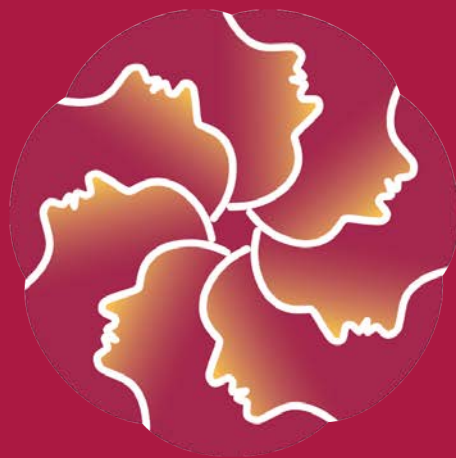




MIND & LIFE
EUROPE

Activity Report 2024



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Who Are We?

A HOME FOR UNCONVENTIONAL INTERDISCIPLINARY ENCOUNTERS

Mind & Life Europe is a **home** for unconventional interdisciplinary encounters, where researchers and practitioners enrich one another in their understanding of mind and life,

through the rigour of **scientific inquiry**, the openness of **philosophical investigation**, the edginess of **artistic exploration**, and the depth of **contemplative wisdom traditions**.



We believe that holding an **open-hearted and interdisciplinary space of dialogue** is in itself a radical, ethical mode of being-in-the-world, which generates new pathways of research and collective sense-making with transformative potential.

What Do We Do?

WE HOST DIALOGUES AND FUND CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH

At MLE, we facilitate **generative encounters** that encourage an ongoing circulation between different disciplinary perspectives, between theory and practice, and between contemplative, philosophical, and scientific approaches to the mind. We do this primarily through **curating** a lively line-up of online and in-person dialogues, **hosting** interdisciplinary retreats and symposia, **funding** the

next generation of researchers in contemplative science, and **sharing** cutting-edge findings in these fields with the general public. We work closely with researcher-practitioners in the fields

of neuroscience, philosophy, education, ecology, contemplative practice, and the arts, and strive to build communities that foster open-hearted and radically honest interactions.



Why Support MLE?

TO HELP US FACILITATE COLLECTIVE SENSE-MAKING WITH TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

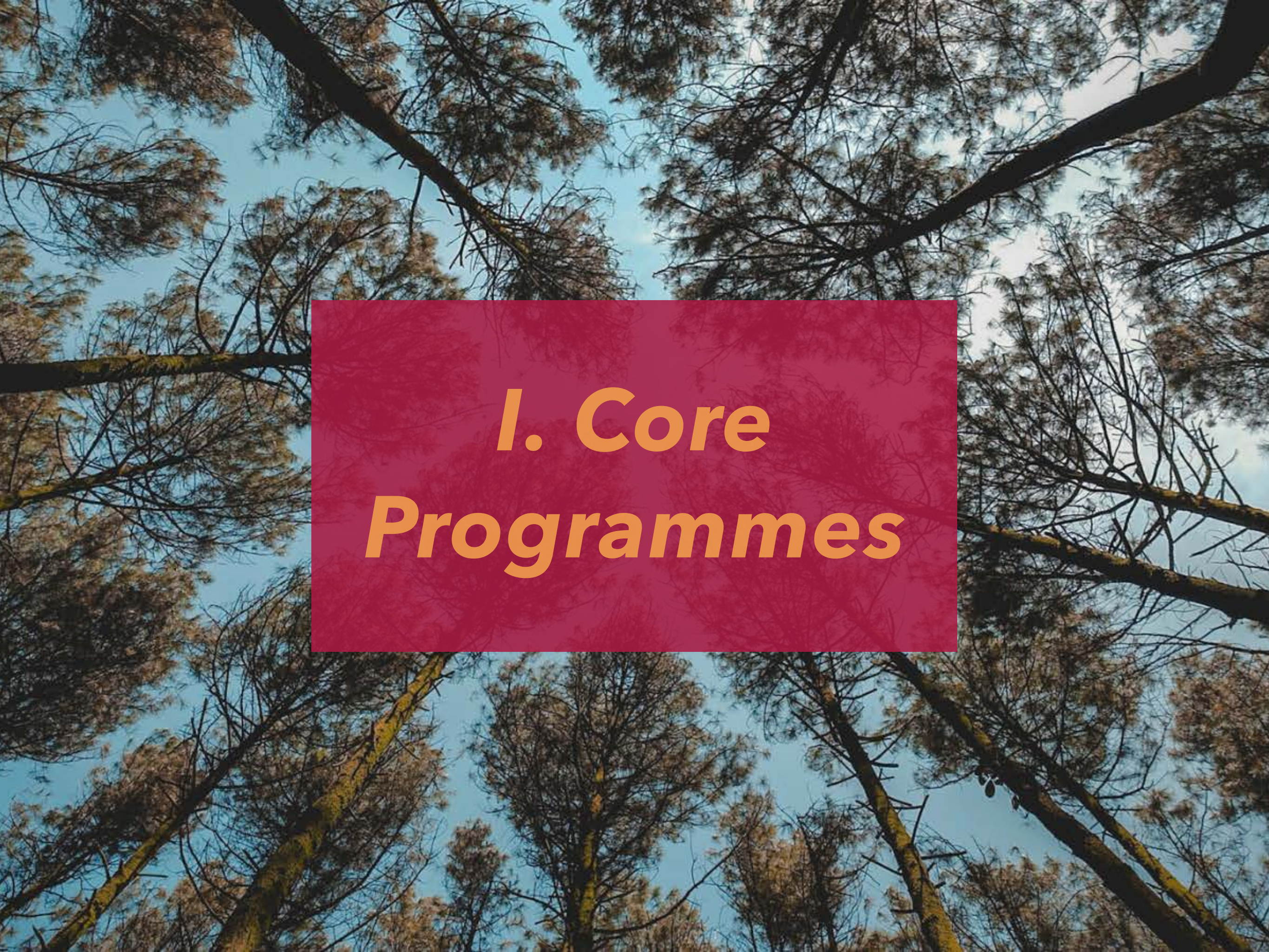


Mind & Life Europe's lodestar is the **shared vision of the Dalai Lama and Francisco Varela**, as it was set out at the first Mind & Life Dialogue in 1987. This vision aims to create a new field of dialogue for the sciences and contemplative traditions. This dialogue shapes and expands our understanding of who we are as humans, and addresses **how we can create a world that is more sustainable for the generations to come**.

There are **no simple solutions** to global challenges – inner and systemic transformation leading to change necessitates careful work and dialogue. We need to bring **the best**

of science, ethics and our inner worlds to the forefront of human activities and interactions on this planet.

Since our inception, the Mind & Life Institute and Mind & Life Europe have collectively been a **field-defining, ground-breaking initiative**, involving the most cutting-edge scientists and contemplative leaders from around the world. Our purpose is to **initiate changes in how science works**, to advance our understanding of the mind, and to explore how we as human beings can develop our inner capacities for change, for the sake of both our individual well-being and for the common good.

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a forest of tall, slender pine trees. The dark trunks and branches of the trees frame the edges of the image, reaching towards a clear, light blue sky. The perspective creates a sense of height and verticality.

I. Core Programmes

Summary of Core Programmes in 2024

1. European Summer Research Institute (ESRI): *"Living in Groundlessness with Responsibility"*
2. European Varela Awards (EVA) management
3. MLE Retreat for young researchers and scientists: *"Opening Up the Space Between Us"*
4. Core Enaction Programme, Semester 4
5. Mind Matters webinars: *"Gaia: Gateway to the Climate Conversation"*
6. MLE Friends webinars
7. Mind & Life Europe podcast
8. Making Room for Contemplation
9. ICP Workshop and Webinars



Mind Matters



Core
Enaction



European Summer Research Institute

The European Summer Research Institute (ESRI) is our **flagship** event bringing together around 120 scientists and practitioners of diverse backgrounds. It is an intimate multi-day in-person event, bringing together the **scientific rigour of an academic conference** and the **experiential depth of a retreat**.

ESRI offers a much-needed space outside of the traditional academic conference circuit, in which contemplative researchers at different stages of their career can come together, learn from one another, exchange experiences and methodologies, and initiate new collaborations. It also provides an example of how to

encourage a **productive circulation between different disciplinary perspectives**, as well as between theory and practice. In addition to theoretical exchanges, there is ample space for practice, whether in the form of contemplation, activities in nature, dance, and movement, or artistic co-creations. It is an **invaluable opportunity to build life-long connections** and friendships with like-minded people, supporting each other's growth with care and awareness.



European Summer Research Institute 2024

– 4th – 8th August, Italy

“LIVING IN GROUNDLESSNESS WITH RESPONSIBILITY”

This year marked the second year in a three-year thematic arc, “Care for Life”, which aims to foreground caring as an active, processual, and participative feature of being sentient in a wildly complex and rapidly evolving ecosystem.

In year 1, we explored the theme of “**Sentience and Responsibility in Critical Times**”. This year, we will interrogate more closely the notion of **groundlessness** in all its conceptual and existential density, carefully reflecting on the **phenomenology** of ground/lessness, how **meaning** arises from groundlessness, and how groundlessness intimately informs our **sense of ethics and being-in-the-world**. The week loosely followed an arc of investigation, allowing faculty and participants to:

- reflect together on the **basic terms of inquiry** (what exactly does one mean by ground and groundlessness?);
- consider the **import and valence of groundlessness** within and across several academic disciplines (philosophy, neuroscience, quantum physics, psychology, anthropology, and more);
- explore the **possibility of a ‘middle path’** that considers wisdom and compassion as two sides of the same coin;
- and find ways of **integrating the experience of groundlessness** – or the realisation of it – in our everyday lives and work.

5

Days

31

Countries

115

Participants

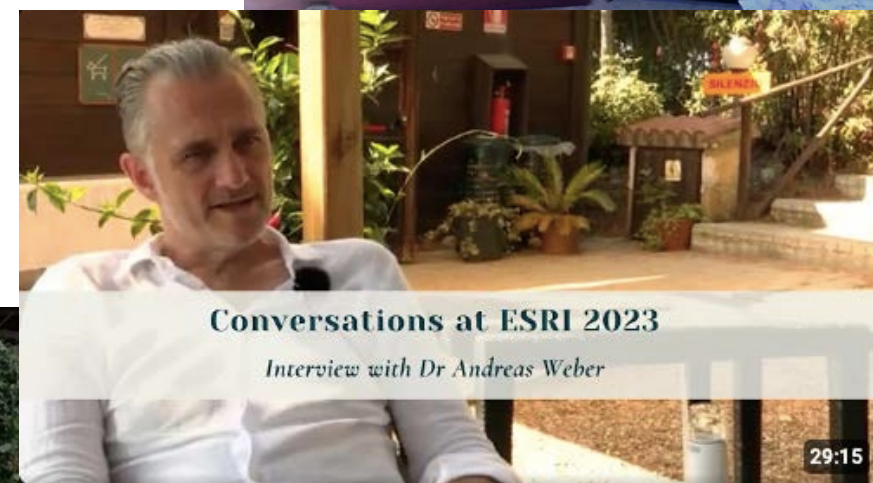


2024 ESRI FACULTY

Dr Sāgaradevī Barratt
Dr Aviva Berkovich-Ohana
Dr Jennifer Branlat
Marion Chaygneaud-Dupuy
Leslie de Galbert
Dr Jay L. Garfield
Br Dao Hanh
Dr Juan C. González
Hsuan-Hsiu Hung
Naïssam Jalal
Dr Urban Kordeš
Dr Miriam Kyselo
Br Pháp Linh
Dr Wolfgang Lukas
Dr Edel Maex
Dr Fernando Rosas
Fr Francis Tiso
Dr Martijn van Beek
Dr Marieke van Vugt
Amy Cohen Varela

VIDEO SERIES - "CONVERSATIONS AT ESRI & MLE RETREAT"

Published on	Video Title
22nd April 2024	<u>Conversations at ESRI 2023: Prof Jay Garfield & Br Pháp Linh</u>
29th April 2024	<u>Conversations at MLE Retreat 2023: Dr Martijn van Beek & Dr Marieke van Vugt</u>
13th May 2024	<u>Conversations at ESRI 2023: Dr Luc Steels & Dr Laura Candiotta</u>
18th July 2024	<u>Conversations at ESRI 2023: Dr Andreas Weber</u>
12th Sept 2024	<u>Conversations at ESRI 2023: Dr Christopher Timmermann</u>



Grant Giving: European Varela Awards (EVA)

CYCLES 2023 AND 2024

Named after the neuroscientist and philosopher Francisco J. Varela, **The European Varela Awards** have been an important and integral component of **Mind & Life Europe's support of contemplative scientists and scholars**. Francisco believed that contemplative training offers modern science novel methods for investigating human experience. In his vision, contemplative training not only provides a new domain for scientific study, but it also offers resources for advancing scientific theories and models of cognition, emotion, and consciousness.

The Varela Grants were established by the Mind & Life Institute in 2004 as a companion program to the Mind & Life Summer Research Institutes (SRI) and they have been a critical element in supporting the development of Contemplative Science and Contemplative Studies. Following this, in 2014, Mind & Life Europe established the European Summer Research Institute (ESRI) and the **European Varela Awards (EVAs)**, which have

been **supporting the young generation of contemplative researchers in Europe** ever since.

Awarded since 2014, **thanks to the generous support of the Hershey Family Foundation**, the goal of the EVAs is to help **fund the next generation of contemplative researchers** and to build an interdisciplinary understanding of the mind.



European Varela Awards 2023

IMPACT

Since 2014, **the European Varela Awards at Mind & Life Europe have supported 63 projects with a total of just over €942,000 awarded to junior scientists in the field of contemplative studies.** As a result, there has been a significant increase in the scholarly articles being published in top-tier, peer-reviewed, scientific journals reporting cognitive, behavioural, neurobiological, and clinical effects of contemplative practices.

Thanks to the generosity of MLE's Varela Awards donor, grants of up to **€23,500** have been awarded annually through a competitive application and selection process.

Research conducted with the support of the **European Varela Awards** will be the future basis of the emerging fields of Contemplative Science and Contemplative Studies. Today's researchers will be tomorrow's leaders in the exploration of the mind.

SCOPE

The EVAs encourage research projects with an **emphasis on studies incorporating first-person (experiential) methods alongside third-person (classically scientific) methods.** Preference is given to interdisciplinary studies as MLE would like to actively encourage collaboration of researchers with contemplative scholars and practitioners.

10

Award Cycles

63

Projects Funded

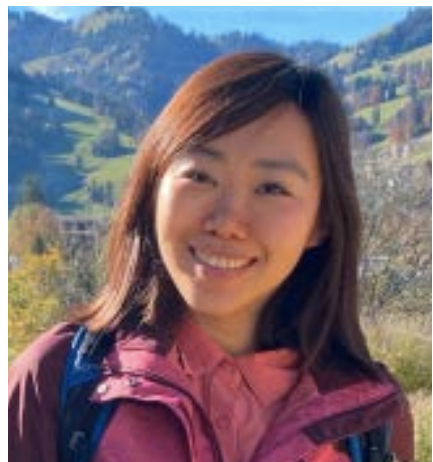
€942,000

Awarded since 2014

2023 EVA Recipients and their Research Projects



Oytun Ayyün, Dysco Lab, Paris8 University and Nanterre University, France. *"Breathe, Learn"*



Jie Gao, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (EPFL), Lausanne, Switzerland. *"Towards an engaged ethnography of Intersubjectivity in experience research through the design of a Collaborative Microphenomenology Modelling Tool"*



Nona Kiknadze, University of Miami, Miami, USA. *"The Adapted Science of Flourishing for Young Adults: A University-based Mixed Methods Flourishing Intervention Emphasizing Diversity"*

2023 EVA Recipients and their Research Projects



Karin Matko & Heena Kamble, University of Melbourne, Australia and India. *"Who practices what and why? A Global Exploration of Meditators"*



Alejandra Vásquez-Rosati, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Villarrica, Chile. *"Movement and the experience of emotions through the Cognitive-Corporeal Integration Method"*



David Zarka, Free University of Brussels, Belgium. *"Impact of mindfulness on sensorimotor control and learning: does meditation practice improve the integration of proprioceptive information?"*

ICP Workshop and Webinars

This year's **ICP (Initiative for Contemplative Phenomenology) workshop** took place at Le Reposoir, France, between **4th – 8th October**. It featured the cutting-edge work of nearly **40 researchers and scholars** in the micro-phenomenology community, coming from **5 different continents** and over **20 countries**. Across the **24 presentations** and **15 posters** that were on the line-up this year, we heard about an unheralded variety of research initiatives using **phenomenology** and **micro-phenomenology** as their guiding framework, celebrating the many insights born of this approach and discussing together the many challenges researchers face in this domain (whether methodological, ethical, or institutional).

It was a poignant example of interdisciplinarity-in-practice, caring epistemologies, collective sense-making, and, as Dr Claire Petitmengin noted at the end, the value of remaining '**anchored in experience**' while pursuing academic work. By all accounts, the gathering of this community provided a precious refuge and source of inspiration for those working in the field.

The in-person gathering was preceded by three webinars, which are available to participants for replay.

Talk by Prof Claire Petitmengin – *"Becoming aware as a process of subtilization of experience"*.

Talk by Prof Natalie Depraz – *"On Becoming Aware: A pragmatics of experiencing under the pulse of surprise"*.

Talk by Prof Michel Bitbol – *"On Becoming Aware. Phenomenology and the primacy of experience"*.



MLE Retreat

The MLE Retreat offers an opportunity to **systematically explore individual trajectories, motivations, challenges and opportunities** using contemplative practice and other tools for self-exploration and self-development.

The retreat is aimed at **younger and/or early career scholars and professionals** who have an established, regular meditation practice. Emphasising individual and group work and employing an intensive contemplative and dialogic approach, the retreat is **facilitated by experienced scholar-practitioners**.

This year, inspired by the 2024 MLE banner theme, **“Opening Up the Space Between Us”**, we explored how contemplative practice may help us in this process of opening up space, individually and collectively, as our lives unfold. In a world where a hardening of boundaries and deepening polarisations seem to be on the rise, **living open-heartedly and cultivating response-ability**, as the wisdom traditions suggest, appear as radical and necessary alternatives.

What might this mean, concretely, in our personal and professional lives? What experiences do we already have with it, what are our challenges, and **how might insights and practices from various wisdom traditions be beneficial?** How do we bring more kindness, clarity, and insight to bear on how we live in relationship to ourselves, others, and the world at large? **What inner and outer resources and competences do we already possess?** How might we develop our capacity to navigate the challenges of **living with groundlessness as a foundational condition of being**, and as an existential horizon?

The retreat included **silent and guided meditations**, reflections, dialogical exercises, journaling, and gentle movement practices. We also engaged with **microphenomenological methods** to explore five gateways to wholeness and authenticity (body, breath, heart, mind, and foundational creativity).

MLE Retreat 2024 – 31st July – 2nd August, Italy

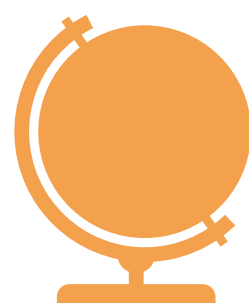
“OPENING UP THE SPACE BETWEEN US”



40 Participants



3 Days



19 Countries

This **3 day in-person retreat**, connected to the European Summer Research Institute 2024, took place at **The Lama Tzong Khapa Institute** in Pomaia, Italy, from **31st July – 2nd August 2024**.

This year, inspired by the 2024 MLE banner theme, **“Opening Up the Space Between Us”**, the participants explored how contemplative practice may help us in this process of opening

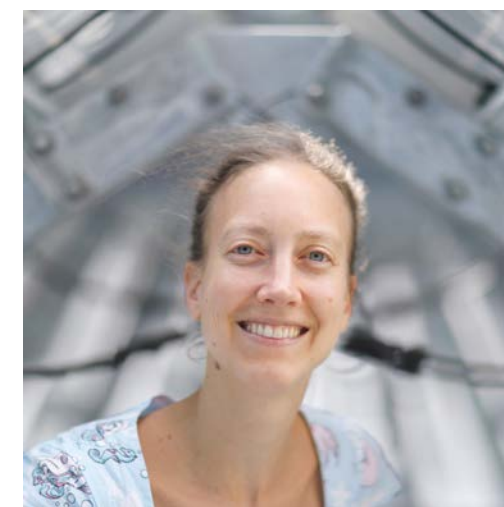
up space, individually and collectively, as our lives unfold.

This retreat was led by **Dr Martijn van Beek** (Associate Professor of Anthropology at Aarhus University, Denmark) and **Dr Marieke van Vugt** (Assistant Professor at the Institute of Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Engineering of the University of Groningen, Netherlands).

MLE RETREAT FACULTY



Dr Martijn van Beek



Dr Marieke van Vugt

Core Enaction Programme

This **brand new programme intended for university students of all levels**, from undergraduate to post-doctoral researchers began in **autumn 2022**.

Conceived as a four-part e-learning curriculum (much like a MOOC), the **Core Enaction Programme** unfolded **over the course of four semesters** (2022-2024).

In spring 2024 (Semester 4), we explored ways that the enactive approach **informs the intersubjective practices of people**: therapists and teachers, artists and curators, improvisors and AI specialists, the neurodivergent community and more.

Structured differently from past semesters, the final segment of the programme was



the **occasion for thematic encounters** during which the invited researcher-practitioners confronted their lived experience of their practices with themes from participatory sense-making (understood as enaction in the social domain).



Core Enaction Programme, Semester 4 – Session 4
– Moving & Improvising

SEMESTER 4

Date	Speaker	Topic
27th March 2024	Dr Hanne De Jaegher and Dr Rebecca Todd	<u>Session 1 - Participatory Sense-Making (primer)</u>
10th April 2024	Jonny Drury, Dr Allison Leigh Holt, and Dr Katta Spiel	<u>Session 2 - Thinking Divergently (neurodiversity)</u>
17th April 2024	Dr Sanneke de Haan, Dr Rika Preiser, and Amy Cohen Varela	<u>Session 3 - Healing (psychology & psychiatry)</u>
8th May 2024	Luc Petton, Barbara Bogatin, and Dr Scott Brewer	<u>Session 4 - Moving & Improvising (dance, music, and somatics)</u>
29th May 2024	Dr Shay Welch and Dr Karen Holdaway Grøn	<u>Session 5 - Curating (arts, the creative process, and curation)</u>
5th June 2024	Dr Erin Manning and Dr Joëlle Aden	<u>Session 6 - Teaching, Learning, and Transmitting (pedagogy)</u>
12th June 2024	Dr Elena Cuffari, Dr Luc Steels and Dr Takashi Ikegami	<u>Session 7 - Computing Differently (AI & robotics and the future of cognitive science)</u>
26th June 2024	Dr Ezequiel Di Paolo and all guest speakers	<u>Session 8 - Enactive Ethics: Difference Becoming Participation</u>



CORE ENACTION SEMESTER 4 SPEAKERS

Dr Joëlle Aden
Barbara Bogatin
Dr Elena Cuffari
Dr Hanne De Jaegher
Jonny Drury
Karen Grøn
Dr Sanneke de Haan
Allison Leigh Holt
Dr Erin Manning
Dr Takashi Ikegami
Dr Ezequiel A. Di Paolo
Luc Petton
Dr Rika Preiser
Dr Leticia Renault
Dr Katta Spiel
Dr Luc Steels
Dr Rebecca Todd
Amy Cohen Varela
Dr Shay Welch

Mind Matters Series 2024

Gaia: Gateway to the Climate Conversation

The Mind Matters Series, initiated in 2020, provides an interdisciplinary online platform for some of the world's preeminent voices in the field of contemplative science. In 2023 at MLE, at the most general level of our programming, we chose to focus on "Caring for Life", and it is from within this perspective that we were taking up the **Gaia hypothesis as a nodal point for the Mind Matters Series**, a work we continued in 2024 as well. Perched on the ever more perilous horizon of the Anthropocene, we need more than ever to reflect critically on the precipitous disintegration of the planet's habitability, and, crucially, on our participation in this disintegration. What can our work at MLE – informed as it is by science, philosophy, and the wisdom traditions – contribute that is unique to the ongoing global conversation?

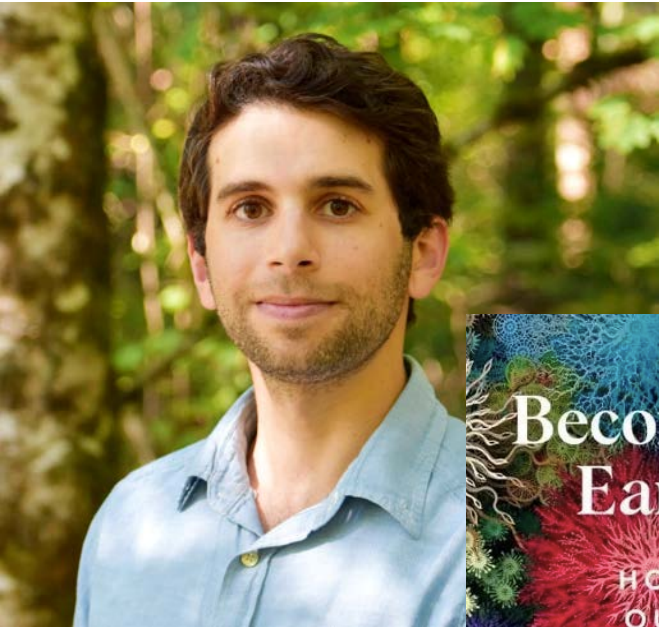
A key part of our DNA at Mind & Life Europe is the **enactive tradition which holds at its centre a view of the continuity of life and mind**. In the same way that the enactive approach posits a structural coupling between the biological processes "in here" and the manifestation of the world "out there", the Gaia hypothesis draws our attention to

Mind Matters

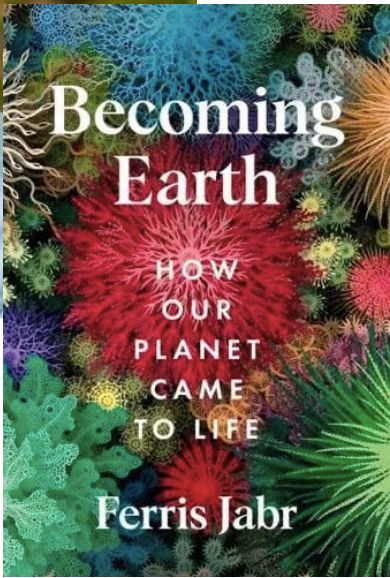
the **inextricable co-evolution of the biological (human life) and the geological (planetary life)**. If Gaia has become shorthand for a return to a pre-modern form of holism – an understanding of the **Earth as a self-regulating superorganism**, of which we humans are but one part – it has also gained tremendous momentum in the scientific community in recent years. The Gaia hypothesis offers both a coherent narrative framework and a robust scientific model – and, perhaps most importantly, it offers a way of understanding our predicament from outside of the constraints of the strictly human perspective. **"Gaian being denotes planetary solidarity"**, Professor Bruce Clarke reminded his audience in a talk delivered in 2022 at the Koldo Mitxelena Cultural Center in Donostia-San Sebastián, Spain. It is this way of being, precisely, that challenges us to **go beyond the classical narrative of being separate agents acting on a broken world**.

Mind Matters

Date	Speaker	Topic
22nd May 2024	Ferris Jabr	<u>"Becoming Earth: A Personal Journey Through the Gaia sphere"</u>
23rd October 2024	Dr Frédérique Aït-Taouti	<u>"Gaia on Stage"</u>
27th November 2024	Dr Tim Lenton	<u>"Gaia as Seen from Within"</u>



Ferris Jabr,
Science Writer



Frédérique Aït-Taouti,
Stage Director and
Science Historian

Dr Tim Lenton,
Professor of Climate
Change and Earth
System Science



MLE Friends Exclusive Webinars 2024

Periodically, Mind & Life Europe hosts **exclusive webinars** with guest speakers for members of the **MLE Friends** community.

The webinars are made up of two parts: a lecture and a Q&A. The interactive format enables *MLE Friends* in attendance to **further their understanding of key contemporary issues in the field of contemplative science and contemplative practice research.**

These exclusive events also encourage subscription to the special *MLE Friends* community.

The *MLE Friends* community was established in May 2020, and as of

September 2024, we have **100 members.**

This year, we held **5 MLE Friends webinars**, the details of which are arranged in the tables on the following pages.

MLE Friends webinar: "Enaction, relevance realisation..." with Sāgaradevī Barratt



Enaction and contemplative education

- Groundless epistemological framing – forced to ‘...confront the lack of ultimate foundations’ (Varela 1991: 233)
- Understanding of self-world that offers an alternative to dualistic assumptions
- Cognition and meaning making embedded within embodied experience
- Knowing of the world as participatory and the importance of being



Date	Speaker	Topic
15th February 2024	Prof Dr Wolf Singer	"Artificial and Natural Intelligent Systems: A Challenging Relation"
27th June 2024	Dr Sāgaradevī Barratt	"Enaction, relevance realisation and the development of wisdom-informed approaches to contemplative education"
17th October 2024	Dr Elena Antonova	"Open Presence and Compassion: How Dyads Open Up the Space Between Us"
14th November 2024	Dr Laura Candiotta	"Loving a Place That Is Dying: Environmental Love, Grief, and Hope"
5th December 2024	Dr Marek McGann	"Messy Entanglements and Ethical Orientations of Enacted Bodies"



Prof Dr Wolf Singer



Dr Sāgaradevī Barratt



Dr Elena Antonova



Dr Laura Candiotta



Dr Marek McGann

Mind & Life Europe Podcast

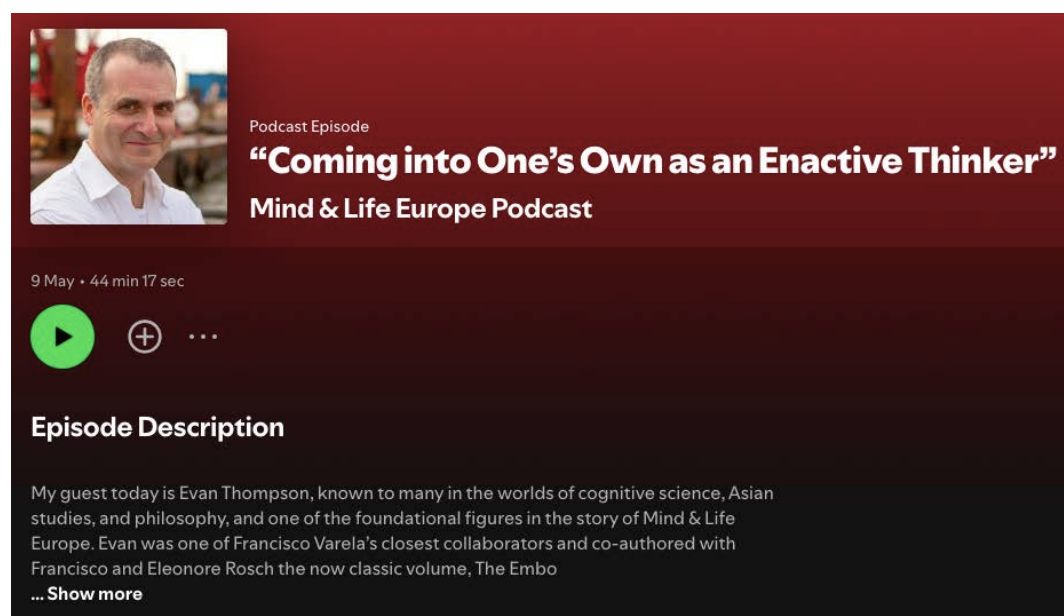
In Spring 2024, we launched **Season 1** of the **Mind & Life Europe Podcast** entitled **'Opening Up the Space Between Us'**, following our annual theme for 2024. In this season, we invited some of the key **figures from the MLE lineage** to engage in in-depth conversations that aspire as much to look back at our **historical lineage** as to look forward into the possible expressions of this work in the future.

Notably, our podcast emphasises the importance of **exploratory dialogue, radical candour, intersubjectivity, and listening as an epistemology**. Inspired by the groundbreaking work of our co-founder, the Chilean neurobiologist and philosopher Francisco Varela, these conversations are one more way of exploring what has been the lodestar for our work at Mind & Life Europe: the

continuity between mind and life, or in Francisco's own formulation, **"living as sense-making"**.

Since its launch in April 2024, there have been over 1000 downloads from listeners all over the world, from 55 countries across 6 continents.

The episodes are freely available on major Podcast platforms: [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Deezer](#) and [Acast](#).



1000+

Downloads in the first 4 months

55

Countries

6

Continents

Mind & Life Europe Podcast

Season 1 Episodes

Released on	Conversation with	Title of Episode
11th April 2024	Amy Cohen Varela (Part 1 of 3)	<u>"Not Two Minds, but One Mind"</u>
18th April 2024	Amy Cohen Varela (Part 2 of 3)	<u>"Epistemophilia: The Pleasure of the Search"</u>
25th April 2024	Amy Cohen Varela (Part 3 of 3)	<u>"Epistemology Matters"</u>
9th May 2024	Evan Thompson (Part 1 of 2)	<u>"Coming into One's Own as an Enactive Thinker"</u>
16th May 2024	Evan Thompson (Part 2 of 2)	<u>"The Blind Spot: Opening Up Our Understanding of Human Experience"</u>
6th June 2024	Michel Bitbol (Part 1 of 3)	<u>"A Community of Minds"</u>
13th June 2024	Michel Bitbol (Part 2 of 3)	<u>"(Im)mersive Epistemologies in Physics, Philosophy, and Buddhism"</u>
20th June 2024	Michel Bitbol (Part 3 of 3)	<u>"Phenomenology in the Making"</u>



Amy Cohen Varela



Prof Evan Thompson



Prof Michel Bitbol

Mind & Life Europe Podcast

Season 2 Episodes

In this **second season** of the podcast, we are prolonging an experiment of sorts that we conducted in the spring of 2024 in the [Core Enaction Programme](#), our online learning curriculum, by inviting our dialogue groups back for a second round of conversations, where we not only pick up some of the threads of their earlier dialogue, but venture further into the **moving horizons** of their thinking.

Released on	Conversation with	Title of Episode
12th December 2024	Dr Hanne De Jaegher	Episode 1: "Opening Up the Space Between Us"
19th December 2024	Dr Elena Cuffari, Dr Hanne De Jaegher, and Dr Ezequiel Di Paolo	Episode 2: "Enactive Ethics: Difference Becoming Participation"



Dr Hanne De Jaegher



Dr Elena Cuffari



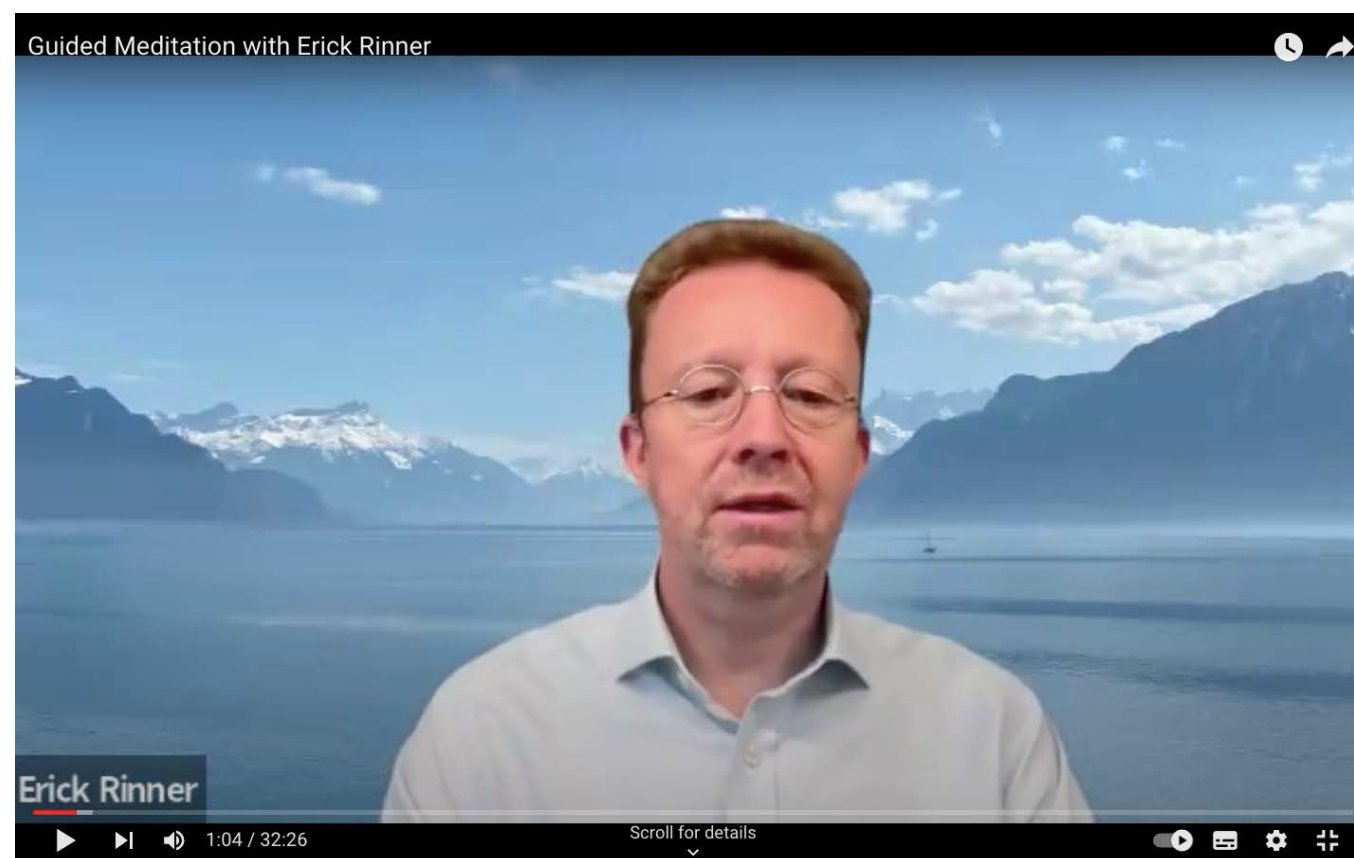
Dr Ezequiel Di Paolo

Making Room for Contemplation

As a response to the growing calls from the MLE community for contemplative spaces for the cultivation of being, we began a new initiative in 2024, **Making Room for Contemplation**. So far, we have gathered one Tuesday evening a month from April, to **carve out time and space to become silent and present as a group** and to share our experiences with each other. This is an ongoing project, which we hope will be shaped from the ground up by all those who participate.

Contemplation evokes carving out a time and a space to become silent and be present with a kind, open awareness. The busier our lives and the

bigger our responsibilities are, the more important this becomes – not to escape reality, but to be able to stand in the middle of it, with more courage, energy, creativity, freedom, and compassion.



9th July Session with Erick Rinner, MLE Board Member

The background of the slide features a warm, golden-orange sunset sky. Silhouettes of tall, thin grasses with feathery seed heads are scattered across the frame, some in sharp focus and others blurred. A semi-transparent purple rectangular box is centered horizontally and vertically, containing the text.

II. Partnership Events

Summary of Partnership Events in 2024

- 1. Land Art Event “Road to Montegrande, regarding Francisco Varela” (18th January – 18th February, Elqui Valley, Chile)**
- 2. Conference “The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism” (21st – 23rd February, University of Padova, Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, Italy)**
- 3. 8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit (7th – 19th March)**
- 4. Varela International Symposium: “Sentience and Intelligence: AI, the More-Than-Human, and Us” (24th – 26th May, Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, US, hybrid event)**
- 5. Training Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding International Programme (May – December 2024)**
- 6. Dialogue Between Scientists and Tsoknyi Rinpoche (24th – 26th May, Brussels)**
- 7. 2nd Annual “International Society for Contemplative Research” Conference (19th – 23rd June, University of Padova, Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, Italy)**

Land Art Event “Road to Montegrande, regarding Francisco Varela”

18th January - 18th February, Elqui Valley, Chile

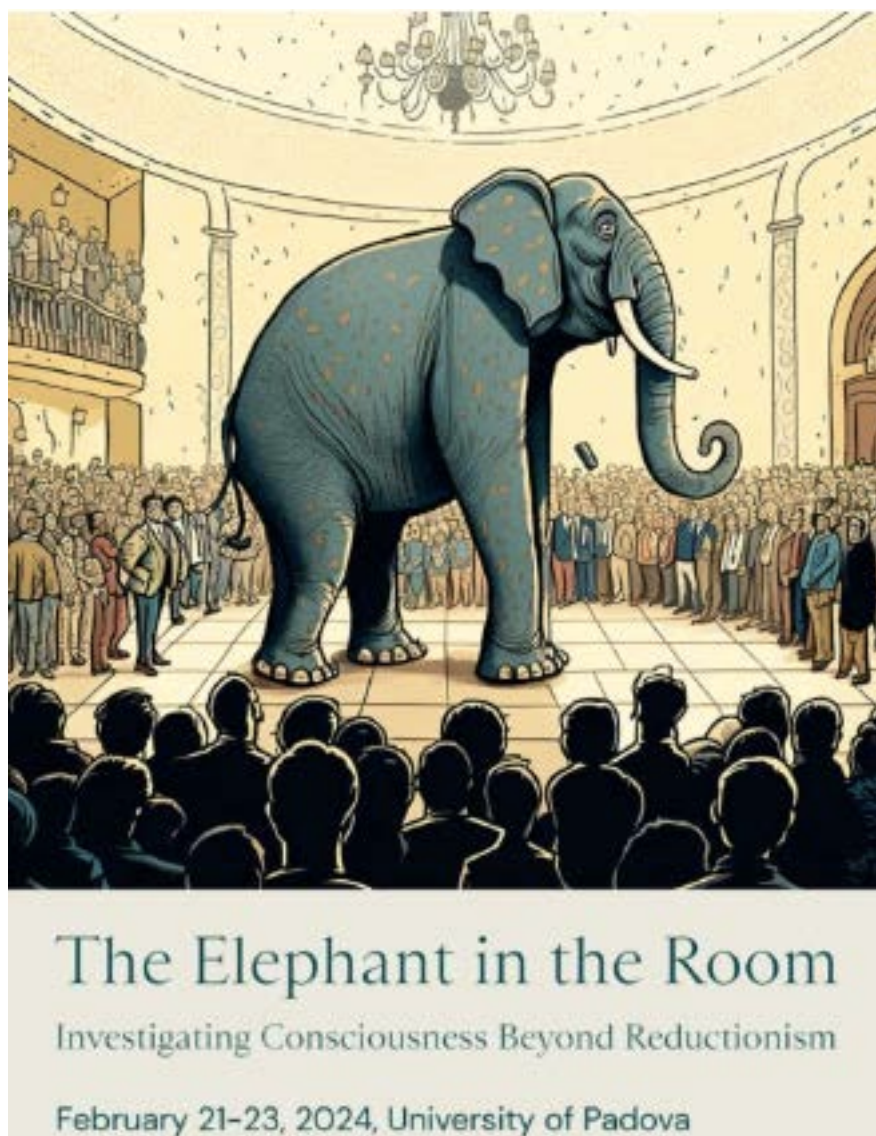
MLE was a collaborating partner of a cutting-edge **Land Art** event and scientific colloquium which took place in Montegrande, Chile from **18th January to 18th February**. These works of art, integrated into the spectacular landscape of the Andes mountains, celebrated the work of **Francisco Varela** (1956 – 2001), Chilean neurobiologist, philosopher, and Buddhist meditator, and specifically the notions of impermanence, memory, and experience. There, **art was understood as a journey, as an organic creative action that has its own spirit.**

Participants in the colloquium included MLE Board Chairperson, **Amy Cohen Varela**, along with several other esteemed collaborators of Francisco Varela.



"The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism"

21st February – 23rd February, University of Padova, Italy



MLE was a collaborating partner of an exciting conference on *"The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism"*, taking place in person at the **University of Padova**, Italy, from **21st February** to **23rd February**, organised by the Italian Buddhist Union Research Center. The conference hosted international scholars from various fields of research (including neuroscience, physics, philosophy of mind, and

contemplative research) to foster interdisciplinary collaboration regarding consciousness – one of the great unresolved mysteries of our time. Participants in the conference included MLE members, **Dr Giuseppe Pagnoni**, **Dr Steven Laureys**, **Dr Elena Antonova**, and **Dr Sebastjan Vörös**.

8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit

7th – 19th March

MLE was a partner in the **8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit**, which took place from **7th to 19th March, 2024**.

As the world moves towards system collapse, many look away, entrenching themselves in everyday normality and virtual distraction. But where the threat grows, the need for solutions also grows! **This summit encouraged us to understand how profound the change we are experiencing is;** how we can be part of the new world that is being created; and what our individual contributions can be.

With 40 outstanding speakers, amongst them MLE members, and honorary Board members, **Matthieu Ricard** and **Roshi Joan Halifax**, this free online event was deeply thought-provoking and inspired us all to 'become the change'.



Varela International Symposium 2024

“Sentience and Intelligence: AI, the More-Than-Human” and Us”

24th – 26th May, Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, US, hybrid event

Over the weekend of 24th – 26th May, we held the **Varela International Symposium** – co-organised with the Upaya Institute and Zen Center. This hybrid event was titled: ***‘Sentience and Intelligence: AI, the More-Than-Human, and Us’***. It brought together a remarkable faculty to explore cutting-edge areas of science, philosophy, and contemplative practices.

In the programme participants had the opportunity to explore the profound questions around ***‘Sentience and Intelligence’***.

Faculty Members

Onsite: Molly J. Crockett, PhD; John Dunne, PhD; Adam Frank, PhD; Roshi Joan Halifax, PhD.

Online: Kristin Andrews, PhD; Richard Davidson, PhD; Gábor Karsai; Luc Steels, PhD; Evan Thompson, PhD; Amy Cohen Varela.

The recordings are available on the MLE YouTube channel as a [playlist here](#).



Varela International Symposium 2024

Recordings

Released on	Content
25th November 2024	<u>Part 1: Intelligence and Wisdom - A Crucial Distinction</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 2: Exploration of mind, wisdom library, and the relationship between contemplative states and neural mapping.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 3: Relationship between agency, sentience, and the potential creation of suffering in AI systems.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 4: Concept of life as sensemaking and its implications for artificial intelligence (AI) and consciousness.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 5: The blind spot in science: crisis in physics and issues in quantum mechanics.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 6: Meditation beyond commodification, the transformation in neuroscience, and the importance of flourishing for ethical engagement.</u>



Organisms $\neq$ machines



Journal of Theoretical Biology
Volume 353, Issue 1, 7 March 2020, Pages 79–90

?



Universal Turing Machine
State Transition Diagram
Turing Machine Description
Infinite Tape

Closure to efficient causation,
computability and artificial life ☆

Mário Luís Cárdenas,^{a,*} João Carlos Leitão,^b Claudio Galierani,^c
Ariel Carrasch Boudon,^d R. de Jesus Soto-Andrade,^e

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Training in Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding International Programme

"Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding in Times of Polycrisis"

May – December 2024

MLE is a partner for the Training in Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding (TECTU), an interdisciplinary European Erasmus+ training programme initiated by **philosophers, computer scientists, cognitive scientists, and environmental designers, including numerous MLE members**. It offers a fresh take and novel methodologies for students and researchers to think critically and creatively, contributing to the **transformation and enrichment of the skill of critical thinking in the 21st century**. The 2024 programme was hosted by the **University of Iceland** and included an online webinar series, a summer school in Iceland, and an independent project.



Dialogue Between Scientists and Tsoknyi Rinpoche

"Radical Resilience: Embodying Fearless Compassion for Ourselves, Others, and our Planet"

24th – 26th May, Brussels, Belgium

Two MLE members, Valentine Goblet d'Alviella and Charles-Antoine Janssen **generously hosted** and co-organised a dialogue with **Tsoknyi Rinpoche** in Brussels on **24–26th May**. The event was titled ***"Radical Resilience: Embodying Fearless Compassion for Ourselves, Others, and our Planet"***. It included teachings and practices led by Tsoknyi Rinpoche, and two panels of dialogue between Rinpoche, scientists (Dr Elena Antonova, Dr Perla Kaliman, Dr Olaf Blanke, and Dr Giuseppe Pagnoni), and social activists (Sandrine Dixson-Declève, the President of Club of Rome, and Laila Martins from the Inner Development Goals) on **"Inner Awareness, the key component for global sustainability"**. The programme ended with a circle entitled **"Bringing the sacred into our work: How to engage from the inside-out to engage in life-sustaining behaviours"**. The participants (appr. 50 people) learnt, in a deeply felt way, the importance and

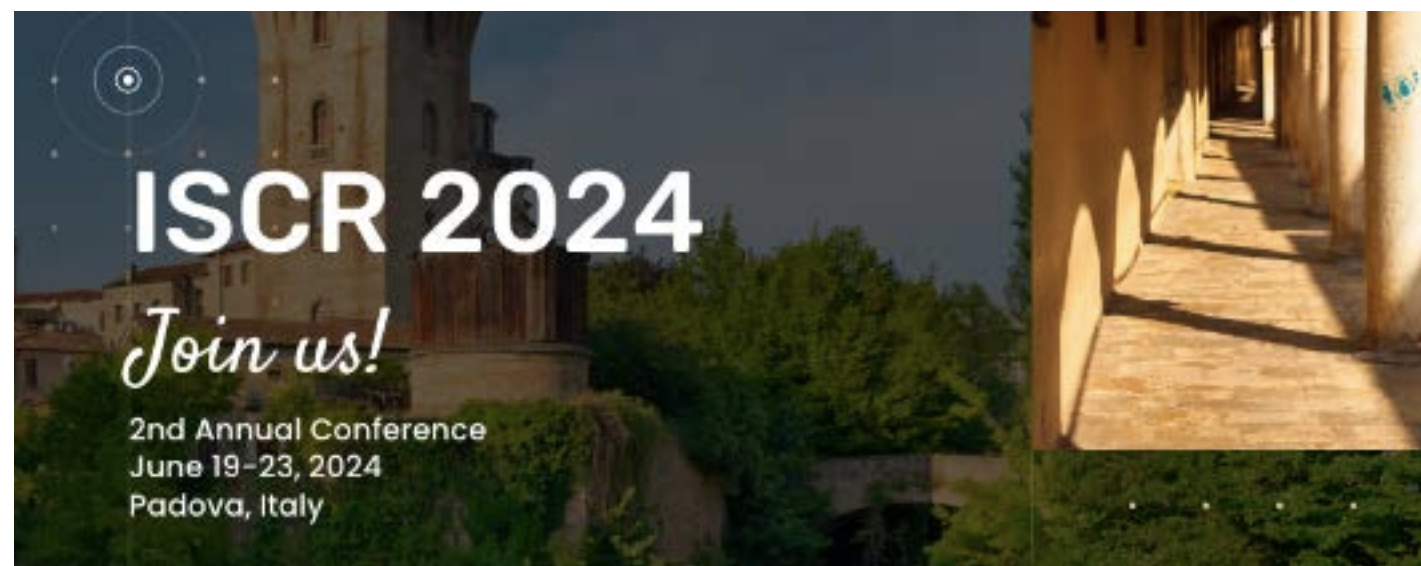
relevance of cultivating our "essence love", as Tsoknyi Rinpoche called it – that it is from this inner dimension that our resilience can take root so that **we make progress collectively, and bravely, towards life-sustaining choices and behaviours**.



2nd Annual “International Society for Contemplative Research” Conference

“Embodied Cognition and Intersubjectivity in Uncertain Times: Interdisciplinary Frameworks for Contemplative Research and Education”

19th – 23rd June, Padova, Italy



MLE was a partner of the 2nd Annual “International Society for Contemplative Research” (ISCR) conference on ***“Embodied Cognition and Intersubjectivity in Uncertain Times: Interdisciplinary Frameworks for Contemplative Research and Education”***, which took place in **Padova, Italy, from 19th to 23rd June**, co-organised by ISCR, the University of Padova, the Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, and MLE. This second annual conference with **380 participants** aimed to foster the emerging field of contemplative research through a

rich interdisciplinary dialogue that brings together clinical science, neuroscience, philosophy, religious studies, psychology, developmental science, and education, in the fully enculturated and intellectually rigorous study and integration of the profound insights of the world’s prominent contemplative traditions. Our focus was to delve together into pathways for scholarly research through emerging approaches such as **“Embodied Cognition”**.

***III. Programme
Development
2024–2025***

Summary of Programme Development in 2024–2025

1. ***“Care for Life”***– ESRI 2023–2025 **“arc theme”** development
2. ***“Opening Up the Space Between Us”***– 2024 **“MLE umbrella theme”** development
3. ***“Gaia: Gateway to the Climate Conversation”*** – Mind Matters series 2024 theme development
4. ***“Power and Care”*** – theme and sub-themes development
5. ***“Arts and Enaction”*** – theme development

“Care for Life” – ESRI Arc Theme 2023–2025

In this 3-year arc, **we aim to create sustainable conditions to promote the much-needed collaboration across disciplinary (and other) boundaries**, necessary to meaningfully address the multifaceted crises of our age. We invite perspectives from the traditional disciplines represented at MLE, such as philosophy, neuroscience, and contemplative practice, as well as from the social sciences, education, and the field of artificial intelligence, so as to nurture and deepen the dialogues already nascent between these different fields.

The overarching theme, *Care for Life* will be explored in three progressive stages:

Year 1 (2023) - *Sentience and Responsibility in Critical Times*

Year 2 (2024) - *Living in Groundlessness with Responsibility*

Year 3 (2025) - *Exploring Meaningful Ways of Living*

We aim to investigate **how we can collaboratively increase our understanding of life and the quality of our care**, so as to enact meaningful change in and around us. The theoretical questions that we will pose in this arc necessarily become ethical and embodied questions in their own right, such is the imperative of these times.

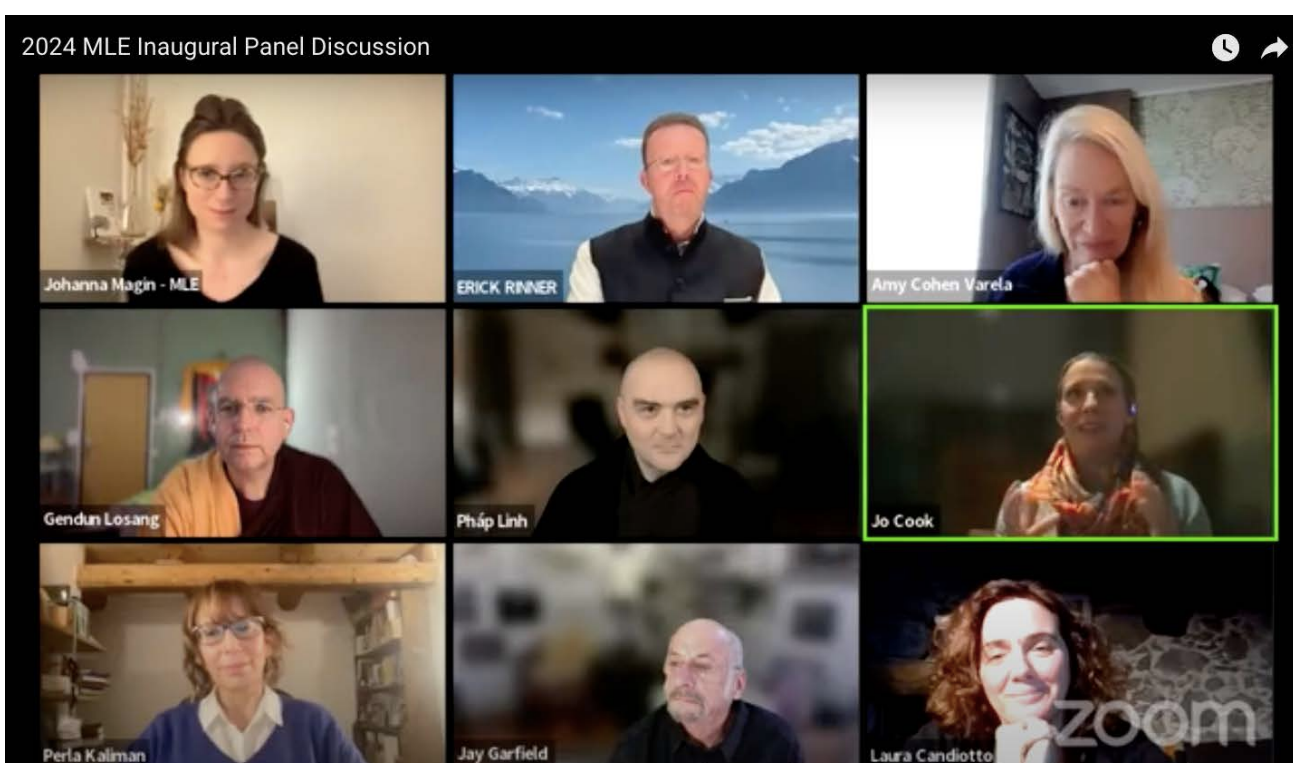


“Opening Up the Space Between Us” – 2024 MLE umbrella theme



In 2024, we have chosen to turn our attention to two of MLE’s values: “Open space” and “Seek clarity” by taking up **“Opening the Space Between Us”** as the banner theme. With this banner theme, we wish to invoke a more expansive, interconnected, and panoramic epistemology for engaging with the world, one which allows for a natural form of clarity (“Seek clarity”) to emerge. When we “open space” and “seek clarity,” what new horizons appear before us which might not otherwise have been possible?

MLE Inaugural Panel 2024: “Opening Up the Space Between Us”



More about the concept

What is implied by open space? Does it imply the absence of boundaries and edges, or is it in fact inclusive of such boundaries and edges? How might it **decentre the subject and disrupt our habitual understanding of the subject-object relationship?** How might open space help us to **interrogate and reimagine our tired narratives based on “either/or” thinking?**

How does open space relate to the notion of **groundlessness**, which figures prominently in many of the **world’s great contemplative traditions**? What does groundlessness have to teach us about the condition of life on this planet, as well as about how we live and think and work together? What does groundlessness look like when brought to bear in the field of relationality?

“Gaia: Gateway to the Climate Conversation” – Mind Matters Series 2023–2025

Conceptual Questions

The **Mind Matters series**, initiated in 2020, provides an interdisciplinary online platform for some of the world’s preeminent voices in the field of contemplative science. Last year at MLE, at the most general level of our programming, we chose to focus on “Caring for Life,” and it is from within this perspective that **we are taking up the Gaia hypothesis** as a nodal point for the Mind Matters Series.

In this series of talks, we are taking **Gaia** as our conceptual figurehead and examine – with an appropriate degree of humility – this vast topic as one would a prism, viewing it from a myriad of different angles, seeing what is reflected back, and hopefully emerging with a more nuanced appreciation of the place of the human in the wider cosmos.

“What are the implications of taking a “Gaian” perspective and considering things according to Gaian timescales?”

“What would it mean to be Gaian, not as another identity banner, but as an existential commitment to a mode of being-in-the-world?”

“How has the “more-than-human world” (David Abram) extended itself into the imaginations of philosophers and scientists? ”

“Can we elicit the “active hope” of which Joanna Macy so eloquently spoke, whereby the world can be healed through ordinary, human efforts?”

“Power and Care” 2023–2026 – theme and sub-themes

In 2016, MLE organised a dialogue with the Dalai Lama themed: **“Power and Care”** to examine the nature of these two fundamental forces, their expressions and the relationship between them.

Since then, the theme of “power and care” has cropped up over and over in our community circles and wider discussions. These include sub-themes such as:

- **Enacting Values in Academia**
- **Role of Women (and Men) in Modern Societies**
- **Money and a Caring Economy**

We are hence circling back to this theme in 2024 in order to delve further into topics which are deeply relevant to many of our lives.

More about the concept

Over the centuries, we have become very skilled as **“masters and possessors of nature”** (among other things), but have also come to see, since Descartes, that this paradigm is in itself an optical illusion, to use Einstein’s words, in that it supposes we are separate from the object at hand, be it a text, a person, or a complex system. Perhaps **we can start to conceive differently of this “drive to power”**, so endemic to the human condition, and see in it instead the very apparatus through which different forms of caring (and life) are made possible.

Today we speak of “power to” and “power with,” which would seem to be a sign of progress. But **what about the power within, around, about, and in-between?** And what about the inner life and its relation to “outer” manifestations of power? Why are so many of us inclined to look first to external factors as a way of feeling we have power over our individual lives? **How can we go beyond the classical ‘either/or’ narratives**, which presume that the problems of power reside either all ‘in here’ or all ‘out there’? **What if our way of knowing the world – itself a source of power – is tantamount to our way of caring for the world?**

“Arts and Enaction” 2023–2026 – theme development

Many artists who encounter enactive thought report experiencing something of a **homecoming**, recognising in enaction many of the principles that have implicitly been at work in their creative processes since the beginning.

Artistic practice shows us something essential about enaction from an experiential perspective:

- It prioritises a form of knowing that cannot be easily objectified: **intuitive knowing**, sometimes pre- or non-verbal knowing, knowing accessed through the ‘felt sense’.
- It posits a **fundamental circularity** between creator, creation, and experiencer.
- It enacts *par excellence*, through movement, orality, sound, and performance.

Because art is one of those rare domains in modern life that gives us **full permission to feel**, notably through our sensorimotor sensitivities, it gives us access to what has



come to be known as the **“4E” way of seeing the world**, one which is eminently **embodied, embedded, extended, and enacted**.

In the years ahead, we hope not only to consider artistic practice as a **generative, enlivening, and accessible playground for enactive thought**, but also as a means of coming into **contact with the ethical and relational dimensions of life on this planet** – a paramount concern for us at MLE.



IV. Members' Projects

Summary of Members' Projects Development in 2023–2025

1. Amy Cohen Varela: The Varela Archive
2. Dr Fabienne Picard: MLE documentary film
3. Dr Hanne De Jaegher: The Enactive Approach for the Caring Professions
4. Dr Perla Kaliman: Creation of schools sensitive to adverse childhood experiences
5. Dr Donata Schoeller: Training in Embodied Critical Understanding
6. Dr Marieke van Vugt: Tibetan nuns involved in monastic debate research
7. Ven Gendun Losang: The Buddha Project
8. Inga von Staden: Developing narrative skills for young researchers
9. Dr Laura Candiottto: Mind & Life Europe academic journal

1. Amy Cohen Varela: *The Varela Archive*

MLE has the unique responsibility to **keep Francisco Varela's legacy alive** and to facilitate the renewal of its interpretations and applications. This requires a **complete archive** of Francisco's oeuvre and the dialogues which he took part in. The materials are available in various locations, but will require a distinct and well-planned project in order to build an archive which can be made accessible to students and researchers.

Requested Funding:

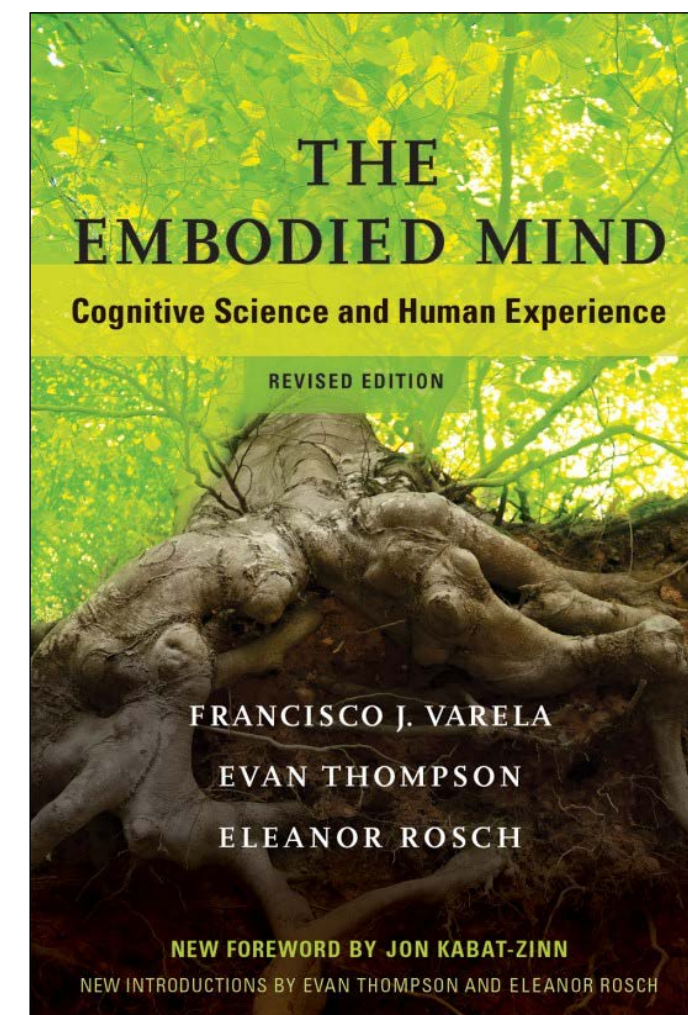
€ 15,000 in 2024 (project preparation).

Budget for 2025–2026 to be developed in the project preparation phase.

Member Bio



Amy Cohen Varela is Chairperson of the Mind & Life Europe Board and involved with Mind and Life since its inception. She is also a clinical psychologist specialised in psychodynamic therapy and philosophy.



2. Dr Fabienne Picard: MLE documentary film

One way of transmitting the spirit of MLE's community would be making a film (a documentary of high level) in which a panel of people with different backgrounds and professions could **speak about their feelings and the knowledge acquired through their direct experience of long-term meditation practice and other first-person methodologies of exploration.**

What experiences did they gain from these methods? How did practice change their vision of mind, of the world and of life? How did each of them, of originally Western culture, whether **anthropologists, philosophers, neuroscientists, physicians, artists,** etc., gain profound insights different from those taught to them since infancy? How has this been transformative regarding their actions?

Requested Funding:

€ 15,000 in 2024 (project preparation and first interviews).

Budget for 2025 to be developed in the project preparation phase.

Member Bio



Prof Fabienne Picard is a neurologist in the EEG and Epilepsy Unit of the Neurology Department at the University Hospitals of Geneva. She holds a MD degree in medical studies in Neurology as well as a Diploma of Advanced Studies (DEA) in Cellular and Molecular Biology (neurobiology) from the Faculty of Medicine of Strasbourg, France and is internationally renowned in the field of epilepsy genetics.

3. Dr Hanne De Jaegher: The Enactive Approach for the Caring Professions

The **enactive approach** is the academic study of **what it means to be a living, caring being** with distinctive foundations in **cognitive science and philosophy of mind**. This project aims to develop a precise roadmap to **teach the enactive approach to caring professionals**, and to cultivate their human understanding of care, for their own benefit as professionals and for the benefit of their clients or patients. Because **care is inherently social**, the curriculum will be based on the enactive approach to intersubjectivity and its concepts of **participatory sense-making, loving and knowing, linguistic bodies, and enactive ethics**.

Outline of the teaching programme:

- Understand the enactive concepts as they relate to the capacities that undergird care.
- Understand research findings from enactive cognitive science as they pertain to ethical social interactions.
- Implement and critically relate to enaction as a world-view, and let it inform their practice.

- Trust their human capacity to care in their professional context, based on a strong philosophical grounding of the notion of care.

Integral to the teaching will be the participants' **immersion in experiential, embodied practices** designed to gain awareness of and insight into the dynamics of interactions.

Requested Funding:

€ 150,000 for starting up in the first year.

Anticipated income in the following years from course fees: € 108,000 per year.

Member Bio



Dr Hanne De Jaegher is the leading developer of the enactive approach to intersubjectivity. She developed the concept of *participatory sense-making* with Ezequiel Di Paolo, and is co-director of Dialogica UK.

4. Dr Perla Kaliman: Creation of schools sensitive to adverse childhood experiences (from 2023 onwards)

This project is embedded within the framework of the association Dr Kaliman has recently launched for the creation of **"schools sensitive to adverse childhood experiences"** in disadvantaged areas. The mission of the association is to educate and sensitise teachers, families, and adolescents about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

The association will provide resources to educators, orient families to community support networks and help integrate a protocolised multimodal programme for adolescents in schools to prevent and overcome some of the lasting effects of ACEs. The programme for adolescents will involve mindfulness and compassion training together with other trauma-sensitive activities.

The association aims at helping interrupt intergenerational cycles of suffering through awareness, compassion and healing, using the school environment as a setting to promote ACE awareness and support. It's important to

keep in mind that, globally, 67% of the population has experienced at least one ACE, and that one in eight people have suffered more than 4 ACEs. These figures are likely to be higher in disadvantaged areas.

Requested Funding: EUR 20,000 per year (from 2023 onwards)

Member Bio



Dr Perla Kaliman is a honorary fellow at the Center for Healthy Minds (University of Wisconsin Madison) and an associate professor in Nutrition and Public Health at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, where she teaches nutrigenomics.

5. Dr Donata Schoeller: Training in Embodied Critical Understanding (from 2023 onwards)

Online workshop and winter school for university students.

Training in Embodied Critical Understanding (TECU) strives to foster critical, motivated engagement and the skill of fruitful debate by 3-year training programmes for students/researchers in which 7 universities cooperate. TECU is a European innovation of educators/researchers responding to a threefold crisis: breakthroughs of AI (chatGPT) impacting student engagement; social media echo-chambers/polarisation endangering democratic dialogue; climate change-stuckness impacting students' mental health.

TECU provides free 3-year training programmes for students/researchers. It includes a series of 12 weekly webinars/year, a summer school/year, and a mentoring phase for an independent project with which students will earn 15 ECT. In collaboration with MLE, this programme is expanded to include an online workshop and a winter school for university students across Europe.

TECU will be accompanied by a research pilot-study that measures the impact of the programme on the trainees with standardised quantitative and also qualitative research measures. Students from 7 universities are eligible to travel/accommodation grants for three summer schools.

Requested Funding: EUR 20,000 per year (from 2023 onwards)

Member Bio



Dr Donata Schoeller is a philosopher. She initiated the international research project Embodied Critical Thinking in 2018 and is currently the Academic Director of TECU (Training in Embodied Critical Understanding), an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership in Higher Education.

6. Dr Marieke van Vugt: Tibetan nuns involved in monastic debate research

Aims

- Developing the capacity of a group of nuns to do science and eventually start asking their own scientific questions.
- Learning about whether the practices of monastic debate and analytical meditation are instrumental to reducing negative affect and the ability to see things from many different angles.



Dolma Ling Nuns. Source: <https://tnp.org/nuns/dolmaling/>

The project is a **multi-year series of missions** that allows the project to develop a connection and trust with the nuns and slowly develop scientific thinking skills. Each visit would be for 3 weeks.

- **Year 1:** Introduction to science and first experiment: emotion questionnaire study.
- **Year 2:** Introduction to EEG.
- **Year 3:** Defining next questions and designing experiments to test these questions.
- **Year 4:** Conducting the experiments to test these questions.

Total requested funding: € 66,000

Member Bio



Dr Marieke van Vugt is an assistant professor at the Institute of Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Engineering (ALICE) of the University of Groningen (Netherlands).

7. Ven Gendun Losang: The Buddha Project

Vision

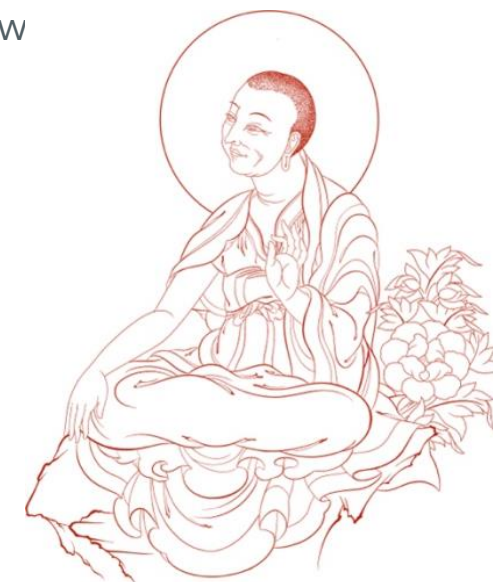
In its broadest sense the aim of the Buddha Project (TBP) is the **promotion of the examined life in the West** through:

- **Bringing together a network of dedicated meditators** and offering them comprehensive access to the full array of traditional Buddhist contemplative and meditation techniques, in a way that resonates with a Western cultural framework, provides them with sustained support, and the safety of a conducive community.
- **Collaborating with researchers in a cross-fertilising manner**, grounded in mutual respect, in order to find common language and metaphysical ground, necessary to explore how an integrated approach of the diversity of Buddhist practices informs the individual techniques and nourishes the complexity of the individual, so that a transformational path can naturally unfold.
- **Empowering practitioners, and their social and environmental engagement**, through embedding them

in an integrated and cooperative network of contemplative communities from other religious and humanistic traditions.

Courses

- A **four-year online *In-Depth Meditation Training***, revolving around the major Buddhist perspectives of Theravada, Yogacara, Madhyamaka, and Tantra.
- **Four to six annual retreats** in various locations, focused on Vipassana, Compassion, and Mahamudra.
- **The *Yogi Bootcamp***: a one-year intensive, personal meditation training with periodic instructions and individual online interview



Buddha Research Project

A conversation with two scientists, **Nicolas Pellerin and Liudmila Gamaionova**, during Mind & Life's European Summer Research Institute in 2019 led to the formulation of a new branch of TBP, the **Buddha Research Project**.

Its purpose is **to create a platform of ongoing collaboration between Western contemplatives and researchers** that promotes mutual listening and understanding, in the hope that it brings forth a innovative language, inspired by the works of Francesco Varela, that is better suited **to express not only the effects of meditation, but also the insights that it brings with regard to the nature of consciousness and reality**.

This research, which is funded by a **European Varela Award (EVA)**, will be conducted in collaboration with participants from the **Yogi Bootcamp, In- Depth Meditation Training, and retreats**.

Burning Bush Project

The purpose of this final branch of TBP, the **Burning Bush Project**, is **to promote inter-contemplative practice, rather than dialogue, both spiritually and socially engaged, humanistic and religious, through networks of friendship**. The form that this is going to take is currently being explored by Ven. Gendun in dialogue with an Orthodox Baptist bishop from Georgia, a Sufi Sheikh from Turkey, a Rabbi from France, a German Philosophy professor, and the Mind & Life Europe community.

Budget

EVA funding: €18,926

Additional funding requested to achieve longer term goals: €18,000

Member Bio



Ven Losang Gendun is a Buddhist monk of Dutch origin. For the past 15 years, he has been teaching Buddhist philosophy, psychology, and meditation in countries like the Netherlands, France, Monaco, the US, and the UK, and was the resident teacher of FPMT's Maitreya Instituut in Amsterdam for six years.

8. Inga von Staden: Developing narrative skills for young researchers

Several young academic researchers are doing audiovisual recordings as part of their research, primarily in **Visual Anthropology**. A leading figure in this area, Prof Andreas Roepstorff is on the board of MLE. There is increasing pressure coming through the research funding bodies for the research results to be disseminated in an accessible form to a broader public.

There is an inspiring interface created by MLE between (young) high-profile academics and (renowned) practitioners of contemplation. This is enhanced through seminars and workshops that open a **space of deep inner and academically profound reflection**.

Young academics are in great need of professional consultancy and support regarding the **professional planning, production and distribution of film**.

The idea is to **bring young film makers to MLE's European Summer Research Institute** to be inspired by the experience and the content of that intense week and

meet young academics working on fascinating research topics. Furthermore it could be very interesting to run small workshops on "how to film" and "the audiovisual narrative" for all stakeholders interested.

ESRI could become a **seeding ground for intersectoral work** between audiovisual narrative and academic / scientific research and thus (indirectly) disseminate the core values of both.

Requested Funding: € 10,000 in 2025 for attending ESRI (4 people, EUR 2,500 each, travel and participation fee).

Bio



Inga von Staden teaches courses on 'response-able storytelling' and facilitates human-centred change processes. Her aim is to open co-creative spaces by bringing together humanities, sciences and IT with the creative industries and arts.

9. Dr Laura Candiotta: Mind & Life Europe academic journal

There are no philosophical academic journals that have enaction at their core, but there is a growing community that would benefit from an **MLE academic journal** dedicated to furthering the **academic research on the enactive approach**.

The journal's focus should be **interdisciplinary** and specifically on the entanglement of the enactive approach, contemplative science and religious studies.

This journal would be an **online open-access journal**. This format would reduce the costs and help in the dissemination of the content.

Some universities, especially in Northern Europe, offer financial support for open-access journals by providing the online platform and the governmental agreement about open-access and copyrights.

Requested Funding: € 10,000 in 2024 to set up the editorial board (5 people) and pay their fees for one year.

Member Bio



Dr Laura Candiotta is Associate Professor in Philosophy at the Centre for Ethics of the University of Pardubice, Czech Republic. Originally from Italy, she moved to Scotland, France, and Germany in the last seven years for carrying out different research projects on the philosophy of emotions.



V. Organisational Development

Summary of Organisational Development 2024–2025

- 1. Outreach to academic programmes in Europe**
- 2. Outreach to Eastern Europe**
- 3. Communications development**
- 4. Capacity building**

1. Outreach to academic programmes in Europe

We have set up a research project to explore and promote the **extension of MLE's outreach within Europe**. This involves **connecting with universities and organisations within Europe** that offer courses, or work, within MLE's core fields of interest – contemplative science, philosophy, cognitive neuroscience, religious studies, consciousness studies, etc.

In 2023, MLE volunteer, Henok Pankhurst, carried out research on relevant institutions and universities who might be interested in our work. This led to us reaching out to **57 new leads for MLE, from 21 different countries**.

The next stage in our research will be to extend this search to Eastern Europe and

Russia, in line with MLE's Eastern European Outreach Initiative.

We are also thinking about **how this research can be used to extend MLE's outreach**, thereby reaching more (young) researchers to apply to attend the European Summer Research Institute and other MLE events, and for the European Varela Awards.



2. Eastern Europe Outreach Initiative (EEOI)

As a European association, MLE recognises that it must **extend its field of activity beyond Western Europe to Eastern Europe**, including Russia and the Baltics. This integration not only establishes MLE as a truly European organisation: it gives us a **wider and more diverse pool of connections** and potential Association members with a better geographical spread; it also increases resources for our different programmes (ENCECON, ICP, CCE, etc) whose scope should not be limited socially, economically or geographically.

Not negligible is **the Dalai Lama's sustained interest in developing contemplative science in Eastern Europe**. We envision that the EEOI will

start as a modest research and development initiative, whose goal is to explore and develop key contacts in these regions and determine their needs and interests related to contemplative studies.



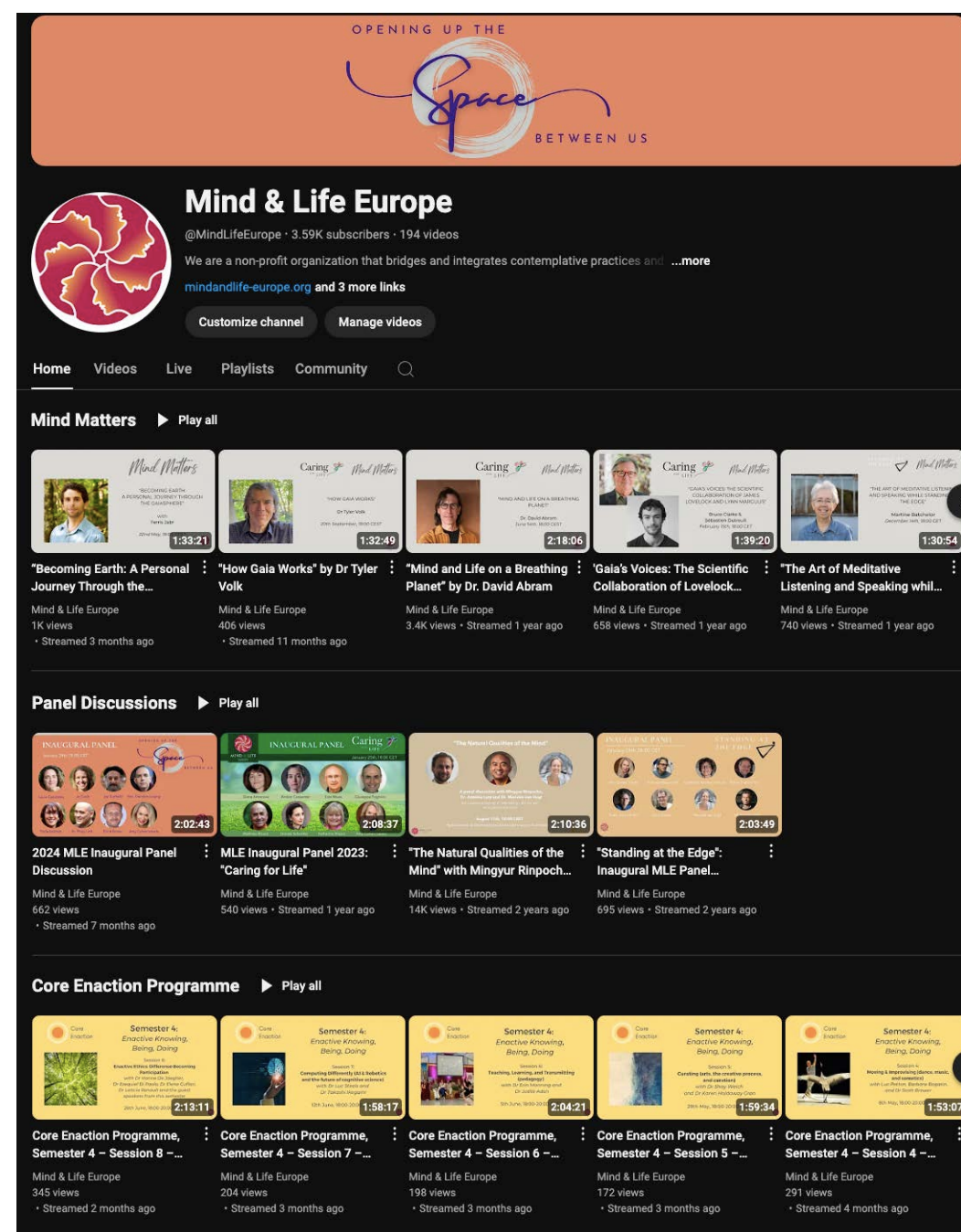
3. Communications development

A renewed emphasis on communications has been one of our top priorities since 2021. In March 2021 we **launched the MLE YouTube channel** where most of our events and webinars can now be viewed by the public.

As of December 2024, we have nearly **3,700 subscribers** and more than **150,000 total views of our content** (with appr. 200 videos), with our most popular speakers being Mingyur Rinpoche, Dr Evan Thompson, Stephen Batchelor and Dr David Abram.

We are publishing **newsletters** once or twice a month, sharing our **upcoming events** for the month and **insights into broader areas of work**, including partnerships and news from our networks.

We have also sustained the **increase in our events communication on our social media and via group newsletters** (MLE Friends, CCE, Association, etc).



MLE YouTube Channel (Sept 2024)

4. Capacity building

All the activities mentioned in this brochure require increased capacities, both in terms of team members and the financial resources needed for the development and implementation of these projects.

In May 2023 **Eugène Sandoz** joined us as Media Lead and became responsible for our media developments (podcast series, video series, conversations at ESRI & MLE Retreat, and documentary, detailed above).

We are also working with volunteers on specific areas and projects:

Luciana Longo joined us in March 2023 and has been working on curating material from our online educational programme, Core Enaction, with the eventual aim of making this rich material more widely accessible. She has created

an evolving glossary of key terms for the field of enaction, generated short and easily digestible content summaries for each class session, and started culling key insights and quotes from our line-up of guest speakers in the programme. During the ESRI 2024, Luciana was helping our Communications Manager, Meijia Ling, in events management.

Dr Ayda Duroux joined us as a volunteer in November 2023 and has been working closely with Luciana on the 'Core Enaction' material. During the ESRI 2024, she was working closely with our Programmes Manager, Dr Johanna Magin, in supporting the faculty members.

Julien Hauvuy also joined as a volunteer for the ESRI 2024 and primarily assisted our Executive Assistant, Derek Sola, in supporting the participants.

Eugène
Sandoz



Luciana
Longo



Dr Ayda
Duroux



Julien
Hauvuy



***VI. Projects to
Support
in 2024***

VI. Projects We Invite You To Support In 2024

1. Budget of Core Programmes in 2024

Core programmes in 2024	EUR
1. European Summer Research Institute (ESRI)	80 000
2. European Varela Awards (EVA) management	15 000
3. MLE Retreat for young researchers and scientists	10 000
4. Core Enaction Programme, Semester 4	15 000
5. Mind Matters webinars: "Gaia: Gateway to the Climate Conversation"	5 000
6. <i>Mind & Life Europe</i> Podcast	30 000
7. Initiative for Contemplative Phenomenology event	10 000
8. MLE Friends webinars	5 000
Total	170 000

2. Budget of Partnership Events in 2024

Partnership events in 2024	EUR
1. Land Art Event "Road to Montegrando, regarding Francisco Varela"	10 000
2. Conference "The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism"	10 000
3. 8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit	5 000
4. Varela International Symposium 2024	10 000
5. Training in Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding International Programme	5 000
6. Dialogue Between Tsoknyi Rinpoche and Scientists	5 000
7. 2nd Annual International Society for Contemplative Research Conference	40 000
Total	85 000

3. Budget of Programme Development in 2024

Programme Development in 2024	EUR
1. <i>"Care for Life"</i> – ESRI 2023-2025 "arc theme" development	15 000
2. <i>"Opening Up the Space Between Us"</i> – 2024 "MLE umbrella theme" development	15 000
3. <i>"Gaia: Gateway to the Climate Conversation"</i> – Mind Matters webinars theme development	15 000
4. <i>"Power and Care"</i> – theme and sub-themes development	15 000
5. <i>"Arts and Enaction"</i> – theme development	15 000
Total	75 000

4. Budget of Members' Projects in 2024

Members' projects in 2024	EUR
1. Amy Cohen Varela: The Varela Archive (project preparation)	15 000
2. Dr Fabienne Picard: MLE documentary film (project preparation)	15 000
3. Dr Hanne de Jaegher: The Enactive Approach for the Caring Professions	150 000
4. Dr Perla Kaliman: Creation of schools sensitive to adverse childhood experiences	20 000
5. Dr Donata Schoeller: Training in Embodied Critical Understanding	20 000
6. Dr Marieke van Vugt: Tibetan nuns involved in monastic debate research	30 000
7. Ven Gendun Losang: The Buddha Project	18 000
8. Inga von Staden: Developing narrative skills for young researchers	10 000
9. Dr Laura Candiottio: Mind & Life Europe academic journal	10 000
Total	288 000

5. Overall Budget in 2024

Overall budget in 2024	EUR
1. Core programmes in 2024	170 000
2. Partnership events in 2024	85 000
3. Programme development in 2024	75 000
4. Members' projects in 2024	288 000
5. Organisational development in 2024	50 000
6. Administration in 2024	50 000
7. Projects management in 2024	100 000
Total	818 000



Our Association and the small team of five people managing the programmes and operations of MLE **covered many major projects** in 2024. Based on a detailed calculation of the time which all these projects required this year, **we divided the budget of 2024 into the main sections of Core Programmes, Partnership Events, Programme Development and Members' Projects** (as detailed in the tables above).

All these projects, both the external, publicity-driven ones, and the internal, developmental types **are equally important** for the longer-term stability and growth of MLE.

Your support is invaluable. We are grateful in advance for any contribution you may be inspired to make.

Amy Cohen Varela,
MLE Board Chairperson

Gabor Karsai,
Managing Director of MLE

VII. How Can You Support Us?

IT'S MUCH NEEDED

Should you wish to support us, **you may designate your contribution to any of our projects**, or it may be marked as undesignated, in which case we will allocate your funding based on the specific needs of the projects in 2024/25.

If you are interested and would like to **receive more information**, please send an email to Gábor Karsai, Managing Director of MLE, at gabor.karsai@mindandlife-europe.org.

We would be happy to **arrange a call** to discuss your support further and answer any questions you may have.

Tax-deductible donations are welcome to the following Swiss bank accounts:



Mind and Life Europe

Zürcher Kantonalbank (Bahnhofstrasse 9, 8001 Zurich)
BIC/Swift: ZKBKCHZZ80A

CHF: IBAN CH44 0070 0110 0012 4365 0

EUR: IBAN CH37 0070 0130 0006 8718 9

USD: IBAN CH15 0070 0130 0006 8719 7

An aerial photograph of a rocky coastline. The ocean is a vibrant turquoise color, with white, frothy waves crashing over dark, jagged rocks. The rocks are scattered across the frame, creating a dynamic and textured scene. The water's surface is covered in intricate patterns of white foam and deep blue-green hues.

VII. Our People

Board Members



AMY COHEN VARELA
Board Chair
France



MARTIJN VAN BEEK
Denmark



LESLIE DE GALBERT
France



GÁBOR KARSAI
Hungary



ERICK RINNER
Luxembourg



ANDREAS ROEPSTORFF
Denmark



DONATA SCHOELLER
Germany



FATHER FRANCIS TISO
Italy

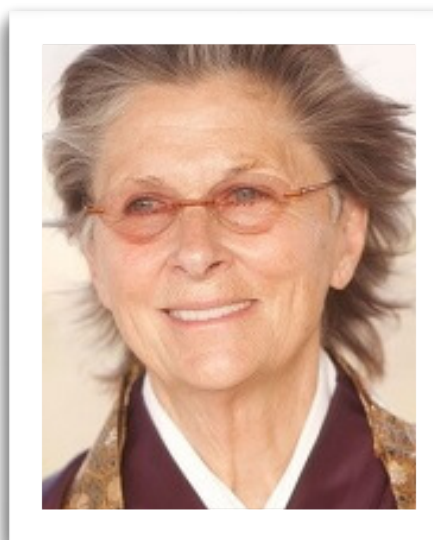


MARIEKE VAN VUGT
Netherlands

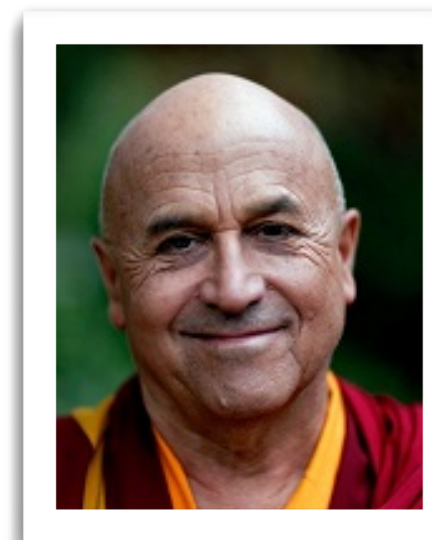
Honorary Board Members



CHARLES-ANTOINE JANSSEN
Belgium



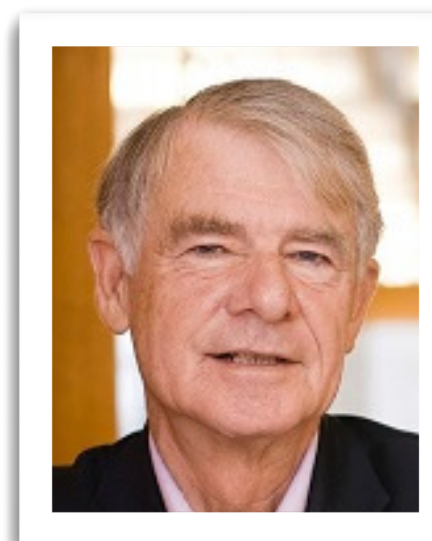
ROSHI JOAN HALIFAX
USA



MATTHIEU RICARD
France



TANIA SINGER
Germany



WOLF SINGER
Germany

Staff Members



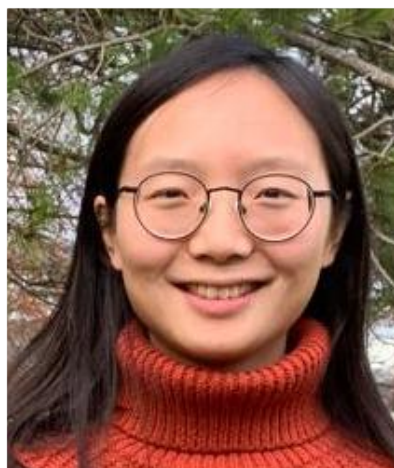
GÁBOR KARSAI
Managing Director



JOHANNA MAGIN
*Community and Programs
Manager*



DEREK SOLA
Executive Assistant



MEIJIA LING
Communications and Events Manager



EUGÈNE SANDOZ
Media Lead

MIND & LIFE EUROPE

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