



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

in partnership with the  
 European Music Therapy Confederation



## HUNGARY

### Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

Ágnes Varga<sup>1</sup> & János Kollár<sup>2</sup>

#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

The first application of music therapy in Hungary was organised for emotionally disturbed children receiving psychosomatic therapies in 1875. The significance of music as a therapeutic tool became recognised step by step. This process has also been positively influenced by the work and theories of Hungary's famous composers, Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. There were several early yet isolated attempts to use music therapy in special institutions and psychiatric facilities.

The first meeting of professionals working with music in clinical settings took place in 1980 in Visegrád, where the theory of music therapy was discussed by physicians, psychologists and music teachers. Since then dialogue amongst professionals involved in music therapy has focused on the organisation of conferences, demonstrations and workshops as a means of enabling music therapy to become a recognised profession. A music therapy category was formed within the Hungarian Psychiatric Association in 1986. Gradually, music therapy became integrated within the annual conferences of psychology. The First National Music Therapy Conference was organised in 1988 in Budapest.

The political turn of the year in 1989 helped to create more opportunities to build international music therapy connections. The growing interest towards music therapy led to the formation of two Hungarian music therapy associations: The Albert Schweitzer Music Therapy Association in Pécs was founded by Attila Sasvári in 1992, and the Hungarian Music Therapy Association was founded by Ildikó Konta and chaired by Katalin Urbán Varga in 1994.

#### Training courses

There are two postgraduate part-time courses in the country: in Pécs at the Liszt Academy of Music in collaboration with the Medical School of Pécs, and in Budapest at the Special Needs Faculty of Eötvös University. In the last few years as many as 60 therapists received their qualification from the two programmes, many of whom had already been working in the field. In addition to these postgraduate programmes, music therapy modules are offered at undergraduate level at the University of West Hungary, the University of Debrecen and the Special Needs Faculty of Eötvös University in Budapest.

#### RECOGNITION AND APPROVAL

While music therapy is listed in the nomenclature of professions in Hungary, there are no laws or regulations ensuring the appropriate application of music therapy. There is no state authority responsible for keeping records of music therapists; neither is there a national registry of music therapists. The state regulates music therapy education standards (accreditation for universities, recognition for professional associations, and music therapists educated abroad). Those candidates who have started studying music therapy in accordance with the European Music Therapy Register (EMTR) standards abroad are eligible to continue their studies in Hungary. The music therapy curriculum in this country, however, is not fully compatible with the EMTR standards. Music therapy is classified within the medical services in the area of alternative medicine and music therapists have the status of medical associates or as an allied medical profession.

The current economic situation in Hungary does not favour the employment of music therapists in the public health sector. The lack of state registration and regulation is rather detrimental to the profession. Some hospitals and institutions employ self-acclaimed practitioners or nurses as 'music therapists' rather than trained clinicians or qualified music therapists. There are some music therapists, however, employed in health institutions, state and private hospitals, clinics, doctor's offices, rehabilitation centres, schools and pre-schools, counselling centres, churches and social protection centres (e.g. geriatric centres, care centres for persons with special needs, and prisons). Others have established a music therapy service on a private basis. The state and the professional associations do not regulate the work of a music therapist although there are regular meetings and conferences where qualified music therapists have the opportunity for sharing their professional experiences with each other.

It is a difficult yet exciting period for music therapy in Hungary. The growing number of qualified music therapists creates the opportunity for music therapy to become a more recognised profession. Our identity as music therapists is strengthened by the academic qualifications that music therapy students acquire, yet we

<sup>1</sup> Hospital St. László in Budapest; Representative of the Hungarian Association for Music Therapy.

Email: [vvagnes@gmail.com](mailto:vvagnes@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Semmelweis University, Institute of Behavioural Sciences, Budapest.

E-mail: [janoskollar@gmail.com](mailto:janoskollar@gmail.com)

are far from having a fully developed professional identity.

## SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ EMTC country information:  
<http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/hungary/>
- ❑ Hungarian Association for Music Therapy (Magyar Zeneterápiás Egyesület):  
<https://magyarzeneterapia.wordpress.com/>

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Forgács, E. (2002). *Zeneterápia a magyarországi gyakorlatban* [Hungarian Music Therapy in Practice]. Dissertation, Budapest: Bárczi Gusztáv Faculty of Special Needs.
- Kokas, K. (1992). *A zene felemeli a kezeimet* [Music raises my hands]. Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó.
- Kollár, J. (2003) *Garden of knowledge – World-wide survey of the position of music therapy training*. Thesis submitted for the acquisition of the academic degree of the Doctor scientiae musicae at the Institute for Music Therapy of the University for Music and Theater, Hamburg. Retrieved from [http://mti.deoec.hu/upload/deoecmagatartas/document/kollar\\_janos\\_doktori\\_disszertacio.pdf](http://mti.deoec.hu/upload/deoecmagatartas/document/kollar_janos_doktori_disszertacio.pdf)
- Konta, I., & Urbán-Varga, K. (1993). Hungary. In Dileo Maranto, C. (Ed.), *Music Therapy International Perspectives* (pp. 263-279). Pipersville, Pennsylvania: Jeffrey Books.
- Konta, I. (2001). *A Magyar Zeneterápiás Egyesület rövid története* [History of the Hungarian Music Therapy Association]. *Rehabilitáció – 2001./11.évf./3.* Budapest: Szent Margit Kórház.