



Revisiting Professional Identity in the Arts Therapies: Core Values, Challenges, and Dialogues within the Arts and Health Field

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This panel questions the notion/illusion of the professional status of the arts therapies as a stable home or safe haven, particularly in the context of the current attention and funding the arts and health movement is receiving. How can we successfully communicate and negotiate the differences between arts and health interventions and the arts therapies, given widespread public misconceptions and the misleading use of the mostly non-protected terms art/ dance-movement/ drama/ music therapy by arts-in-health providers? Where, how and why do we struggle to understand and communicate our own professional identity? To what extent is the professional image challenged by arts therapists venturing into ‘grey areas’, particularly non-clinical settings or personal development contexts, or by engaging in community interventions and social action practices? How do cultural and social factors influence arts-based therapeutic and prevention approaches? What common core values and main principles of the arts therapies can we identify and should we (re)turn to in practice and in training?

Throughout their history, the arts therapies have repeatedly returned to questions of identity, negotiating their place in diverse and shifting social and cultural landscapes. Could the incorporation of arts and health projects led by professionals coming from other backgrounds make the recognition of the arts therapies more difficult in some countries? Where do the arts therapies fit into and support the European human rights framework which is currently under considerable pressure? What is the role of the European arts therapies organisations in these contexts?

This panel brings together representatives of the four European umbrella organisations (EFD, EADMT, EFAT, EMTC, in dialogue with ECArTE). Each will share their perspectives on these challenges, before engaging participants in a shared discussion on how the arts therapies can return to their core values while positioning themselves vis-à-vis the broader arts and health field.



Biographies

Maria d'Elia studied art education, art history, and psychology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich (Germany), then obtained an M.A. in Art Therapy from Vermont College of Norwich University (Montpelier VT, USA). She has worked as an art therapist in the USA and in Germany, and for the past 23 years has been employed as full-time art therapist at Hôpital Kirchberg, Luxembourg. She is a founding member and former president of the Luxembourgish Arts Therapies Association (Association Luxembourgeoise des Art-thérapeutes Diplômés - ALAtD) and founding member and current president of the European Federation of Art Therapy (EFAT). Maria has published and presented internationally.

Johannes Junker studied theology and philosophy in Germany and drama therapy in the Netherlands where he also completed his supervision and coach training. He brings 21 years of professional experience as a dramatherapist and department head at a psychiatric and forensic clinic in Germany. In 2011, he was appointed professor and rector at the Hochschule für Kunsttherapie Nürtingen, Germany. Since 2016, he has served as dean of the BA Drama Therapy at the University of Nürtingen-Geislingen. Additionally, Professor Junker is the President of the European Federation of Dramatherapy and serves on the board of the German Scientific Society of Arts Therapies.

Angelica Postu is the leading advocate for music therapy in Romania. She lectures at the University of Music in Bucharest and the University of the Arts in Berlin, and practices clinically at Charité University Hospital for Psychiatry. As a doctoral researcher, she explored the development of music therapy in Romania and the artist's transformation into a therapist. In 2017, she founded Romania's first music therapy association and university course in the field. With degrees in psychology, music therapy, and piano performance, she promotes emotional health and musicians' well-being, publishing and lecturing across Europe on music therapy and wellness through music.



Recent Publications and Presentations

Havsteen-Franklin, D., D'Elia, M. (expected in early 2026). **Formation en art-thérapie en Europe : naviguer entre les dimensions pragmatiques, pédagogiques et multi-probatoires** (Art therapy training in Europe: Navigating pragmatic, pedagogical, and multi-probatory dimensions). In Sudres, J-L., Chardon, F. (Eds). *Les Diplômes Universitaires d'Art-Thérapies en rencontres : Tisser l'avenir... (University Diplomas in Art-Therapies in encounter: Weaving the future....)*, Paris: Harmattan.

D'Elia, M. (in press, expected end of 2025). **Art Therapy in Europe**. In: Gussak, D. & Rosal, M. (Eds). *The Wiley Handbook of Art Therapy*, 2nd edition.

D'Elia, M. (03.09.2025). **Totem and Taboo. A glance across borders at issues of professional identity in art therapy**. [Semester inauguration talk] Hogeschool Utrecht, campus Amersfoort, Netherlands.

Junker, J. (2025). **Spiritualität und therapeutische Perspektiven** (Spirituality and therapeutic perspectives). In: Hopf, A. (Ed.), *Künstlerische Therapien und Spiritualität (Arts Therapies and Spirituality)*. De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston, 47 – 59.

Constien, T. & Junker, J. (2023). **Analysis of the body of literature based on a new drama therapy literature database**. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* (82/1):101989

Junker, J. (2023). **Theatertherapie – eine nonverbale Therapie? Oder das Verhältnis des Wortes zur Tat?** (Drama therapy – a nonverbal therapy? Or the relationship between words and actions?). In: Hinkel, C., Hopf, A. & Reichert, B. (Eds.), *Sprechen - Hören - Schweigen. Die Kunst des Sprechens in den Künstlerischen Therapien (Speaking - Listening - Silence. The art of speaking in the arts therapies.) Wissenschaftliche Grundlagen der Künstlerischen Therapien* (10). epubli: Berlin, 137 - 145.

Postu, A. (2025). **Audible emotions through music**. *Psychiatrische Pflege*, 10(5), 6–8.

Postu, A. (23.09.2025). **Happiness in the creative act: self-evident or a continuous pursuit?** [Keynote] 8th Eufonia Festival, Timișoara, Romania.

Postu, A. (28.06.2025). **Promoting health: Contrasts and crossroads of art therapies between clinical perspectives and cultural interventions**. [Keynote] *Space for Art Therapies VI, Prague, Czech Republic*.