



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

in partnership with the
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BELGIUM

Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

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HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Music therapy was founded in Belgium thanks to the great efforts of Prof Dr Jos De Backer and Prof Jan Van Camp in collaboration with the former College of Science and Art, campus Lemmensinstituut at Leuven, which now is LUCA, School of Arts, campus Lemmens. In 1985, a two-year music therapy initiation course with a frequency of three hours per week was established as an optional course in the curriculum of the students at the College of Science and Art, campus Lemmensinstituut at Leuven. To begin with, educators, musicians and anthropologists engaged with this course. The official five-year Master's training was founded in 1993. Collaboration with the Leuven Catholic University was established from the start. Nowadays Belgian music therapy students are trained throughout a five-year full time Bachelor's and Master's music therapy programme. The training is psychodynamically oriented and is purposefully accommodated within the environment of a conservatory, to ensure the quality of the musical skills of the students alongside their psychotherapeutic skills. At a professional level the Belgian professional association 'Beroepsvereniging voor Muziektherapeuten' (BMT asbl) maintains a register with high standards to ensure the quality of its professional members. BMT asbl advocates the rights of Belgian music therapists, engages in continuing professional development for its members, collaborates with other associations and engages in the process of recognition of the title and profession of music therapy. Belgian music therapists are employed in a variety of working fields across children-, youth- and adult psychiatry, special education, institutions for children and adults with mental and/or physical disabilities, prisons and forensic psychiatry, general hospitals and nursing homes. Many of them engage in establishing a private practice.

RECOGNITION AND APPROVAL

The Master's training in music therapy is recognised by the Belgian government and is distinguished from the creative therapy training, which is a Bachelor training. Currently the title of music therapist and the profession are not recognised. However, recently a law on practising psychotherapy and using the title of psychotherapist was voted in the Belgian parliament, which will be executed in 2016. It is expected that this will pave the way for a future recognition of the title and the profession of the Belgian music therapist.

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

Alongside the developments at the training level, the association 'Muziek & Handicap' was founded in 1995. This association focuses on musical activities with persons with mental and/or physical disabilities. In 1998 the 4th European Music Therapy Congress took place at Leuven and during the preparations of this congress the Belgian professional association for music therapists (BMT asbl) was founded. In 2006, the BMT asbl was officially recognised by the Belgian government. In 2008, the Master's training for music therapy in Leuven became a member of the Consortium for Research and Education. This consortium unites eight universities throughout the world for research and education purposes. In 2012, the College for Science and Arts amalgamated with the Leuven Catholic University and out of this LUCA, School of Arts emerged with its own doctoral training in music therapy. Katrien Foubert is the first doctoral student in music therapy at this programme. Her research focuses on improvisation and personality disorders. Next to this LUCA, School of Arts maintains a research unit called 'Research Unit of Music Education & Therapy'. Its goal is to gather all research in these fields and to stimulate research in music education and music therapy. In 2014, the research unit was awarded €55,000 for a research proposal concerning music and psychopathology with Prof Dr Jos De Backer as its lead. The outcome of this research will lead to many other follow-up research possibilities. Also the future holds positive news: it is to be expected that the execution of the Belgian law on psychotherapy will facilitate the recognition process of the title and profession of music therapists. Furthermore, important steps that are to be taken include the insertion of music therapy in the Belgian national guidelines for mental healthcare, the refund of music therapy sessions by health insurance institutions, increasing the public awareness of music therapy, the stimulation of more music therapy research in Belgium and increasing the support for music therapy from the political point of view given the process of recognition of music therapy.

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SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ Aream:
www.arem.be
- ❑ BMT asbl:
www.muзикtherapie.net
- ❑ EMTC country information:
<http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/belgium/>
- ❑ LUCA Arts:
www.luca-arts.be/opleidingen/muziek/muziek/international/welc
[ome](http://www.luca-arts.be/opleidingen/muziek/muziek/international/welc)
- ❑ Muziek en Handicap:
www.muзikenhandicap.be

SELECTED REFERENCES

Recent books

De Backer, J., & Sutton, J. (Eds.). (2014). *The Music in Music Therapy: Psychodynamic Music Therapy in Europe: Clinical, Theoretical and Research Approaches*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Recent book chapters

- De Backer, J., & Foubert, K. (2011). *Psychose und die innere Pulsierung*. In J. Illner & M. Smetana (Eds.), *Wiener Beiträge zur Musiktherapie* (Vol. 9). Wiener Schule der Differenziellenklinischen Musiktherapie: Ein Update (pp. 13-30). Vienna: Praesens.
- De Backer, J., & Van Camp, J. (2014). *Music and Psychosis. The Answer from the Patient to Music Therapy: Für Elise!* In J. De Backer & J. Sutton (Eds.), *The Music in Music Therapy. Psychodynamic Music Therapy in Europe: Clinical, Theoretical and Research Approaches* (pp. 93-122). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Ronse L., & Maes, R. (2014). *The Walking Bass. Supporting the Sounding Relationship for Patients with Dementia*. In J. De Backer & J. Sutton (Eds.), *The Music in Music Therapy. Psychodynamic Music Therapy in Europe: Clinical, Theoretical and Research Approaches* (pp. 200-210). London: Jessica Kingsley.

Recent articles in peer-reviewed journals

- De Backer, J., Foubert, K., & Van Camp, J. (2014). Das lauschende Spielen. Musiktherapeutische Interventionen in der Psychosenbehandlung. *Psychodynamische Psychotherapie. Forum der tiefenpsychologisch fundierten Psychotherapie*, 4, 256-263.
- Sutton, J., & De Backer, J. (2009). Music, trauma and silence: The state of the art. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 36, 75-83.