



MIND & LIFE
EUROPE

Activities Report 2014

Summary

2014 marked the second full year of Mind and Life Europe activities. In several respects it was a difficult and disruptive year from an organizational perspective. The programmatic highlight was surely the very successful European Summer Research Institute at the Fraueninsel, Chiemsee, Germany from 23rd-29th August with over 150 next generation researchers and an outstanding faculty.

In early April, 2014 latent dissatisfaction among the MLE staff led to the resignation of the full staff of Mind and Life Europe. Despite significant efforts on the part of the Board of Directors, the situation was not reversible. After deep reflection and discussion, the Board came to the conclusion of the necessity to completely re-start the process of building a European Mind and Life with new staff and leadership.

Understandably, these events caused considerable confusion and distress among the Advisory Board, a number of friends of MLE and some donors and others. Over the later spring and summer months it became necessary to spend the requisite time and effort in individual and group conversations, Board and other discussions, to clarify the reasons for these decisions and review the processes that were taken. It has been a painful process in several respects, not only for those directly concerned, but for many others who are deeply committed to the development and welfare of Mind and Life Europe.

A larger stakeholders meeting was called for August 29/30th at the conclusion of the ESRI at the Chiemsee. This meeting, carefully prepared and held in a mood of openness and dignity, was a helpful and constructive beginning of a healing process. Specific suggestions were offered, particularly in regard to enlarging the membership in the Association. This process was able to take place immediately, which would also lead to the expansion of the Board of Directors more broadly representative of the overall work and aims of Mind and Life.

At the October 4th, 2014 Board meeting of MLE and subsequent Extraordinary General Meeting of the Association, we welcomed the addition of six new members to the Board, and a change in the Officers of the Board. **Arthur Zajonc** stepped back as President of the Board, **Charles-Antoine Janssen** took on the role of Treasurer, and **Tania Singer** and **Matthieu Ricard** took on the function

of Vice-Chairman and Secretary respectively. The new Board members in addition to **Amy Cohen** (new Chair of the Board) and Tania and Matthieu are **Paul Grossman, Wolf Singer and Michel Bitbol**. This Board development was duly celebrated by Association members and Board alike.



Amy Cohen-Varela (new Chair) and Arthur Zajonc
Antoine Janssen



Tania Singer, Amy Cohen, Matthieu Ricard, Charles-Antoine Janssen

ESRI- The theme of the Summer Research Institute was “Towards a Contemplative Science in Europe”, organized by **Diego Hangartner** and a dedicated group of colleagues. An extraordinary faculty included: **Wolf Singer, Tania Singer, Stephen Batchelor, Michel Bitbol, Richard Davidson, Heleen Slagter, Martine Batchelor, Fred von Allmen, Matthieu Ricard, Olga Klimecki, Thomas Metzinger, Tsoknyi Rinpoche, Rupert Gethin, Andreas Roepstorff, Jennifer Windt, William Kuyken, Paul Grossman, Elena Antonova**. The event was a great success, and demonstrated the relevance, need and overall appreciation for the work of Mind and Life Europe.



Varela Grants Program- MLE has received funding from a generous donor for up to 5 Varela Awards, in conjunction with Mind and Life Institute, for younger researchers who are interested in the field of contemplative science.

Members of the MLE Board were able to participate in the large MLI **International Symposium for Contemplative Studies** in Boston, USA with **His Holiness the Dalai Lama** and approximately 1600 guests. This major event was a great success, and afforded the opportunity for members of the Boards of MLE and MLI to meet each other and discuss future collaboration.

Board Meetings:

2014

April- 1/2nd-Zurich

April 30th—Zurich

October 3/4th – Zurich

October 4th- Extraordinary General Meeting

December 12th--Paris

2015

Board Meeting- January 12th -teleconference

Annual General Meeting- February 20th - Paris

Board Meeting- February 20th – Paris

Board Retreat- Spring/Summer

Board Meeting- September 3rd-Chiemsee

With the resignation of **Anna Alomes**, the ‘**Education, Human Development and Flourishing Initiative**’ was supported from Norway by **Christian Egge**, who took on a coordinating role from his home in Norway, with supervision from Arthur Zajonc and MLI. This arrangement proved to work well as an interim solution, and at the October Board meeting MLE asked MLI to take over this program, its supervision and financing. There will still be shared reports on this initiative, but the MLE Board would like to evaluate its programmatic commitments anew for the future.

2014 in Review:

January/February: MLE participated in a fundraising event in Brussels with the Bank de Groof, including a presentation about MLE to invited members at the home of the Janssen family.

April: Participation of MLE Director and Advisory Board members in the **Spirit of Humanity Conference** in Reykjavik, Iceland. Staff resigned in mid April and Director is let go. Christian Egge, Norway, is hired as external consultant for Education Initiative. End of April discussions in Advisory Board regarding these issues. Cornelius Pietzner takes on Interim CEO/Director role for MLE.

July: MLE received an extraordinary major donation to support programs and developments.

August- ESRI at the Fraueninsel, Chiemsee, with 150 next generation researchers. Stakeholders meeting at conclusion of conference and confirm the addition of new members to the MLE association.

October: Extraordinary General Meeting and Board meeting. Board is expanded. Monica Voegelé resigns from Board. Amy Cohen elected as Board Chairperson.

December: New Board meets in Paris and interviews candidates for various posts and discusses commitments for the future.

Outlook 2015

At its January 12, 2015 Board meeting, it was decided to create an association “**Friends of Mind and Life Europe**” in France. This association, located in Paris, will also allow MLE to hire personnel in France. To this end, the Board agreed to hire **Geraldine de Vries** as **Communications and Administration Officer** for MLE, to be based in Paris.

The **ESRI 2015** will take place again at the Fraueninsel, Chiemsee, Germany 28 August- 3rd September entitled “**Contemplative Practices, Science and Society**”.

We are honoured that **His Holiness the Dalai Lama** has agreed to participate in a public Mind and Life Europe conference in September, 2016 in Brussels. This major conference is titled: “**Power and Care**”. Since these meetings take a lot of pre-planning, we will spend much of our focus in 2015 setting up this event for next year. The planning committee is in the process of finalizing the content of the meeting.

Throughout the coming year we will continue to expand our network, facilitate new research, give young people access to the emerging field of contemplative science, and translate the findings and benefits into specific programs as well as make them accessible to others. We also need to raise substantial funds as the projected and initiated activities will not occur without financial support.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of our donors for their generous and steadfast support. This has been a turbulent time for Mind and Life Europe, and we very much hope to focus on programs and activities this year once organizational matters and structures are settled. Despite the difficulties of the last year, we are positive and enthusiastic about the work ahead, and most grateful to those friends and donors who have steadfastly stood by Mind and Life Europe and its mission and purpose.

MIND & LIFE EUROPE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Amy Cohen-Varela (President), Tania Singer (Vice President) Charles-Antoine Janssen (Treasurer), Matthieu Ricard (Secretary) Arthur Zajonc, Roshi Joan Halifax, Paul Grossman, Michel Bitbol, Wolf Singer, Cornelius Pietzner (Interim CEO)