



Special issue

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

in partnership with the
European Music Therapy Confederation



LATVIA

Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

Dzintra Zarina¹

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Music therapy in Latvia is a young and rapidly growing profession. Sixteen years have passed since 1998 when Mirdza Paipare, the first Latvian music therapy pioneer, in collaboration with Latvian music therapy patron and supporter Reiner Haus from the Children's and Adolescents Hospital Datteln, University of Witten/Herdecke (Germany), began offering annual music therapy courses at the University of Liepaja (Paipare 2014). During this period, governmental recognition of music therapy as a healthcare profession in Latvia was attained.

In 1998 a co-operation agreement between the German Children's and Adolescents Hospital Datteln, University of Witten/Herdecke and the Latvian Ministry of Science and Education led to the incorporation of a music therapy Bachelor's programme at the University of Liepaja in 2003. The collaborating partner was W. Andler, a former medical director and chairperson for paediatrics, who had a vision for an academic training programme and practice network of music therapy in Latvia (Haus & Paipare 2014). The Bachelor's programme was based on the Nordoff-Robbins music-centred approach.

The year 2005 was significant with the creation of the professional Music Therapy Association of Latvia, under the leadership of Mirdza Paipare, and the opening of a music therapy practice centre in Liepaja. This has provided the possibility to invite lecturers, leading music therapy professionals and scholars from Europe, such as Vilmante Aleksiene, Monika Nocker-Ribaupierre, Heidi Fausch-Pfister, Alice Peck, Marko Punkanen, Esa-Ala Ruona, Tonius Timmermann, Tony Wigram and others. It also offers a valuable opportunity for new specialists to take part in music therapy masterclasses allowing them to gain the latest knowledge and practice examples from the field of professional European music therapy.

In 2006 a master's training programme in the arts therapies (dance-movement, drama, visual-plastic and music therapy) with a psychodynamically-informed approach was opened under the direction of Inga Millere in the Faculty of Nursing at Riga Stradiņš University. In order to ensure the successful implementation of the programme, the Art Therapy Academic School of Rīga Stradiņš University, under the leadership of Kristīne Mārtinsone was founded, and considerable work was done in the preparation of teaching resources, enhancing research and international collaboration, as well as the recognition and promotion of the art therapy profession (Mihailovs, Mārtinsone & Mihailova 2009). A Master's programme in music therapy was established in the University of Liepaja in 2008. In both universities, the Head of the music therapy study programme is Mirdza Paipare who holds master's degrees in healthcare and music and is a certified music therapist and supervisor. In 2009 the master's programme of arts therapies in Riga Stradiņš University moved from the Faculty of Nursing to the Faculty of Rehabilitation. In 2013 a training programme for supervisors was formed in Riga Stradiņš University, in the Faculty of Continuing Education. In 2014 a Master's programme in the University Public Health and Social Welfare Department under the leadership of Kristīne Mārtinsone was established (www.rsu.lv/studiju-iespejas/magistra-studijas/studiju-programmas/supervizija).

IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

The developmental process of music therapy in Latvia has been very intense. Full professional recognition of music therapy and state-funded jobs for music therapists have been attained. Furthermore, within a relatively short period of time, educational programmes of music therapy have been set up in two universities.

It can be considered that the pioneering period of the music therapy profession was quite short: 1998-2003. The university study programme has been in place since 2003.

Cross-professional collaboration and incorporation of four art therapy specialisations (dance-movement, drama, visual-plastic and music therapy) with common professional standards have been strategically important and successful steps in professional recognition. In 2005 the project of confirming professional standards was initiated and in 2008 the professional standard classification 'art therapist' was accepted by the Vocational Training and Employment Sub Council (Mihailovs, Mārtinsone & Mihailova 2009).²

An art therapist (music therapist) in Latvia is a medical practitioner who has obtained a master's degree in healthcare and art therapist professional qualifications

¹ Representative of the Music Therapy Association of Latvia.

Email: dzintrazarina@hotmail.com

² See also:

<http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0368.pdf>
and <http://visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/ps0434.pdf>

with a specialisation in one of the art forms (visual-plastic arts, dance and movement, music and drama). This is in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers, Regulation No. 2009. 268 (<http://likumi.lv/ta/id/190610-noteikumi-par-arstniecibas-personu-un-studejoso-kuri-apgust-pirma-vai-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-mediciniskas-izglitiba>) and Regulation No. 2010. 461 (<http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=194941>).

The Medical Law states that an art therapist (music therapist) in Latvia is a Functional Specialist (similar to a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, technical orthopedic, clinical therapist, nutrition specialist, art therapist). Such a person is a medical practitioner who has acquired the second higher level of professional medical education and operates according to their competence in medicine. A music therapy medical practitioner has to be registered in the register of medical practitioners and medical support staff. The statement was adopted by the parliament and included in Medical and Regulation No. 2010. 461 (<http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=194941>).

The art therapist certification is carried out in accordance with the Cabinet of Ministers No. 943 of treatment procedures for certification determined by the Medical Law of Latvia (<http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=253782>).

The meaningful collaboration between the four art therapies associations (music, drama, dance-movement and visual-plastic) under the umbrella association Latvian Arts Therapies Association, has played a crucial role in being heard in the State decision-making institutions and in achieving recognition.

The next important step which needs to be taken is gaining the recommendation of music therapy in the national health guidelines and its inclusion in the list of State compensated medical services.

SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ EMTC country information:
<http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/latvia/>
- ❑ Latvian Arts Therapies Association – the association brings together about 140 members and candidate members from four arts therapies associations (Music Therapy Association of Latvia, Dance-Movement Association of Latvia, Drama Therapy Association of Latvia, and Art Therapy Association of Latvia):
<http://lmtaa.maksluterapija.com>
- ❑ Liepaja University:
www.liepu.lv
- ❑ Music Therapy Association of Latvia – the association brings together 41 members (including trained music therapists and music therapy students/candidate members):
www.muzikasterapija.lv
- ❑ Rīga Stradiņš University:
www.rsu.lv

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Haus, R., & Paipare, M. (2014). *Singing creates freedom – Music therapy academic and practice development in Latvia*. Presentation at the World Congress of Music Therapy, Krems, Austria, 7-12 July 2014. Retrieved from www.musictherapy2014.org/fileadmin/download/Abstract_Book_WCMT_2014_01.pdf
- Mihailovs, J. I., Mārtinsons, K., & Mihailova, S. (2009). *Mākslas terapijas izglītības attīstība. Mākslas terapija: teorija un prakse*. Rīga: Drukātava.
- Paipare, M. (2014). Music therapy in Latvia. *Mūzikas terapija: izglītība un pētniecība, pieredze un prakse*. Liepāja: LiePA.