

Belgium

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Master in Music Therapy

Chairman of BMT and Belgian
Delegate of the EMTC

Snapshot

Area

30,528 square kilometers; Belgium is located in Western Europe. Bordering countries are France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

Population

10,438,353 (July 2012 est.)

Official Language

Dutch, French and German

Ethnic Groups

Fleming 58%, Walloon 31%, mixed or other 11% (April 2012 est.)

Median Age

42.3 years (April 2012 est.)

Children under 5

0-14 years: 15.9% (male 846,706/
female 812,486) (April 2012 est.)

Sources

The World Factbook
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/be.html>



“Accept the children the way we accept trees – with gratitude, because they are a blessing—but do not have expectations or desires. You don’t expect trees to change, you love them as they are.”

– Isabel Allende

Demographics

Ever since the University College of Science & Art founded the music therapy training course in 1993, the profession of music therapy in Belgium has blossomed. As an associated department of the Catholic University of Leuven, this intense 5-year training leads to a Master’s Degree in Music Therapy. It is the only official music therapy training program that has been recognized by the Belgian government with six to eight students graduating each year. Additionally, Artevelde College, Ghent offers Bachelor program in creative therapy with a specialization in music therapy, and Association pour la Recherche, l’Enseignement et les Applications de la Musicothérapie en Belgique Francophone (AREAM), Brussels is offering a private music therapy training.

Traditionally, Belgian music therapists have been employed by various agencies in health care and special education. However, the number of music therapists working in private practice is steadily growing. In total, there are approximately 85 music therapists practicing in Belgium.

Background Information

Belgium has one professional

organization for music therapists, Beroepsvereniging van Muziktherapeuten asbl (BMT asbl). It was founded in 1998 after the fourth European Music Therapy Congress which took place in Belgium.

Since many years, BMT asbl has been an active member of the European Music Therapy Confederation (EMTC). The organization’s legal statutes are based on the EMTC regulations and are the entry requirements for members. Currently, BMT asbl has 45 registered members, qualified at the Master’s level. BMT asbl negotiates with the Belgian governmental departments regarding the recognition of music therapy as a health profession.

BMT asbl also offers legal assistance to its members and produces a semi-annual journal of music therapy. The organization also supports ongoing training by organizing workshops, lectures, symposia, and a network of group supervision.

Other organizations also exist in Belgium, including:

- Belgische Vereniging voor Creatieve Therapie’ of ‘Association Belge d’arts Thérapies (BVCT-ABAT) is a professional association for creative therapists, including those specialized in music therapy.

- Muziek & Handicap asbl is an organization, which focuses on music therapy with persons with mental and/or physical disabilities.
- Muzo asbl, founded by music therapists, provides art camps that focus on music for children with and without disabilities.
- AREAM asbl, already mentioned above, is an association that focuses on information and clinical practice in music therapy in the French-speaking part of Belgium.

The *Music Therapy Research Group* supervises doctoral studies in music therapy and is situated at the University College for Science and Arts. This group, located on the Lemmensinstituut at Leuven campus, works together with the Music Therapy Centre of Expertise

Belgian music therapists work as part of multidisciplinary teams with infants, young children and adolescents in a variety of settings including intensive care and oncology units in general hospitals, children's hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, special education settings, music education settings, and schools. Music therapists also work in private practice and provide workshops for parents, including pregnant women, and for other professionals who work with young children.

Common Approaches

Belgian music therapists are informed psychotherapists. This orientation is founded in the openness psychoanalysis traditionally maintains towards music, and by the intensive theoretical foundation that is prevalent among Belgian psychoanalytic societies related to the relationship between art and the human psyche. Additionally, music therapists are influenced by developmental psychology and psychodynamic theory. Music therapists involved in music education may also use ortho-agogical techniques (focusing on cognitive and motor skills).

In reaching children in early childhood, both expressive and receptive individual

and group music therapy are offered, although the active form is preferred. The duration of a session is typically 30 to 45 minutes. Music therapists in Belgium lead instrumental and vocal improvisations, song creations, playing forms, and role-play. The child in the session is always the therapist's source of inspiration.

Prominent Publications

- Bracke, I. (2007). *Just like heaven. Music therapy in pediatric oncology. Newsletter BMT abl, 9th year, 31-34.*
- Van Camp, J. & J. De Backer (2012) *Autisme Muzikaal: Rocking, metronoom en compactheid [Autism musically: Rocking metronome and compactness]. In G. Gluckers (Ed.) Het raadsel autisme... psychoanalytische psychotherapie? [(The riddle of autism ... psychoanalytic psychotherapy?). Antwerpen: Garant.*

About the Author



Freya Drossaert, Master in Music Therapy, chairman of BMT asbl, has experience in working as a music therapist with children, adults and older adults with psychological and psychiatric issues. Currently, she works at the General Psychiatric Hospital Saint-Lucia, Sint-Niklaas, and with adults at various specialized settings.

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