



Special issue

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

in partnership with the
European Music Therapy Confederation



CZECH REPUBLIC

Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

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HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Music therapy in the Czech Republic draws on the heritage of music culture and folklore, the foundations of special education and the principles of music education.

The use of music therapy in the Czech Republic dates back to the 1970s. At the time, elements of music therapy were intentionally implemented in psychiatry practice and social education. Jitka Vodňanská (who studied with Christoph Schwabe) and Josef Krček (a musician who studied with different music therapists abroad) are two out of many other pioneers.

Currently, there are around 300 active music therapists in the Czech Republic who mostly work part-time.

RECOGNITION AND APPROVAL

Music therapy is not yet recognised in Czech law. The recognition of training and education institutes by the state is currently being discussed by ministries and universities.

Generally, it is the Czech Ministry of Education which decides about the recognition of diplomas from courses and trainings; however, the recognition of music therapy education by the music therapy community has not yet been anchored.

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

In connection with the music therapy recognition process in the Czech Republic, it is necessary to mention the historical circumstances of the non-democratic communist regime period after World War II. The regime did not enable liberal development of any activity that did not comply with the communist ideology and it

suppressed mainly individual and group activities. Sadly, music therapy fell within this category.

Only after the political change in 1989 (the so-called Velvet Revolution) when the democratic regime was re-established was it possible to start building and developing music therapy. Nevertheless, the heritage of non-democracy brought many difficulties in various fields: the health system, education as well as social care transformed only little by little from the deep-rooted directive state towards a free society.

Thus we can only talk about the process of music therapy recognition since the last decade of the 20th century. In the 1990s, music therapy was gradually integrated in various fields of the helping professions (psychotherapy, special education, etc.) The pioneers who helped expand the number of music therapists by organising courses and trainings take particular credit for this (e.g. Josef Krček [2008] who established the Musica Humana studies).

In the first decade of the 21st century, music therapy moved on to the next stage when professional organisations were formed – often as a part of other professional organisations or in connection with other arts therapies associations.

The first one was the Music Therapy Section at the Czech Psychotherapeutic Society at J. E. Purkyne Medical Society in 2004, known later in 2005 as ČAMAD (which transformed to the successor organisation – Music Therapy Association of the Czech Republic [CZMTA] in 2008). The Moravian Association of Arts Therapies was founded in 2009 and later re-named the International Association of Arts Therapies (MAUT), uniting people connected with the “Akademie Alternativa” art therapy private school. Both CZMTA and MAUT have been members of the European Music Therapy Confederation (EMTC) since 2009. Currently, CZMTA has around 200 members and MAUT around 30 members.

Music therapy programmes have not yet been fully integrated into the programmes of educational institutions. A music therapist candidate must study a different programme, for example speech therapy, physiotherapy or psychotherapy and only after that, are they eligible to study a postgraduate course in music therapy. Nevertheless, music therapy courses are already included in several study programmes at universities (the Faculty of Education and the 1st Faculty of Medicine at Charles University in Prague, the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Palacky in Olomouc, and the University in Plzeň, Department of Psychology).

Music therapy research does not yet have a broad background as there is no research institute devoted exclusively to music therapy research. Nevertheless, several specialised research studies have been integrated within the postgraduate PhD studies and others are arising.

The recognition of music therapy is focused on the following goals:

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- ❑ affirming the professional level of working with clients, especially concerning their safety;
- ❑ developing and establishing music therapy as a recognised profession based on defined standards;
- ❑ developing and promoting professional music therapy education, ideally in accredited study programmes, and establishing regular university education in the bachelor's degree programme;
- ❑ contributing to the clarification and (legal) recognition of the music therapy profession in the fields of healthcare, social work and special education;
- ❑ developing and intensifying international co-operation, mainly within Europe (international research, internships for music therapists, etc.).

As mentioned above, music therapy has not yet been anchored in the Czech legislation. Music therapists' work is thus guaranteed mainly by their membership of professional organisations (and in the case of the CZMTA, by the ethical code of the CZMTA which draws on the EMTC ethical guidelines).

At the moment, talks and negotiations are ongoing at the highest level (currently the most intensive at the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic). However, the process of music therapy recognition and the discussions with public authorities are encountering many obstacles. The authorities do not yet completely agree with the suggested changes as the system is stifled by inertia. Other important factors are the inconsistency of approaches and aims of individual professional organisations as well as some serious personal conflicts, which may give a bad impression when dealing with authorities.

The goals of the CZMTA, based on European standards, are the definition of professional requirements for music therapists and the guarantee of their professional qualification. It is expected that when these goals are met, it will be easier to achieve the recognition of the profession by public authorities.

CZMTA sincerely hopes that the associations will ultimately reach an agreement, which will lead to positive relationships being established with the relevant authorities and successful negotiations for the recognition of this fine profession.

As for raising awareness of music therapy, Czech music therapists have accomplished many achievements with both the general and professional public. A considerable amount of original and expert writing is being published and professional conferences are being organised (e.g. the International Common Space Conference has been organised for the past few years devoted to various arts therapies). In tribute to the first European Music Therapy Day (15th November 2014) many events were organised, such as the conference *'Music Therapy in Health Care – Practice and Research'* for healthcare professionals. For social services, a music therapy show took place in the Centre of Social Services in Tluskov.

Significant advances have been made also in the field of education: organising accredited music therapy courses with various specialisations, or including the compulsory course of Music Therapy in Neuro-rehabilitation in the curriculum for students of medicine at Charles University so that they are able to recommend this type of therapy to patients in need and to realise the possibilities of the therapeutic use of music therapy.

SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ Czech Music Therapy Association (CZMTA): www.czmta.cz
- ❑ EMTC country information: <http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/czech-republic/>
- ❑ International Association of Arts Therapies: www.maut.cz
- ❑ Music Therapy Section at the Czech Psychotherapeutic Society at J. E. Purkyne Medical Society: www.sekcemuzikoterapie.717.cz

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- Kantor, J., Lipský, M., Weber, J., Procházka, T., Grochalová, K. (2009). *Základy muzikoterapie* [Fundamentals of Music Therapy]. Praha: Grada.
- Krček, J. (2008). *Musica Humana*. Hranice na Moravě: Fabula.