



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

in partnership with the
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ESTONIA

Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

Alice Pehk¹, Eve Lukk²
 & Marit Mõistlik-Tamm³

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Three important periods as long-term steps can be outlined in a formative story of music therapy in Estonia (Lukk, Mõistlik-Tamm & Pehk 2011).

First period

In the beginning of the 1980s, health researchers and practitioners who were interested in the therapeutic effect, meaning and experience of music, gathered at the Health Research Laboratory of the Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU) initiated by the head of the Laboratory Saima Tamm. With great enthusiastic commitment she acted as a 'distributor' and a pioneer in the promotion of music therapy, inviting guest researchers and therapists from abroad. Olav Skille (Norway) and Petri Lehtinen (Finland) gave lectures and seminars on music therapy, vibroacoustic therapy and MUBS (Musical Behaviour Scale). These key people as well as Tony Wigram (UK) with their inspiring lectures and workshops and the International Society for Music Education international seminar in Tallinn in 1990 initiated the establishment of the Estonian Society of Music Therapy (ESMT) in 1990. At present there are 40 members in the ESMT.

From 1991 onwards, the Health Research Laboratory of TPU in collaboration with the ESMT became a cornerstone of music therapy development in Estonia. At the same time, therapeutic music practices and research on psycho-physiological influences of music began.

¹ Music Therapy Centre, Tallinn; Estonian Academy of Music; President of Estonian Society of Music Therapy.

Email: alice.pehk@muusikateraapiakeskus.ee

² Tallinn University, Department of Creative Arts Therapies.

Email: eve.lukk@tlu.ee

³ Tallinn University, Department of Music and Department of Creative Arts Therapies; Board Member of Estonian Society of Music Therapy.

Email: marit.moistlik-tamm@tlu.ee

The country's political turn into independence created more opportunities for Estonians to build up wider international music therapy connections. A one-year music therapy training course was carried out by Finnish music therapists Heidi Ahonen-Eerikäinen, Kimmo Lehtonen, Eila-Sisko Wirzenius and Raisa Saloheimo in 1991-1992.

Second period

In 1995, enlivening activities of the ESMT started. A new board of ESMT aimed at widening international contacts in the field by joining the European Music Therapy Committee (known today as the European Music Therapy Confederation, EMTTC) in 1995, and the World Federation of Music Therapy (WFMT) in 1996. The board worked out the ethical code for the ESMT and arranged a number of seminars and trainings. During this period several empirical studies in the fields of the influence of music, music therapy and vibroacoustic therapy were carried out by Eha Rütel, Alice Pehk, Neeme Kahusk and others.

In 1995, the postgraduate entry level course in music therapy was launched at the Open University of TPU. Since 2009, the course has been held at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre, and the head of the training programme is Alice Pehk. From 1996 to 2006 a minor subject in music therapy existed at the Department of Psychology of TPU. Head of this programme was also Pehk. It has been the first music therapy course of such a big scale at academic level in Estonia as well as in the Baltic countries.

In 1996, the first two books about music therapy in the Estonian language were published by the TPU: the monograph by Pehk (1996a) that gave an overview of the influence of music and the basics of music therapy, and a collection of articles, edited by Pehk (1996b), that consist mainly of case studies of Estonian music therapists from different areas in the field.

From 1998 to 2003, intensive courses were carried out by guest music therapy professionals Clive Robbins, Gianluigi di Franco, Joseph Moreno, Ingrid Hammarlund and Igor Reznikoff, introducing different treatment methods and diverse therapeutic approaches.

Between 2002 and 2007, the Estonian music therapy field and research development was supported by the German philanthropists Hannelore Greve and Helmut Greve. The long-lasting project enabled two part-time two-year advanced music therapy trainings by Hans-Helmut Decker-Voigt (Hamburg University of Music and Theatre) to be held at Tallinn University (TLU). From 2002 to 2004, a wide research project was carried out on music therapy and vibroacoustic therapy experiences of teenage girls (Rütel, Ojala, Luik & Lukk 2003; Rütel, Ratnik, Tamm & Zilensk 2004).

Third period

In 2007, Bachelor's and Master's courses in Arts Therapies were launched and the further education and specialisation of music therapy was integrated into Arts Therapies curriculum at TLU. The curriculum was worked out by Eha Rüütel in collaboration with the representatives of different arts therapies (though, in 2013 the BA course was removed from the University's programme). The curriculum of the Master of Arts Therapies is interdisciplinary in nature, placing the field of specialisation in a wider health and socio-cultural context. The curriculum's integrating orientation embeds the application of creative activities and arts media for therapeutic purposes.

In 2007, an important contact was created by TLU with the French non-profit organisation "Musique & Santé" which is advocating and working for the development of live music in hospitals and institutions for the handicapped. The project serves the long-term goal to introduce music and its benefits to patients among leading healthcare institutions.

In 2012, the two-year advanced level course in music therapy started at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. The head of this programme is Alice Pehk. Together with the entry level course it now constitutes a three-year post-graduate music therapy programme.

In 2014, the ESMT became a member of the Estonian Psychotherapy Association.

It is also important to mention that three Estonian music therapists have completed a doctoral degree at the Hamburg University of Music and Theatre: Alice Pehk in 2012, Eve Lukk and Malle Luik in 2014. Therapeutic approaches in music education was the topic of Marit Möistlik-Tamm's PhD dissertation from Tallinn University, defended in 2013.

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

The ESMT is in an active process to work out the professional qualification criteria for music therapists in Estonia to gain the official recognition of the profession. The process has started in cooperation with representatives of arts therapies and Tallinn University. The aim has been to identify the umbrella criteria for all arts therapists and specific criteria in different arts therapies, including music therapy. The qualification criteria for arts therapists have been accepted by the legal entity, the Estonian Qualification Authority (EQA) in November 2014. However, the ESMT finds the criteria that concern music therapists in the aforementioned document not thorough enough to cover the specific issues concerning music therapy and also, the criteria do not meet the real situation in Estonia concerning those already trained and employed as music therapists. For this reason the ESMT has initiated the elaboration of professional criteria for music therapists specifically. The application has been accepted by EQA in November 2014 and is evolving in its process.

Also, the ESMT in cooperation with other psychotherapy organisations in Estonia is working on the professional qualification standards of psychotherapists and on the recognition of the psychotherapy profession in Estonia. This has been quite a complicated and long process because of contradictions across reputable medical circles.

Music therapy in Estonia is in a constant and challenging process of development according to the changes and needs of the society. The professional status of a music therapist is on the way to recognition, but much work must be done in this field in order to achieve the aforementioned aims.

SELECTED LINKS

- EMTC country information: <http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/estonia/>
- Estonian Society of Music Therapy: www.muusikateraapia.ee

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