



Special issue

**Music therapy in Europe:
Paths of professional development**

in partnership with the
European Music Therapy Confederation



CYPRUS

Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

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HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Music therapy was first introduced in Cyprus during the 1980s, by individuals who studied and qualified as music therapists abroad and returned to Cyprus. The introduction of new professions was common at that time as there was an unprecedented urbanisation wave on the island. It was a decade of fast changes, development, and novelty. There were economic and technological improvements and easier accessibility to higher education. However, the establishment of music therapy and other relative professions (e.g. psychotherapy and creative arts therapies) was not easy, largely due to the fact that more subtle areas such as mental healthcare, prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation services progressed at a much slower pace.

In 1988, Anthi Agrotou created the first music therapy work position at 'Nea Eleousa', an institution for people with severe learning disabilities, directed by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare. During her doctoral studies at the University of Sheffield (UK), she based her thesis on her own clinical work at 'Nea Eleousa', researching psychodynamic group music therapy with residents and their carers (Agrotou 1998). She worked rigorously to publicise and demonstrate the efficacy of her personal work and the profession in general to an unsuspecting audience. Her work gained respect, and in 1992 she was appointed as a music therapist to the Special Education Committee which was responsible for updating the 1979 Law in Special Education. The committee's work and report resulted in establishing an updated Law on Special Education in 1999, and thus introducing music therapy in public special schools for the first time (Agrotou 1993, 2008).

It was not until around 2000 that the next generation of qualified music therapists started arriving from their studies abroad, from a variety of universities mainly in the USA and the UK, each one importing their fresh

experiences and knowledge, and each placing their personal imprint in the process of building and establishing music therapy in Cyprus. Other landmarks in the development of music therapy in Cyprus, were the introduction of two more music therapy models recognised by the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT):

- In 2008, a Benenzon Centre was established in Nicosia by Maria Vassiliou. The Benenzon Centre represents the Benenzonian psychotherapeutic model in Cyprus. Rolando Benenzon visited Cyprus in 2008 for the first time for a series of seminars that provided the potential for specialisation in the Benenzon model.
- In 2013 the Bonny method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) was introduced to Cyprus through collaboration with the Cyprus Music Therapy Association (CyMTA). The seminars are conducted by the Greek music therapist and GIM primary trainer Evangelia Papanikolaou. The seminar courses are approved by the Association for Music and Imagery (AMI) and the European Network of Guided Imagery and Music (ENGIM) and are part of a complete programme, the graduates of which are eligible for registration as Fellows of AMI (FAMI), and registration as GIM therapists.

The seminars on the two models are provided as postgraduate courses and serve as continuing professional development for a number of Cypriot music therapists.

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

By 2008, the number of qualified Cypriot music therapists reached about 15, and practically each one had come from a different approved training course, which created an interesting medley. At the same time this pointed to an increasing need to place an official framework for the profession as well as to gain state recognition. That year, the 'Initiative Group for Music Therapy' was formed and undertook the responsibility of composing a legislation proposal concerning the profession of music therapy. In 2010, the proposal was handed in to the Parliamentary Health Committee. Later that year the Initiative Group grew and became the Cyprus Music Therapy Association (CyMTA).

In 2011, the CyMTA became a member of the European Music Therapy Confederation (EMTC) aiming to maintain contact and exchange with the European music therapy community while developing a professional identity within the local society.

To date, the negotiations on the legislation have been fruitless. Due to the rigidity of the legislation process, in 2013 the CyMTA shifted its focus towards more short term and feasible actions, such as:

- promoting continuing professional development (CPD) for the association's members;

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- ❑ publicising the profession and informing the public about the discipline of music therapy through various types of initiatives such as organising seminars and information days, creating a Facebook page (Συνδεσμος Μουσικοθεραπείας Κύπρου - Cyprus Music Therapy Association), and building a website (www.cymta.org);
- ❑ connecting and collaborating with related professions such as art therapy, dance-movement therapy, and drama therapy;
- ❑ creating an updated list of qualified music therapists, holding a Bachelors or higher degree from approved music therapy training programmes, which will be also publicised on the association's website;
- ❑ establishing a code of ethics (work in progress).

CyMTA aspires that these steps will strengthen the professionals working in Cyprus and at the same time inform the public about music therapy which will hopefully assist in the overall recognition of music therapy in Cyprus.

The present and the future

According to the CyMTA's 2014 data, out of the 15 full members, seven are employed in the public sector by the Ministry of Education in special needs schools, and eight are self-employed in the fields of special education, early intervention, outpatient psychiatric services (directed by the Ministry of Health), hospice care, juveniles at risk, geriatrics, and personal development. In addition, there are music therapists employed in university education. Furthermore, there are Cypriot music therapists that contribute to the profession outside our borders – some of their published work is included in the references of this report.

It can be said that overall, there are still fundamental difficulties in attitudes towards and resources available to practise music therapy in Cyprus. Almost three decades after the introduction of music therapy, political attitudes and resources towards new interventions in areas such as mental health care, prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation services still have an unequally slow progress. Nevertheless, almost all Cypriot music therapists work in one or more places and manage to increase awareness and acceptance of our profession amongst clients and their families, as well as employers and co-workers including other therapists, teachers, and doctors.

2014 has been a quite active year for CyMTA, nevertheless there is a long road ahead in the future. Firstly, there is a need for continuous work and development in the areas initiated, as listed above. In addition, the legislation process, is still on hold but the CyMTA is planning to begin working on it again in the near future. Through steady steps, music therapy has been gradually expanding and gaining recognition within the Cypriot society in many different ways. We look ahead in maintaining and even furthering this progress in

order to be able to offer as much as music therapy can to the Cypriot individual and society.

SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ The Cyprus Music Therapy Association: www.cymta.org
- ❑ EMTC country information: <http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/cyprus/>

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