



Special issue

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

in partnership with the  
European Music Therapy Confederation



## LITHUANIA

### Country report on professional recognition of music therapy

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#### HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

In the late 1970s Lithuania marked the beginning of music therapy on a non-professional basis in medical and psychotherapeutic areas of practice. Research into the role of music regarding the treatment of psychosomatic diseases started in the Laboratory of Resort Treatment Research. The investigations were based on the works of Vladimir Bekhterev, Christoph Schwabe and Edith Lecourt. This research took place in music therapy rooms set up in sanatoriums. The research evidence provided the basis for the first doctoral thesis on music therapy in Lithuania, defended by Antanina Jurgutyte. However, in the 1990s research funding was discontinued.

Between 1985 and 1990 music activities were introduced in the Republican Vilnius Psychiatric Hospital. Vladimir Levi and Juliette Alvin inspired the methods used in treating patients. Psychotherapist Grazina Gudaite, who started practising music in psychiatry, stressed the importance of music therapy for both diagnosis and treatment. Courses in Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) led by Helen Bonny were organised in 1992, but financial restrictions and lack of sufficient understanding of requirements for the modern music therapy profession resulted in the cancellation of this project.

The restoration of Lithuania's Independence (1990) and the law on Social Integration of Disabled (1991) made way for the development of educational music therapy. The Lithuanian Centre of Alternative Arts Education was established in 1992. A number of initiatives were taken by the centre's founder Albertas Piliciauskas. The first initiative was the establishment of music classes named 'Credo' for children and adults with disabilities that were set up in the largest cities of the country. Following this, he initiated a doctorate programme which sought to investigate the arts for people with special needs at Vilnius Pedagogical

University. The programme was focused on educational aspects of music therapy. However, the researchers Vilmante Aleksiene, Loreta Kaciusyte Skramtai, Jautre Sinkuniene and Aldona Vilkeliene became interested in music therapy methods that had not been previously applied in Lithuania.

The Lithuanian Association of Educational Music Therapy was established in 1997. The organisation aimed to unite musicians and music teachers, who were regarded as pioneers in educational settings working with children with special needs. Another important goal of the organisation was the development of music therapy training programmes. The first training phase focused on the Nordoff-Robbins approach to music therapy. The association launched courses given by renowned music therapists such as Brynjulf Stige in 1997 and 2000, Tom Naess in 1998, and Clive and Kaoru Robbins in 1999.

A working relationship was established with Norwegian music therapists, in particular Brynjulf Stige, who at the time was the Head of the music therapy programme in Sandane. A cooperation agreement between Vilnius Pedagogical University and Sogn og Fjordane University College was signed in 1998. This resulted in seven Lithuanians graduating with a degree in music therapy in Norway, while one of our colleagues graduated from Augsburg University. This led to a proliferation in the activities of music therapy in Lithuania.

Since 2002, the Lithuanian Association of Educational Music Therapy has been involved in various projects. In 2002-2003 it implemented the PHARE 2000 ACCESS project '*Social-Interactive Model: Musical Activities for Integration of Teenagers with Cerebral Palsy*'. In 2004-2005, it undertook the Geneva Initiative in Psychiatry project '*Artistic Self-Expression of Persons with Severe Mental Problems*'. Most recently, in 2011-2013, the association was involved in the European Social Fund project which was carried out in Lithuanian schools. This resulted in a book named *Muzikos Terapijos Modelio Įgyvendinimas Mokykloje* [Implementation of a Music Therapy Model in Schools].

The Lithuanian Association of Educational Music Therapy also oversaw music therapy training courses and dissemination of research findings. In 2003-2014 music therapy courses were provided by Joseph Moreno, Karin Schumacher, Simon Procter, Heidi Fausch, Mirdza Paipare, Teresa Leite, Tonus Timmermann, Adrienne Lerner, Marketa Gerlichova, Jacqueline Furlepa, Barbara Wheeler and Vicky Karkou. In 2008, 2010 and 2014 international music therapy conferences were organised. The music therapy field had now expanded considerably. In 2011 the organisation was renamed to the Lithuanian Music Therapy Association ([www.muzikoterapija.lt](http://www.muzikoterapija.lt)) and in 2013 the association opened the Music Therapy Service Centre in Vilnius. ([www.centras.muzikoterapija.lt](http://www.centras.muzikoterapija.lt)).

Recent years have seen the development of other non-governmental organisations linked to the use of music therapy methods, such as the Ethnomusic Therapy Association. This organisation was founded in 2010 by Aldona Vilkeliene in the Southern regional centre of Alytus where she gathered music teachers who had experience of working with people with disabilities. The

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Ethno Music Therapy Association initiated various musical activities in the hospital of Alytus and the medical rehabilitation and sports centre. Furthermore, this association is collaborating with the Institute of Ethno-Music-Therapy in Austria for the development of music therapy practice and research. The year 2011 marked the foundation of the Lithuanian Arts Therapy Association, which was supported by art, dance, music, drama and literature teachers, as well as psychologists and special teachers from the Western region cities of Klaipėda and Šiauliai. Neither of the organisations mentioned above have any professional music therapists in their membership; they contribute, however, to the promotion of music therapy and the development of services in these regions.

Today music therapy services are integrated in rehabilitation and spa treatment centers, and mental health institutions. In addition, neonatology, neurology, oncology and rehabilitation clinics show an increased interest in music therapy services and research. From 2008 to 2013, neonatologist Rasa Garunkštie (with the assistance of music therapist Jurgita Zebrauskaitė Talockienė) carried out a music therapy study with premature infants at Vilnius University Children's Hospital Neonatology Centre. Research in music therapy for the social inclusion of people with epilepsy has been taking place since 2009 by Zita Abramavičiūtė, PhD student at the Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences.

The further development of music therapy is being restricted as it is not officially recognised in Lithuania as either a service or a profession. Therefore, while there is a shortage of professional music therapists, universities in Lithuania are reluctant to start music therapy training programmes until legislation comes into force.

The issue of the training of music therapists has been discussed since the 2000s. In 2004 the Specialisation in Arts Therapies (40 ECTS) within a social work master's degree programme was established at the Vilnius Pedagogical University. In 2011 the optional programme 'Introduction to Music Therapy' (60 ECTS) started at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre within the Bachelor of Music degree programme. In 2013, however, this programme was halted due to financial restrictions. In 2012 the project 'Establishment of Baltic Joint Music Therapy Master Programme' was submitted to the European Social Fund. Once again no funding was received. In 2013-2014 the joint music therapy master's programme was developed in cooperation with the Vilnius University Faculty of Medicine and the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre. The programme is likely to start in 2015 following the regulation of the profession of music therapy.

## IMPORTANT STEPS IN THE RECOGNITION PROCESS

For a decade leaders of the Lithuanian Music Therapy Association have been working towards the legal recognition of the music therapy profession. The first interdepartmental working group of the Lithuanian parliament started in 2005 and raised the questions of

music therapists' education and services. However, after the change of political powers in the parliament and the cabinet of ministers, the work was halted. In 2009, a second interdepartmental working group named 'Arts for Health' continued the work. At this point it managed to prepare recommendations regarding the regulation of services as well as study programmes for art therapists and music therapists. An example was taken from the UK Health and Care Professions Council's 'Standards of Proficiency for Arts Therapists'. In 2011 the Lithuanian Ministry of Health released a draft law on the approval of the service of arts therapists. Finally, in 2014 documents regarding the regulations of the arts therapies professions have been prepared by the joint effort of the Lithuanian Ministry of Health and all arts therapies organisations.

## RECOGNITION AND APPROVAL

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2014, the Lithuanian Minister of Health signed a decree approving the qualification requirements for art therapists and music therapists ([www.etar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/40b9b65068a611e4b6b89037654e22b1](http://www.etar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/40b9b65068a611e4b6b89037654e22b1)). This order comes into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2015. This document is our first step towards recognition. It provides the legal basis for music therapy training, practice and research.

## SELECTED LINKS

- ❑ EMTC country information: <http://emtc-eu.com/country-reports/lithuania/>
- ❑ Lithuanian Music Therapy Association: [www.muzikoterapija.lt](http://www.muzikoterapija.lt)
- ❑ Music Therapy Service Centre: [www.centras.muzikoterapija.lt](http://www.centras.muzikoterapija.lt)

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