



MIND & LIFE
EUROPE

Activity Report 2025



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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

Leveling boundaries between disciplines, Mind & Life Europe facilitates **generative encounters** that encourage an ongoing circulation 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.

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The tree trunks are dark and textured, radiating from the bottom corners towards the top center. The foliage is a mix of green and yellow-green, with sunlight filtering through the canopy. A small patch of clear blue sky is visible at the top. A semi-transparent magenta rectangle is centered over the image, containing the title text.

I. Core Programmes

Why Support MLE?

TO HELP US FACILITATE COLLECTIVE SENSE-MAKING WITH TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

Envisioned jointly by the **Dalai Lama and Francisco Varela** at the first Mind & Life Dialogue in 1987, our lodestar is a shared vision of a new field of dialogue between 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.



Summary of Core Programmes in 2025

1. European Summer Research Institute (ESRI)
2. Mind & Life Europe Retreat
3. European Varela Awards (EVA)
4. ENCECON Workshop
5. Mind Matters Talks
6. MLE Friends Exclusive Webinars
7. Arts & Enaction Events
8. Mind & Life Europe Podcast
9. Making Room for Contemplation Sessions



European Summer Research Institute (ESRI)

The European Summer Research Institute (ESRI) is our **flagship** event bringing together around 140 researchers, scientists, educators, practitioners, artists, and contemplatives across diverse fields. 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 2025

“DOWN TO EARTH: EXPLORING MEANINGFUL WAYS OF LIVING, TOGETHER”

27th–31st July at Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, Austria, supported by the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union.

This year marked the **final year in a three-year thematic arc, “Caring for Life”**, which aimed 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**”. In year 2, we turned toward “**Living in Groundlessness with Uncertainty**”. This year, we turned to the ethical, embodied, and relational implications of these inquiries – integrating the theoretical perspectives of past years with the concrete realities of how we live and respond. Embracing a theor-ethical approach, we explored how knowing and being are intertwined, and how we might live responsibly within the worlds we help shape. This allowed participants to:

- reflect on the interplay between knowing and ethical action;
- explore creative, sustainable responses to today’s challenges through diverse perspectives;
- examine how care for life can be practiced in community, education, research, and daily life;
- and consider how cross-disciplinary dialogue might offer more flexible ways of engaging with complexity.



5 days



27 countries



140 participants

European Summer Research Institute 2025

FACULTY MEMBERS



*Dr Sāgaradevī
Barratt*



*Dr Catherine
Bastien-
Ventura*



*Prof Martijn
van Beek*



*Barbara
Bogatin*



*Prof Laura
Candiotto*



*Dr Hanne De
Jaegher*



*Prof John
Dunne*



*Dr Enara
García*



*Karen
Grøn*



*Hsuan-Hsiu
Hung*



*Dr Raphaële
Jeune*



*Dr Kilian
Jörg*



*Dr Edel
Maex*



*Dr Marek
McGann*



*Prof Alva
Noë*



*Prof Andreas
Roepstorff*



*Dr Fernando
Rosas*



*Prof Cliff
Saron*



*Erric
Solomon*



*Prof Evan
Thompson*



*Dr Sébastien
Treyer*



*Prof Rebecca
Todd*



*Prof Marieke
van Vugt*

European Summer Research Institute 2024

VIDEO SERIES: “CONVERSATIONS AT ESRI 2024”



Dr Fernando Rosas and Dr Urban Kordeš

8th March 2025



Conversations at ESRI 2024
Naïssam Jalal

Naïssam Jalal

16th April 2025



Conversations at ESRI 2024
Prof Jennifer Branlat & Prof Miriam Kyselo

Prof Jennifer Branlat & Prof Miriam Kyselo

13th June 2025

Mind & Life Europe 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 2025 MLE ESRI theme, ***“Down to Earth: Exploring Meaningful Ways of Living, Together”***, participants explored how contemplative practice might more intimately inform our ways of relating to the world(s) at hand. What alternative pathways open up when we approach these worlds with a mind of inquiry and a capacious heart? How can we set robust aspirations for ourselves while still remaining “down-to-earth” in our expectations? What might it look like to live together meaningfully in a world in which we are witnessing increasing fragmentation and polarisation? How do we form a reliable sense of meaning when the grounds beneath us feel volatile and precarious? The retreat included **silent and guided meditations**, reflections, dialogical exercises, journaling, microphenomenological methods, and gentle movement practices.



Mind & Life Europe Retreat 2025

“DOWN TO EARTH: EXPLORING MEANINGFUL WAYS OF LIVING, TOGETHER”

23rd–25th July at Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, Austria

This **3 day in-person retreat**, connected to the European Summer Research Institute 2025, took place at the **Rangjung Yeshe Gomde Center** in Austria, from **23rd–25th July 2025**, and was supported by the **Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union**.

This year, inspired by the 2025 MLE ESRI theme, “**Down to Earth: Exploring Meaningful Ways of Living, Together**”, participants explored how contemplative practice can be brought more fully into the brambles of our everyday lives, and how it might more intimately inform our ways of relating to the world(s) at hand. 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).



Dr Martijn van Beek



Dr Marieke van Vugt



3 days



22 countries



48 participants

Grant Giving: European Varela Awards (EVA)

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 2025

IMPACT

Since 2014, the European Varela Awards at Mind & Life Europe has supported **65 projects** with a total of just over **€989,000 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. Also, MLE offers the opportunity for our EVA awardees to present their work for MLE's community. **Grants of up to €23,500** have been awarded annually through a competitive application and selection process, thanks to the generosity of MLE's Varela Awards donor.

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.



**11 Award
cycles**



**65 projects
funded**



**€989,000 awarded
since 2014**

2024 EVA recipients and their research projects



Rémi Thériault, New York University, USA.

“Reading Books Changes Lives: Investigating the Effects of Popular Psychology Books on Prosociality and Polarization”

Katrin Heimann, Aarhus University, Denmark.

“Investigating and enhancing the neuroinclusivity of micro-phenomenology”



European Neurophenomenology, Contemplative and Embodied Cognition Network (ENCECON)

This network brings together **European scientists** engaged in **embodied cognition, contemplative neuroscience, and neurophenomenology** to address the theoretical and methodological challenges hampering the empirical investigation of experience, its relationship to brain and body, and its potential for well-being, through the integration of rigorous first-person methodologies with third-person empirical approaches. The initial meeting (June 2016) explored the role of the brain resting state in meditation, the role of the body in meditation, and neuro-phenomenology. The second (June 2019) delved into the similarities and differences in phenomenology and the neural dynamics of meditation, hypnosis, trance and psychedelics. Together, these meetings highlighted the need for a **radical paradigmatic shift rather than attempts to integrate neuro-phenomenology within the mainstream cognitive neuroscience paradigm.**

The third workshop, *"Towards a Paradigm Shift"* therefore convened an interdisciplinary team of scholars from neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, physics, medicine, and contemplation to reimagine consciousness beyond reductive materialism. Its mission was to promote rigorous dialogue, challenge long-held assumptions, and develop approaches capable of **addressing consciousness-related questions that lie beyond the scope of the current paradigm.** Through open exchange, experiential sharing, and collaborative research, we sought to articulate new models, frameworks, and methodologies that **better reflect the complexities of human experience, perception, and awareness.**



ENCECON WORKSHOP 2025

“TOWARDS A PARADIGM SHIFT”

10th–14th September 2025 at Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, Austria

The third ENCECON workshop took place at the Rangjung Yeshe Gomde Center in Austria on **10th–14th September 2025** and was supported by the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union.



It brought together an interdisciplinary team of scholars from neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, physics, medicine, and contemplation to collectively reimagine consciousness **beyond the confines of the reductive materialist framework**. Each day began with a brief presentation by participants of their work relevant to the key themes of the workshop, allowing ample time for theoretical discussions, methodological brain storming sessions, and first-hand explorations of consciousness.

As a central outcome, this workshop sought to produce a **comprehensive white paper** synthesising key insights from each discipline, similar to the second ENCECON workshop's publication in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. This document formulated a new paradigm, its epistemic and ontological tenets, and proposed methodology to guide future research in the field of consciousness studies powered by forward-thinking vision. This goal of catalysing a paradigm shift is integral not only to enriching academic discourse but to transforming our collective view of ourselves as well as our relationships with each other and our planet.



5 days



14. countries



31 participants

Mind Matters Talks 2025

The logo for Mind Matters, featuring the words "Mind Matters" in a stylized, handwritten-style font. The text is white and is set against a dark grey rectangular background.

“ARTS AND AESTHETICS IN THE ENACTIVE FOLD”

Since 2020, the Mind Matters Series has provided an interdisciplinary online platform for some of the world’s **preeminent voices in the field of contemplative science**. In 2025 at MLE, at the most general level of our programming, we turned our attention to “*Relating to the World(s) at Hand*”, recognising our nature as embedded and embodied beings and exploring our ongoing entanglement with the world. It is within this frame that we adopted “*Arts and Aesthetics in the Enactive Fold*” as a central focus for this year’s Mind Matters series.

Aesthetic experience permeates nearly every dimension of human life: the ethical, the introspective, the relational, the concrete. To navigate this world as a sentient being, in some sense, is to understand oneself as an aesthetic creature, and thus as embedded in a life full of feeling. Many artists who encounter enactive thought report experiencing something of a homecoming, recognising in enaction **principles that have implicitly guided their creative processes** from the beginning. Art itself can be said to enact many of the finer points of enactive theory, whose central tenet holds that “*cognition is not representation of a pre-given world by a pre-given mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs.*” (The Embodied Mind, 2017, p. 9). Artistic practice reveals something essential about enaction from an experiential perspective, while also intimating an **epistemological framework emphasising listening, circularity, complexity, valence, and sense-making**. Considering arts and aesthetics as woven throughout the enactive fold invites us to engage them not as ornament or afterthought, but as a generative space for enactive inquiry and as a way of coming into deeper contact with the ethical and relational dimensions of life on this planet.

Mind Matters Talks 2025

“ARTS AND AESTHETICS IN THE ENACTIVE FOLD”

Date	Speaker	Topic
5 th March 2025	Jane Hirshfield	<u>“One Continuous Enactment”: Poetry as a Way of Being in the World</u>
30 th April 2025	Dr Stephen Nachmanovitch	<u>“Mind & Life are Playing, Creating, Improvising (even in times of terror)”</u>
24 th September 2025	Stephen Batchelor	<u>“Imagination, Creativity and Art”</u>
12 th November 2025	Matthieu Ricard, PhD	<u>“Painting with Light”</u>



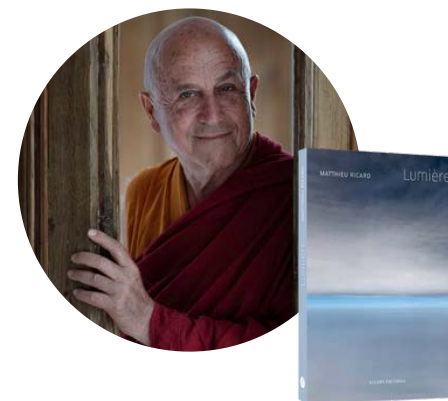
Jane Hirshfield,
poet, essayist



Dr Stephen Nachmanovitch,
improvisational
violinist & writer



Stephen Batchelor,
Buddhist writer
& translator



Matthieu Ricard, PhD
writer & photographer

Arts & Enaction Events 2025



“ARTS AND AESTHETICS IN THE ENACTIVE FOLD”

In parallel with this year’s Mind Matters Talks, and as part of our ongoing inquiry into “Arts & Aesthetics in the Enactive Fold”, we launched a new space for intellectual and creative exchange initially led by Prof Alva Noë, a central figure in enactive philosophy.

Through a series of live encounters with renowned artists and creators from around the globe, this series opened a dialogical arena for thinking through questions of process, praxis, and the philosophies that drive artists’ creative endeavours.

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.

Arts & Enaction Events 2025

“ARTS AND AESTHETICS IN THE ENACTIVE FOLD”

Date	Speaker	Topic
28 th May 2025	Fabrice Mazliah	<u><i>Installment #1</i></u>
29 th July 2025	Jonathan Burrows	<u><i>Installment #2</i></u>
17 th December 2025	Louwrien Wijers	<u><i>Installment #3 in partnership with the Fries Museum</i></u>



Fabrice Mazliah,
choreographer & dancer



Jonathan Burrows,
choreographer & dancer



Louwrien Wijers,
artist & writer

MLE Friends Exclusive Events 2025



Mind & Life Europe also offers a series of **exclusive, interactive online events** for members of the **MLE Friends** community. These gatherings feature leading voices from our MLE Association and (Honorary) Board, who share insights at the forefront of contemplative science and contemplative practice research.

Each **webinar** includes a one-hour talk followed by a 30-minute live Q&A session. This dynamic format enables MLE Friends in attendance to **further their understanding of key contemporary issues in the field of contemplative science and contemplative practice research** through engaging directly with experts and connecting with like-minded community members. In addition to webinars, we also host **special book launches** with guest authors, offering an intimate space to explore new ideas and emerging scholarship.

The MLE Friends community was founded in May 2020 and continues to grow steadily. As of December 2025, it brings together 401 members from across Europe and beyond. This year, we hosted five MLE Friends webinars and one book launch—further strengthening the value and vibrancy of this unique community.

**BECOME AN MLE
FRIEND HERE!**



MLE Friends Exclusive Webinars & Book Launches 2025

Date	Speaker	Topic
6 th February 2025	Venerable Losang Gendun	<u><i>"Participatory Sense-Making in a World on Edge"</i></u>
20 th March 2025	Dr Olga Klimecki	<u><i>"Novel Approaches to Conflict Resolution"</i></u>
22 nd May 2025	Br Pháp Linh	<u><i>"The Art of Unknowing"</i></u>
29 th October 2025	Prof Jay Garfield & Ven Losang Gendun	<u><i>MLE Friends Book Launch</i></u>
27 th November 2025	Dr Fernando Rosas	<u><i>"Towards a non-reductionist science and a scientific understanding of emergence"</i></u>
11 th November 2025	Dr Enara García	<u><i>"An Enactive Approach to Psychotherapy: Process, Vulnerability, and Power"</i></u>



Ven Losang Gendun
Tibetan Buddhist
monk



Dr Olga Klimecki,
neuroscientist &
psychologist



Br Pháp Linh,
Zen Buddhist monk &
musician



Prof Jay Garfield,
Buddhist philosopher
& scholar



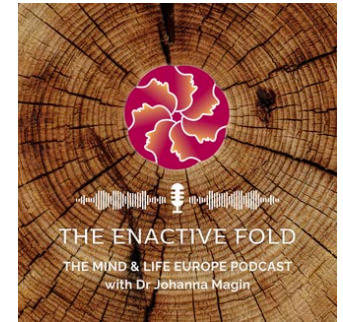
Dr Fernando Rosas,
lecturer & honorary
research fellow



Dr Enara García,
lecturer & post-
doctoral researcher

The Enactive Fold: The Mind & Life Europe Podcast

CORE ENACTION / “ARTS & AESTHETICS IN THE ENACTIVE FOLD”



In Spring 2024, we launched the Mind & Life Europe Podcast with **Season 1: “Opening Up the Space Between Us”**, reflecting our annual theme and inviting key figures from the MLE lineage to explore both our historical roots and the evolving horizons of our work.

This was followed by **Season 2: “Knowing, Being, Doing”**, which continued into 2025 and deepened an experiment within our Core Enaction programme: bringing our dialogue groups back for a second round of conversations to trace earlier threads and follow the moving edges of their thinking.

In November 2025, we launched **Season 3**, newly reframed as part of Mind & Life Europe’s broader evolution: an invitation to explore **what it means to live and create *within* the enactive fold**. This season continues our mission to understand life, mind, and experience through scientific, philosophical, contemplative, and artistic **approaches that go beyond orthodox mind science** and foreground embodiment, embeddedness, complexity, emergence, relationality, and the ethical dimensions of sense-making. In alignment with this year’s banner theme, “*Arts and Aesthetics in the Enactive Fold*”, many of our guests were **practising artists or otherwise deeply involved in creative processes**, opening new ways of understanding how artistic practice can reveal, and even enact, the continuity between life and mind.

Since its launch in 2024, the Mind & Life Europe Podcast has reached **nearly 6000 downloads from 37 countries** worldwide. All episodes remain freely available on major Podcast platforms: [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Deezer](#) and [Acast](#).

The Enactive Fold: The Mind & Life Europe Podcast

SEASON 2 EPISODES

Released on	In conversation with	Episode Title
23 rd January 2025	Allison Leigh Holt, Jonny Drury, & Dr Hanne De Jaegher	<i>"Atopos: Neurodiversity & the Power of Participatory Sense-Making"</i>
30 th January 2025	Amy Cohen Varela, Dr Rika Preiser & Dr Sanneke De Haan	<i>"Beyond Healing: New Narratives for Making Sense Together"</i>
13 th February 2025	Dr Luc Steels & Dr Takashi Ikegami	<i>"An Enactive AI? Computing and Sense-Making Beyond the Data-Driven Approach"</i>
13 th March 2025	Erin Manning and Joëlle Aden	<i>"Learning Laterally: Unsettling the Normative Gestures of Pedagogy"</i>
17 th April 2025	Barbara Bogatin, Luc Petton, Dr Scott Brewer & Dr Letícia Renault	<i>"Knowing-in-Connection: Improvisation as Praxis for Life and Art"</i>
15 th May 2025	Prof Shay Welch	<i>"The Somatic Dance: Curating a Life in the Midst of Breakdown"</i>



The Enactive Fold: The Mind & Life Europe Podcast

SEASON 3 EPISODES

Released on	In conversation with	Episode Title
20 th November 2025	Jane Hirshfield	<i><u>"Ambush of Amazement": Ethics, Meaning, and Music</u></i>
18 th December 2025	Karen Grøn	<i>"Spaces of Aspiration: Unfolding the Potential of the Modern Museum"</i>



Jane Hirshfield,
poet, essayist &
translator



Karen Grøn,
museum director &
curator

Making Room for Contemplation



In response to the growing calls from the MLE and ESRI community for **contemplative spaces for the cultivation of being and connection**, we began a new initiative in 2024, Making Room for Contemplation.

We have continued to gather one Tuesday evening every month, to carve out time and space to become silent and present as a group and to share our experiences with each other. These sessions have been **loosely guided** by various contemplative teachers, such as **Dr Edel Maex**, and **Erick Rinner**, so as to focus on the community and participants themselves than a dedicated teacher. It is an ongoing project which we hope will continue to be shaped from the ground up by all those who participate.

In these extremely challenging times, making the time for contemplation and community is essential for our well-being. **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.



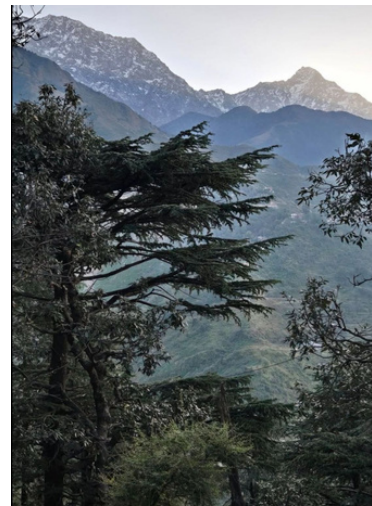
A close-up photograph of a forest floor covered in moss and small mushrooms. The background is a soft-focus forest with warm, golden-brown light filtering through the trees. A semi-transparent magenta rectangular box is centered in the upper half of the image, containing the text 'II. Partnership Events' in a bold, orange, italicized sans-serif font.

II. Partnership Events

Summary of Partnership Events in 2025

1. 9th Pioneers of Change Online Summit

2. Mind & Life Dialogue XXXIX: Minds, Artificial Intelligence, and Ethics



9th Pioneers of Change Online Summit

13th–25th March 2025

MLE was a partner for the **9th Pioneers of Change Online Summit**, which took place from 13th to 25th March, 2025.

At a time when our world is under immense pressure – and many of us feel that same strain – the summit offered a space to reflect on the possibilities that emerge when the old makes way for the new. It invited us to ask: How can we find orientation and direction in turbulent times? How do we access inner regenerative strength amidst challenge? And how might we strengthen and develop regeneration in the world?

With **30 outstanding speakers**, including friends of MLE, **Dr Jack Kornfield**, and **Dr Kristin Neff**, this deeply inspiring event reminded us of our capacity to ‘become the change’.

The summit was held in German, with eight interviews conducted in English.



Mind & Life Dialogue XXXIX

“MINDS, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND ETHICS”

14th–16th October 2025 at Dalai Lama Library & Archives

Mind & Life Europe grew out of a **rich legacy of interdisciplinary dialogue**, most notably between our co-founders, the **neurobiologist Francisco J. Varela** and the **14th Dalai Lama**.

In its **39th year**, the Mind & Life Dialogues continued on the **14th to 16th October 2025** in the **Dalai Lama Library and Archives** in Dharamsala, India, with a remarkable three-day event that reflected both critically and capaciously on this **new era of artificial intelligence (AI)**. The nature of mind has always been at the centre of our inquiry at MLE, and this event was no less an occasion to probe the ontological, epistemological, and ethical implications of a world in which living minds are increasingly confronted with complex, “life-like” technologies such as AI and LLMs.

Organised in collaboration with the Mind & Life Institute and The Dalai Lama Trust, and generously supported by the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union, this event brought together **20 presenters** representing more than 15 institutions worldwide—including leading scientists, scholars, contemplative practitioners, business leaders, and policymakers. Together, they explored the nature of the human mind as a foundation for considering five interwoven themes: minds, (dis)entanglement and meaningful relationships, collective narratives and possible futures, diversity and ethics, and education.



Mind & Life Dialogue XXXIX

CONTINUED EDUCATIONAL EXPLORATION

This landmark event was **livestreamed globally on Youtube**, accompanied by a series of **session summaries** that distilled the core insights, questions, and tensions raised by each presenter.

Short videos of the panel discussions and presentations also continue to circulate across our platforms, extending the conversations beyond Dharamsala and offering our community accessible points of entry into the complex intersections of mind, technology, and ethics. Building on the momentum of the Dialogues, MLE has initiated further explorations into AI and other complex systems—not only through public communications, but through a number of evolving internal conversations and emerging project ideas. As we look ahead, this topic will form a central part of our board discussions in mid-January, where we will consider a **broader strategic vision for MLE's engagement with AI, its global implications, and its resonance with our longstanding commitment to understanding mind and life** in their full relational, ethical, and contemplative depth.



*III. Programme
Development
2025—2026*

Summary of Programme Development in 2025-2026

1. “Caring for Life”: 2023–2025 ESRI thematic arc
2. ”Relating to the World(s) at Hand” – 2025 MLE umbrella theme
3. “Arts and Aesthetics in the Enactive Fold” – Mind Matters and Arts & Enaction 2025 theme
4. “Power and Care” – 2026 MLE umbrella theme



“Caring for Life”

2023–2025 ESRI THEMATIC ARC

This year marked the **final chapter of our three-year thematic arc**, “Caring for Life”, which sought 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”*. In year 2, we turned toward *“Living in Groundlessness with Uncertainty”*, reflecting on how meaning arises from ground/lessness, and how it informs our sense of ethics and being-in-the-world.

In 2025, we turned to the **ethical, embodied, and relational implications** of these inquiries — integrating the **theoretical perspectives of past years with the concrete realities of how we live and respond**. Embracing a theoretical approach, we explored how knowing and being are intertwined, and **how we might live responsibly** within the worlds we help shape.

As a whole, our aim was to **cultivate sustainable conditions** for the kind of **cross-disciplinary collaboration** required to meaningfully address the multi-faceted crises of our age. To that end, we invited perspectives not only from MLE’s longstanding pillars—philosophy, neuroscience, and contemplative practice—but also from the social sciences, education, art and the field of artificial intelligence, so as to nurture and deepen the dialogues already nascent between these different fields.

“Relating to the World(s) at Hand”

2025 MLE UMBRELLA THEME



In 2025, we turned our attention to one of MLE’s new values: “*Relate to the World at Hand*” by taking up “**Relating to the World(s) at Hand**” as the banner theme. With this banner theme, we recognise our nature as embedded and embodied beings and seek ways to discover the localised nature of our agency and explore how can we live in a way that honours the imminence of the world and our entanglement with it.

More about the concept

We live in a moment when **many feel beleaguered and ill-equipped to countenance the world** as it appears before us. Considering climate change, political polarisation, or social inequality, poverty, war, or mass migration, the weaponisation of technology, or addictive consumerism, most of us would agree that **none of these challenges can be solved by the individual alone**. Nor were they meant to be. Yet we are still called to relate to them. Being embedded and embodied beings, we need to acknowledge, on one level, the very **localised nature of our agency**, and seek ways to relate to what is already ‘at hand’ in the conventional sense. But what if we were to nuance the above and question the very premise of a world existing ‘out there,’ as separate from the lone self ‘in here’. If we take the ‘view from within’ — an enactive, organism-centred perspective — things begin to look quite different. We begin to see that self and world are co-constructed and co-evolving. **Because of our intimate entanglement with the world, the world is in some sense always, already at hand**, particularly if we understand the processes that make self and other possible as in-between and all around (E. A. Di Paolo).

“Arts and Aesthetics in the Enactive Fold”

MIND MATTERS AND ARTS & ENACTION THEME

Aesthetic experience permeates every dimension of human life: the ethical, the introspective, the relational, the concrete. To navigate this world as a sentient being is to recognise onself as an aesthetic creature and thus as embedded in a life full of feeling.

Many artists who encounter enactive thought describe a sense of homecoming, recognising **principles that have implicitly guided their creative processes** from the beginning. Art itself enacts core enactive ideas, whose central tenet holds that cognition is not the representation of pregiven world by a pregiven mind, but the enactment of both world and mind through a history of embodied action (The Embodied Mind, 2017, p. 9). Artistic practice offers an experiential window into enaction and highlights an epistemology of listening, circularity, complexity, valence, and sense-making. Situating arts and aesthetics within the enactive fold invites us to treat them not as ornament, but as generative sites of inquiry where we can better apprehend the ethical and relational dimensions of life on this planet.

“The question of creativity is key: that is, for an animal, for a living being to have a world, it’s something that he actually shapes and creates over evolution and in its own history. It is not something that is given.”

—Francisco Varela

“Beauty, therefore, as a sign of an enlivening situation, is itself giving life. Any aesthetic experience of nature thus is to some degree an ethical assessment. Ugliness, on the other hand, has a certain degree of toxicity.”

—Andreas Weber

“Power and Care: Taking an Enactive Outlook”

2026 MLE UMBRELLA THEME

Most of us would like to believe in a **form of power that is woven through with care**, and a form of care that is robust enough to withstand the winds of the political arena. Yet, on most days we are witness to a flagrant lack of care on scales of increasing alarm, as well as the many perversions of a global order that still abides by an ethos of “power over.” In 2026, we will turn our attention to this paradoxical situation, using the epistemological tools we have at hand, from the enactive tradition and adjacent traditions, to **critically assess the relationship between power and care, as well as our relationship to the dynamics of power and care of which we are co-constitutive.**

If we take seriously the **continuity between life and mind**, then the **conditions of mind are also the conditions of our power structures.** Enaction—an immersive, pluralistic listening epistemology—reframes power as the dynamic around and in-between, locating understanding in participatory sense-making shaped by real asymmetries. As a bottom-up, process-oriented approach, it resists totalising epistemologies and grounds an ethics of co-creation through difference, offering guidance for engaging today’s dilemmas of power and care.

CONCEPT QUESTIONS

How can we understand the possible alliance between power and care?

How is care related to embodied normativity, i.e., the vital norms of autonomous systems?

How can we account for the many blind spots that complex systems of power seem intent on preserving?

How can we empower ourselves and members of our community, as an act of caring for one another?

A butterfly with black and yellow wings is perched on a white flower. The background is a blurred green and yellow, suggesting a natural setting. A semi-transparent pink rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

IV. Members' Projects

Summary of Members' Projects

1. Amy Cohen Varela: *The Varela Archive*
2. Dr Fabienne Picard: MLE documentary film
3. Dr Hanne De Jaegher: Participatory Sense-Making HealthCare Course
4. Dr Antoine Lutz: Nature of the Mind (NOM) Research Project: A Transdisciplinary Study of a Traditional Three-Year Retreat
5. Dr Perla Kaliman: Trauma-sensitive mental health-promoting programs for children in vulnerable communities
6. Dr Donata Schoeller: Training in Embodied Critical Understanding
7. Dr Marieke van Vugt: Tibetan nuns involved in monastic debate research
8. Ven Gendun Losang: The Buddha Project
9. Inga von Staden: Developing narrative skills for young researchers
10. Dr Laura Candiotta: Mind & Life Europe academic journal
11. Dr Wolfgang Lukas, Luciana Longo, & Francesco Noera: Mindful Researchers



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 2025 (project preparation).

Budget for 2026–2027 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. Amy studied comparative literature at Brown and Columbia Universities before moving to Paris in the early '80s, where she received her degree in clinical psychology at the University of Paris 7, with a specialty in psychodynamic theory and practice, and in parallel, completed psychoanalytic training.



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) wherein people of a variety of backgrounds and professions would share knowledge acquired through direct experience of long-term meditation practice and other first-person methodologies of exploration.

What experiences did they gain from these methods? How did these practices 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., become convinced of a truth different from the vision of the world they were taught from infancy? How has this been transformative regarding their actions?

Requested funding

€ 15,000 in 2025 (project preparation and first interviews).
Budget for 2026–2027 to be developed in the project preparation phase.

Member Bio

Prof Fabienne Picard is 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. Over the last ten years, her research has focused on the role of the insula in self-awareness through the study of 'ecstatic' epilepsy, which symptoms show similarities with states of consciousness reached in meditation. She has published around 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals.

3. Dr Hanne De Jaegher: Participatory Sense-Making in Practice: The Enactive Approach to HealthCare Interactions



Despite considerable evidence that interaction and communication between healthcare personnel and their patients are fundamental to health outcomes, **healthcare contexts often restrict the very human ways of knowing and caring** that practitioners instinctively bring. 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 sensemaking, 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

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

Requested funding

€ 100,000 annually in the first two years.
Supported by The Hershey Family Foundation.

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

4. Dr Antoine Lutz: The Nature of the Mind (NOM) Research Project: A Transdisciplinary Study of a Traditional Three-Year Retreat



The project investigates transformative training regimes in Tibetan Vajrayāna Buddhism, focusing on the traditional three-year meditation retreat as a long-standing method for reducing suffering and cultivating human flourishing. Central to these practices is recognising the “nature of mind” through nondual awareness, often described as “pure consciousness,” which transcends subject-object dualism and deconstructs the sense of a fixed self. Using techniques such as mental imagery and compassion-based practices, these methods are said to promote deep inner peace, unconditional love, and compassionate action. The project adopts a transdisciplinary approach to scientifically study nature of mind (NOM) practices within a traditional three-year retreat.

Despite their transformative potential, nondual meditation practices remain underexplored scientifically, particularly in longitudinal research. This study addresses this gap by examining how a three-year Mahāmudrā/Dzogchen retreat reshapes perception, self-experience, and metacognition, potentially supporting long-term positive outcomes. A cohort of approximately 35 practitioners is studied using an integrative framework spanning cognitive neuroscience, computational phenomenology, psychology, molecular biology, anthropology, and religious studies.

Member Bio

Dr Antoine Lutz is a director of research at the French Medical Research Institute (INSERM) in the Lyon Neuroscience Research Center (CNRL) where he co-leads the Experiential Neuroscience and Mental Training Team (EDUWELL). He did his PhD in cognitive neurosciences in Paris, France, with Francisco Varela.

Requested funding

€ 790,000 in total.

MLE's requested contribution: € 70,000.

5. Dr Perla Kaliman: Trauma-sensitive mental health–promoting programs for children in vulnerable communities (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, **Generation Alpha Minds**. This is a non-profit association dedicated to developing and scientifically validating programs to promote children’s resilience and mental health in vulnerable communities, and educating and sensitising 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 program for adolescents** in schools to prevent and overcome some of the lasting effects of ACEs. The program 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

€ 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

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



This project involves an 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 (autumn 2023) and a winter school (early 2024) 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

€ 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.

7. Dr Marieke van Vugt: Tibetan nuns involved in monastic debate research (from 2024 onwards)



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.

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. Total: €30,000
- **Year 2:** Introduction to EEG. Total: € 6,000
- **Year 3:** Defining next questions and designing experiments to test these questions. Total: €15,000
- **Year 4:** Conducting the experiments to test these questions. Total: €15,000

Requested Funding

Total requested funding: € 66,000. Partly supported by the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union.

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).



Dolma Ling Nuns

8. Ven Gendun Losang: The Buddha Project

Vision

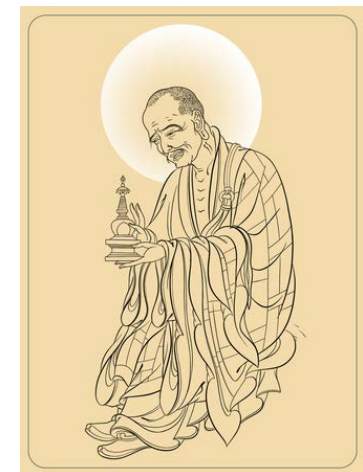
In its broadest sense the aim of the Buddha Project (TBP) is the **promotion of the examined life in the West** through:



- **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, offering weekly guided meditations, lectures, and space for dialogue. Students from Buddhist centres in Amsterdam, Leeds, New York, Toulouse, and Copenhagen will participate.
- **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 interviews.



MEMBERS' PROJECTS FROM 2024 ONWARDS

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 the 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.

9. 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 2026 for attending ESRI (4 people, EUR 2,500 each, travel and participation fee).

Member 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.

10. 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 2026 to set up the editorial board (5 people) and pay their fees for one year. Partly supported by the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union.

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.

11. Dr Wolfgang Lukas, Luciana Longo, & Francesco Noera: Mindful Researchers



The Mindful Researchers are an **independent grassroots community** of academics, scientists, educators, artists and contemplatives integrating contemplative study and practice into professional and creative lives, with a particular emphasis on academia. We cultivate a community of inquiry and practice that supports contemplative research, mutual support and collaboration, and innovative methods integrating contemplation, participation and experimentation. The initiative emerged from the **European Summer Research Institute (ESRI) 2020**, hosted by Mind & Life Europe (MLE), and has since grown into a supportive ecosystem of shared presence, practice, knowledge and collaboration. We believe contemplative life can be lived across all dimensions of human existence and has long evolved through encounters between traditions and cultures. Within traditional academia, we pursue a shared path of careful, attentive exploration. Our aims are to support our members, integrate contemplative practice and research, and contribute to compassionate, collaborative and purposeful cultures in academia, science, education and society.

Activities & Next Steps

We host regular online community spaces for connection, practice and collaboration, including our “Mindful Presentations” format. We share newsletters highlighting events, opportunities and research developments (270 subscribers). In 2023, we completed a community-wide visioning process, leading to collaborative working groups focused on mutual support, shared contemplative practice and inquiry, and professional support and project incubation. We also support ESRI and MLE through bottom-up community initiatives.

Our priorities are to launch an online community hub on [Hylo](#), implement co-created action plans (community support features, mentorship and peer support, public engagement, and an innovation and research lab for contemplative science), and amplify impact through growing networks and collaborations across the contemplative studies ecosystem.

MEMBERS' PROJECTS FROM 2024 ONWARDS

Organisation & Requested Funding

The initiative is stewarded by a **core team of three Stewards**, supported by an **Inner Circle of Contributors** who facilitate community activities and practice groups. To implement the platform and action plans in 2026, the initiative seeks €80,000–€100,000 in seed funding, supporting 1.5 FTE and essential operational costs, with impact monitored through agreed KPIs.

Member Bios

Dr Wolfgang Lukas holds an MSc in Physics from Graz University of Technology and a PhD in Physics from the University of Innsbruck, and was a member of the ATLAS collaboration at CERN (2010–2017). He founded the Contemplative Scientific Collaboration (2016) and the Mindful Researchers initiative (2020), exploring the integration of open science, contemplative practice and community-building.

Luciana Long has over 12 years' experience coordinating projects in mental health, education and science communication across public, private and international organisations. Trained in law (University of Turin) and cognitive science (University College Dublin), her work explores collective practices and joint speech in education, informed by collaborations on unison speech (chant) with Fred Cummins.

Francesco Noera holds degrees in Anthropology, Science and Technology in Society, and Service Design from the Universities of Bologna, Edinburgh and Politecnico di Milano. A Social Innovation Analyst in Italy, his work focuses on qualitative research, service design and applying contemplative practices to secular problem-solving and science–society dialogue.





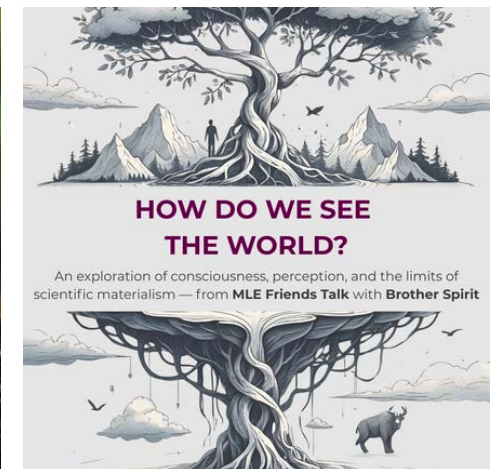
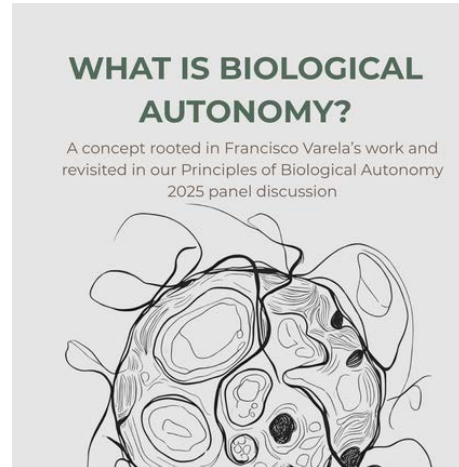
V. Organisational Development

Summary of Organisational Development in 2025

1. Communications Development

2. Enaction Education

3. Capacity Building



Communications Development

A renewed emphasis on communications has been one of our core priorities since 2021. That year, we launched the [MLE YouTube channel](#), a digital space where our conversations, events, and ideas can be freely shared with the public. As of December 2025, it has welcomed nearly 4,000 subscribers, gathered 177.7K total views, and showcased 217 videos. The voices of our most beloved speakers Yongey Mingyur Rinpoch, Antoine Lutz, Marieke van Vugt, Evan Thompson, and Stephen Batchelor continue to resonate with audiences worldwide.

With the arrival of our **new communications & events manager**, Catherine Stringer our strategy has undergone considerable development, strengthening connection with the world at hand through enhanced community engagement, improved accessibility, and a growing suite of educational initiatives. We have continued to publish **newsletters** once or twice each month, sharing upcoming events, new partnerships, and community initiatives. A modernised template has been established for 2026, and a **new community bulletin board** on our website now offers a vibrant space to highlight upcoming events, job opportunities, calls for papers, research participation, and the achievements of members in our community.

Across our social platforms ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), and [Bluesky](#)) we have introduced a refined posting rhythm to increase engagement and tailor our messaging. Instagram has been prioritised to improve accessibility for younger audiences, while our **expansion onto the emerging platform Bluesky** allows us to share event updates, research from EVA participants, and thoughtful prompts for discussion. As of December 2025, we now have 137 followers, a small but steadily forming community of engaged, curious voices.

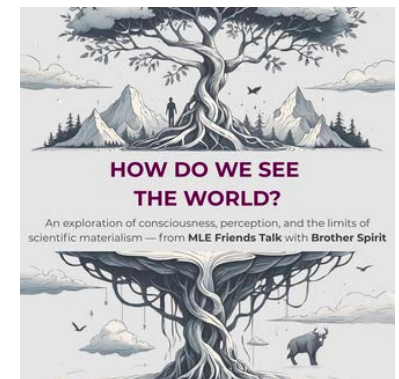
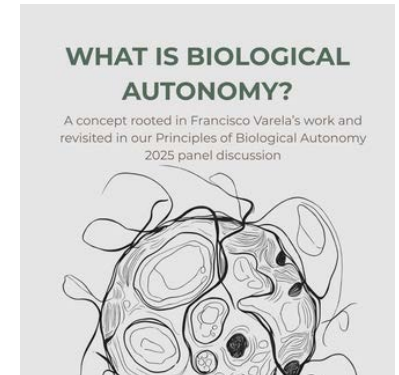
Enaction Education

As part of our ongoing commitment to nourish and invigorate our community, we have continued to develop educational initiatives to make the enactive framework more accessible.

These efforts include a growing body of **concise science communication pieces** including visually engaging **educational carousels that distill insights from recent MLE events**, such as “What is biological autonomy?” from our *Principles of Biological Autonomy* panel discussion, and “How do we see the world?: An exploration of consciousness, perception, and the limits of scientific materialism” from MLE Friends Talk with Br Pháp Linh. Each of these pieces invites viewers into the **living questions at the heart of enactive thinking**.

Guided by Amy Cohen-Varela, we also undertook a **series of short interviews** at this year’s ESRI with **central figures in the enaction lineage**. These conversations form the basis of a

forthcoming collection of short videos that approach enaction from an experiential perspective, for instance delving into “What is enaction?”, “How did you discover enaction”, and “How has the enactive framework helped you in your personal and professional life?” In the coming year, we aim to deepen this project through follow-up interviews and a **series of animated videos that illuminate enaction as an alternative to computationalism and break down its core constituents and relational concepts** such as autopoiesis, biological autonomy groundlessness, participatory sense-making, embodiment, embeddedness, and dialectics. More information in this regard can be found under Amy’s MLE Member’s Project: *The Varela Archive*.



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.

Catherine Stringer joined us as Communications & Events Manager, developing marketing materials and managing social media for Mind & Life Europe, while contributing to the creation of accessible educational content on enaction.

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

Anna Laricheva joined us as a volunteer and has been working closely with our communications & events manager, Catherine Stringer, on two MLE initiatives; developing an accessible educational glossary for the *Beyond Confines* webcast series, and supporting our enaction communications project by helping to conceptualise the scientific foundations of enactive approaches to mind and experience for a series of short educational videos featuring leading scholars and practitioners.

Zéphir Lorne volunteered with us for ESRI 2025, assisting the MLE team with media and technical coordination for the morning panels, conducting longer interviews with faculty, recording shorter participant testimonial interviews, and editing content.

Ayda Duroux also provided valuable support to the MLE team and ESRI faculty throughout the event, helping with logistics and material needs, as she has done in previous years.



Catherine
Stringer



Anna
Laricheva



Zéphir
Lorne



Ayda
Duroux

A close-up photograph of numerous small green seedlings with two leaves each, growing out of dark, moist soil. The seedlings are densely packed, and some have small water droplets on their leaves. A semi-transparent maroon rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the text 'VI. Projects to Support in 2025' in a bold, orange, italicized sans-serif font.

***VI. Projects to
Support in 2025***

Projects We Invite You To Support In 2025

1. Budget of Core Programmes in 2025

Core Programmes in 2025	EUR
1. European Summer Research Institute (ESRI) 2025	80 000
2. Mind & Life Europe Retreat 2025	15 000
3. European Varela Awards (EVA) management 2025	15 000
4. ENCECON Workshop 2025	25 000
5. Mind Matters Talks 2025	10 000
6. Arts & Enaction Events 2025	15 000
6. MLE Friends Exclusive Webinars 2025	10 000
7. The Mind & Life Europe Podcast	30 000
8. Making Room for Contemplation	10 000
Total	210 000

2. Budget of Partnership Events in 2025

Partnership Events in 2025	EUR
1. 9th Pioneers of Change Online Summit	5 000
2. Mind & Life Dialogue XXXIX: Minds, Artificial Intelligence, and Ethics	60 000
3. Barcelona 2026 Conference Preparation	30 000
Total	95 000

3. Budget of Programme Development in 2025

Programme Development in 2025	EUR
1. ESRI 2026–2028 thematic arc development	15 000
2. "Relating to the World(s) at Hand" – 2025 MLE umbrella theme development	15 000
3. "Arts and Aesthetics in the Enactive Fold" – <i>Mind Matters</i> and <i>Arts & Enaction</i> 2025 theme development	30 000
4. "Power and Care" – 2026 MLE umbrella theme	15 000
Total	75 000

4. Budget of MLE Members' Projects in 2025

Members' Projects in 2025	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	100 000
4. Antoine Lutz: The Nature of the Mind (NOM) Research Project	70 000
5. Dr Perla Kaliman: Creation of schools sensitive to adverse childhood experiences	20 000
6. Dr Donata Schoeller: Training in Embodied Critical Understanding	20 000
7. Dr Marieke van Vugt: Tibetan nuns involved in monastic debate research	30 000
8. Ven Gendun Losang: The Buddha Project	18 000
9. Inga von Staden: Developing narrative skills for young researchers	10 000
10. Dr Laura Candiottto: Mind & Life Europe academic journal	10 000
11. Dr Wolfgang Lukas: Mindful Researchers initiative	80 000
Total	388 000

5. Overall Budget in 2025

Overall Budget in 2025	EUR
1. Core programmes in 2025	210 000
2. Partnership events in 2025	95 000
3. Programme development in 2025	75 000
4. Members' projects in 2025	388 000
5. Organisational development in 2025	50 000
6. Administration in 2025	50 000
7. Projects management in 2025	100 000
Total	968 000



Our Association and the small team of five people managing the programmes and operations of MLE **covered many major projects** in 2025. Based on a detailed calculation of the time which all these projects required this year, we divided the budget of 2025 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

Dr. Károly Karsai, 2024. 04. 10.

Gábor Karsai,
Managing Director of MLE

Why Support MLE?

WE ARE EFFECTIVE

Mind & Life Europe is rooted in the vision of the Dalai Lama and Francisco Varela: to bring science and contemplative wisdom into dialogue, deepening our understanding of the human mind and fostering the inner and societal transformation needed to address today's global challenges. For over a decade, MLE has catalysed pioneering work at the intersection of science, philosophy, and contemplative practice. Our goal is to advance research, learning, and leadership that supports human and planetary flourishing.

As a **not-for-profit organisation**, our work depends on the generosity of our community.

Your donation helps us:

- Sustain and expand field-defining research and education
- Nurture a new generation of contemplative scholars and scientists
- Convene global dialogues that inspire ethical and sustainable action



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:

DONATE NOW



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

If you are based in the Netherlands and would like to make a tax-deductible donation for this cause there, please visit www.stichtingmindandlife.org.

A close-up photograph of a lavender field. The foreground is filled with sharp, detailed lavender flower spikes. In the background, more lavender plants are visible but blurred. Two bees are present: one is in sharp focus on the left, hovering near a flower, and another is in the background, slightly out of focus, also near a flower. A semi-transparent red rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the text 'VII. Our People' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

VII. Our People

MLE Board Members



Amy Cohen Varela



Prof Martijn van Beek



Leslie de Galbert



Gábor Karsai



Erick Rinner



Prof Andreas Roepstorff



Prof Donata Schoeller



Father Francis Tiso



Prof Marieke van Vugt

MLE Staff Members



Gábor Karsai
Managing Director



Dr Johanna Magin
Community & Programs Manager



Derek Sola
Executive Assistant



Catherine Stringer
Communications & Events Manager



Eugène Sandoz
Media Lead



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