

Art therapy in Slovakia

**National report prepared as a part of the project
Personal and Human Development. Psychodrama to Help
Disadvantaged**

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Introduction

Art therapy has a great potential in Slovakia, and there is a lot of groups not covered by this effective method of treatment. The integration of disadvantaged groups is provided by different institutions but a lot of them are not covered, such as unemployed.

There was a few ways how to observe and prepare a national report about art therapy in Slovakia. Since the Institut zamestnanosti (Employment institute) is not so oriented in this topic, we asked few specialists who works with different techniques of art therapy to summarize the state of this field in Slovakia. The answers was quite similar, there are some activities, but the institutional context is missing.

The organizations working with art therapy are mainly non-governmental and they lead mostly by specialists as psychologists and other therapists. Other organizations are working close with hospitals and medical centers, where the art therapy is mostly use for helping the children e.g. with cancer or other serious diseases.

A lot of institutions also working with art therapy are daily facilities for mainly mentally disabled people and also seriously physically. The purpose is to get them possibility for self-realization and for better using their free time during the day.

This report is prepared to inform the other institutions about state of art therapy in Slovakia, with few points added how to help to improve it in the next years. We hope, that art therapy will find its place in Slovakia in field of treatment and integrating the disadvantaged into life of majority in society.

We would like to thanks all the experts with who we were consulting this report. We were trying to add and describe as much as possible the relevant organizations into this report.

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1. Experiences in field of art therapy of Institut zamestnanosti

Institut zamestnanosti (Employment Institute) as organization was not working with art therapy till now. It was not our field of interest till now, but we are realizing the necessity of discovering the new methods how to help disadvantages to including them into daily and working life. The Institut zamestnanosti is more theoretical organization, working more with data than directly with disadvantages. But in cooperation with other organizations working directly with disadvantages we can better examine the current situation and make the proposition to governmental and other organizations to improve situation and to help disadvantages to include themselves in majority.

2. The current state of art therapy in Slovakia.

In Slovak republic the tradition of art therapy does not have such a long history. The providers of art therapy are nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations or health care facilities.

Since 1991 art therapy has been one of the subjects lectured at Comenius university at Faculty of education, department of healing and special pedagogics in Bratislava. But the graduated students became not art therapists but special and healing pedagogists.

The extra university program focusing only on art therapy does not exist by now. That is why art therapy is still not recognized as an independent discipline in Slovakia and the profession of art therapist officially does not exist.

In 2000 there was established the Union of Slovak art therapists Terra terapeutica which aim is to organize shorter or longer (two years) courses in art therapy for specialists from different helping professions: e.g. psychologists, psychiatrists, pedagogists, artists and social workers.

Art therapy in Slovakia has been practising in last 10 years in health care facilities as hospitals, especially psychiatry units and in educational institutions as schools, special schools, and in social care institution (senior centres, shelters for abused women and children) by different specialists who graduated in short term courses or graduated as healing pedagogists, special pedagogists, or psychologists.

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3. Institutional context in our country (associations, organizations, networks, foundations, initiations etc.).

Below we added a list of institutions tackling with art therapy in their work, describing their target groups and way of working. The most interesting and important are described deeply, others are just mentioned.

Terra Therapeutica

The Civic Association Terra Therapeutica is non-governmental non-profit organization. The word terra has several meanings. In Latin, terra means: clay, ground, but also territory. In conjunction with the word therapeutica it acquires meaning of healing clay or ground, as well as healing territory. In this context, not only clay, but art itself is considered to have therapeutic power. Its potential is seen not only as esthetical/applied but as well as educational, social, and therapeutic - going beyond general understanding of mission of art.

Terra therapeutica Center is a place, where children and adults can:

- work with clay
- express their personality
- transform their feelings - joy and/or grief - into the form of art
- give utterance to their aggression/anger in socially acceptable form
- compensate their handicap
- change attitudes towards themselves (it is strengthening self-concept and self-esteem) and their social behavior
- find meaning of situations and events in their lives.

The association was established in January 2000 as a natural result of long-term effort of its founders working in the field of visual art, healing pedagogy*, psychology, and medicine. They wanted to connect their activities in the field of art-therapy, and establish the study of art-therapy followed by practical implementation of art-therapy in Slovakia. Theoretical basis of the TT Association stays on conviction that every human being is in some sense an artist and that visual art activities has a great therapeutic potential that can be used for individual and/or group forms of intervention and art-therapy.

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Liga za duševné zdravie (League of mental health)

This organization is trying to provide the help and support to people with problems of mental health. They are providing a few projects where the various group of people can meet or just speak with psychologists and other specialists who can help them. One of the activities is also arttherapy in their local branches. They call it Studio Open Art.

Studio Open Art is place where people problems of mental healths can meet and who have an interest in artistic activities. The aim is to spread the art therapy as the effective tool to help go through problems to that people.

Združenie pre integrálne vzdelávanie (Association for inegrated education), Bratislava

AIE has been established to enable the need to link the endeavour of individuals and organisations to explore the knowledge on the recent world evolution. The purpose of the AIE is to act on the development of the knowledge on mutual relationship between the material and spiritual part of the human life and application of this knowledge in the practice.”

AIE (ZIV) is non-political, non-for-profit organisation promoting the integration of spiritual knowledge and values into existing forms of the education. AIE is the project oriented. Recently the projects concern: creativity development, personal integrity and health, relations development, integral management and consulting. AIE works in partnership with Ken Wilber´s Integral Institute. AIE has been established in 1999.

Many things speak for the suggestion that the world is different than it seems to be and as we learn in the school or we perceive.

They are several reasons that are leading man to seek its hidden face, to seek the answers to the questions that could be summarised into following one: how man can live on the Earth the valuable, harmonic, joyful life? Simple answer: by integrating material and spiritual knowledge in the daily life.

Integral education provide the knowledge on the spiritual part of the life of Man, Earth, and the Universe, accessible to everyone who is ready to perceive. It integrates this knowledge with the one on the material world to improve the life quality.

Workshop on Intuitive Painting - by Art to the Harmony

The fantastic free time activity - visual art workshop for everyone!

The participants Stress Relieves and the subsequent positive Health effect is an amazing ads!

Follow the special relaxing feelings with drawing by water-colour, pastel and the oil painting - basics of visual art with music and meditation.

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Enjoy the unique course that evolves the creativity in the life. The material needed and the small refreshment is included. Two-day workshop is for anyone interested (since age of 15). No previous visual art practice is needed.

Ten years of experience with extraordinary results guarantee the quality and participants satisfaction.

Graduates may further attend the ateliers, open air sessions and exhibitions.

Divadlo z pasáže (Theatre from the passage), Banská Bystrica

Center for community theater. In spectacles play both, the mentally disabled and normal actors. The organizing also the festival of art therapy, where the workshops about art therapeutic methods are organized.

Theater From the Passage has been a non-governmental organization for 10 years. On 15th November 2005 it has received a state grant from Ministry of Culture SR and its activities are under the auspices of the [Theatre Institute](#) .

Fourteen people and fifteen actors work in the Theatre from the Passage, in the Day – care Center of the theatre, and in the Protected living. These three organizations are connected, and neither of them could exist separately. The actors start every day at 8 o'clock. They have various classes, except on those days when they have performances. The rehearsal of each new play is thematically integrated into their education. The rest of us (mostly) also start at 8 o'clock and take care of the life of the theatre. We all have classes with actors. We like each other and that is what keeps our heads above water.

Since our establishment we have:

- rehearsed 11 performances (*Popolvár (The Ashboy) as you haven't seen it yet, The Studio, Groom for Mrs. Mouse, Reflections for Life, The Lights of Forstages, The Returns, Dialogues, The City, America after Kafka, Diagnosis: Desire, Tarzan, Heaven*)
- made a full-length film (*From a Diary of a Carriage*)
- made 4 TV-documents (*in collaboration with Slovak Television, TV Markíza and Czech Television*)
- organised the first year of international theatre festival of Art-therapy, Theory and Practise in Višegrad Countries.
- organised the second year of international theatre festival of Art-therapy: Art on the Margin
- participated in international festivals and theatrical exhibitions in Denmark, the Czech Republic (*in Prague, Brno, Ostrava, Slavičín, Zlín*), Lithuania, Germany

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- created our own system of education for mentally handicapped people
- participated in the establishment of organisation DOM, the purpose of which is the creation of protected accomodation for mentally handicapped people
- helped establish the Agency for Supported Employment, which aims at employing people with lowered working abilities

- created and participated in several projects aimed at integrating mentally handicapped people into society and integrating society into more normal, humane and lightened thought about itself

The phrase Festival of Art Therapy refers to the socio - public function of this gathering. Dramatic stories which are about to meet here share the same social dimension. The stories will be told by people who are, in our "normal" society, labeled as "different". This ranges from mentally, hearing, visually or physically handicapped to the homeless, emigrants, young people from ghettos, people who live in poverty, and others who feel themselves as "different" and "outside". The grammatical opposite of the adverb ,"normal" is "abnormal". Grammar itself therefore shows us a little bit of self-irony, that we could only accept - it's an abnormal people's festival (this of course doesn't reserve us exclusive rights for this denotation :)). Art therapy is a medical term, which, simply put, describes a psychotherapy that makes extensive use of a patient's artistic activities. The patient, being ill, decided to take part in some sort of therapeutic process.

Other institutions working with art therapy

Materská škola pri Diagnostickom centre (Pre-elementary school at Diagnostic centre), Bratislava is the special pre-elementary school for children with mental and physical disabilities in 2 to 7 years old. They are working mostly with art therapy, ergotherapy, music therapy, dramatherapy and fyziotherapy.

Martino – Institute for developement of society (Tesáre) is nongovernmental organization. The main purpose of their activities is to prevent the negative socio-patologic phenomens in society. They provide nonformal education, educational seminars with youth and adults. To fulfill their purpose, they using Hippotherapy, music therapy and art therapy.

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Domov sociálnych služieb pre deti ROSA (House of social services for children ROSA), Bratislava, is one of the facilities provided and financed by Bratislava Upper terotory unit. The fworking with children from 6 to 25 years old woith psychical and physical disability. The mostly usány art therapy, hipotherapy and music therapy.

Klinika detskej psychiatrie (Clinc of child psychiatry), Bratislava – is the only one independent place working at Child faculty hospital in Bratislava. They using art therapy.

Pramienok, NGO, Bratislava – art therapy with Romas children from unpriviledged families in different regions in Slovakia

Psychosociálne centrum, daily facility (Košice) – for clients, who can not work because of their mental disability. They are working in the groups and use different methods ans music therapy, art therapy and biblio therapy (reading books).

Pohoda, non-governmental organization (Revúca) – club of abstainers – art therapy in families of abstinentes.

Centrum pedagogicko-psychologického poradenstva a prevencie (Center of pedagogic and psychologic advisement and prevention (Banská Bystrica, Lučenec). The aim of this center is to provide special treatment to students and teachers in schools. They working with art therapy with this kind of people.

Súkromná škola Kreatívny svet (Private school The creative world), (Martin) – art therapy for all people, commercial activity.

Detské denné sanatórium (Child daily sanatory) – Faculty hospital Trnava. In thi sanatory the children in age 2 to 6 years are treated. They have mainly the respiratory problems, immunity problems and astma bronchiale. As the part of the treatment they using art therapy and music therapy.

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Conclusion

In Slovakia, no one was working with art therapy in inclusion process for unemployed. Different methods of art therapy are quite accessible for everyone who needs it. Art therapy is used mainly for working with physically or mentally ill. The other groups are the children, children from Roma families, retired, children from orphanages, The art therapy is used also in hospitals as successful method of treatment.

The profession “Art therapist” is not recognized in Slovakia. The art therapy is accessible freely to all people through different workshops. These workshops are provided also on commercial level, but also as the part of treatment for people who needs it. The art therapy is becoming the part of treatment in few hospitals and medical centers.

The art therapists are working with different groups of people, such as physically and mentally ill, with children, also children from Romas families, from orphanages, abstainers, retired, homeless. Nevertheless, we can find a lot of groups, where art therapy is not applied, such as unemployed or children in educational process directly at schools.

In academic field, the art therapy was recognized in 1990 after the social economics changes. So this is the reason, why this therapeutic category is not developed right now and why the profession of art therapist does not exist till now.

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Sources

OZ Terra Therapeutica

<http://www.terratherapeutica.sk/activities.htm>

Theatre from the passage

http://www.divadlozpasaze.sk/www/main.php?pageid=about_theatre

Association for integral association

<http://www.ziv-online.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=14299>

Liga za duševné zdravie

http://www.dusevnezdravie.sk/motivacne_centrum.html

Prepared in cooperation with:

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Prof. Jaroslava Sickova, artists and art therapist is author of the books as The Basic art therapy,(2002) Art therapy-used art? (2006) and The importance of art materials and medias in art therapy (2004) :She has established and developoed Spiritually - ecolocical concept of art therapy (SEA) (2002) .The main goul of this approach is trought art and its activities to create the situations which will support spirituaity, dignity and creativity of the man and will help the man to make positive changes in contex of his (her) menthal, emotional ,psychical, social and spiritual life . The main stress is in SEA on three dimensional art experssion as the holistic method of positively influencing contemporary man, who is attaced by post-modern media.

Prof.Sickova has been supervisor of many graduation and disertaion students whoos papers are dealing with art therapy research. The contribution to the problem of evaluation in art therapy is Sickovas Test of imagination and sence of contex (1984) and methods of SEA focusing on concentration, reconstruction, restructualization and transformation.