>). In our view, both the procedural approach used to handle the case and the reasons given for the decision are inadequate in addressing the issue at hand. We would therefore like to make the following statements:

- Klaus Fiedler has, among other things, been accused of incorrect and racist conduct in his capacity as editor-in-chief. We consider allegations of racism to be among the most serious that can be levelled against an individual. In its statement of reasons, the APS did not refer to racism or racist behavior, indicating that they do not accuse him of holding such attitudes or showing such behavior. However, at the same time, the APS did not take any action to defend Klaus Fiedler against this accusation, which we feel would have been appropriate. We are concerned that this inaction may harm Klaus Fiedler's reputation.
- The DGPs condemns any form of racism, as does Klaus Fiedler. If we had even the slightest doubt in this regard, the DGPs would not have conferred on him the German Psychological Society's Wilhelm Wundt Medal, along with honorary membership, in September of last year. We fully stand behind this decision.
- Naturally, Klaus Fiedler's decisions and actions as editor-in-chief are subject to critical scrutiny in this matter. We would like to see this happening in a way that includes the views of both sides. In addition, the general conditions under which editors usually carry out their work should be taken into account. Even if the investigations were to conclude that Klaus Fiedler made mistakes in this specific case, we would find it hard to justify dismissing him from his position as editor-in-chief due to the poor handling of a single paper. Furthermore, we strongly object to the hasty rush to condemn Fiedler that has taken place on social media and elsewhere, as we believe this is not justified.
- In our view, this case raises fundamental questions about the policies and guidelines governing editorial practices. How can we make sure, and how can editors themselves make sure, that a case like this will not happen again? This may seem like an easy question to answer in hindsight, but editors have to act with foresight. For example, how can or should editors ensure beforehand that the small sample of people who review of a manuscript has some degree of representativeness in terms of all of the critical issues discussed in a paper? How can the composition of the sample of reviewers be optimised without simultaneously compromising the speed of the review process, which is also essential nowadays? And how much freedom do we wish to give editors when it comes to evaluating and handling manuscripts? We will discuss and explore these and other issues with our commissions and, where possible, present proposals on how to address them.