



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY OF CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION IN EUROPE

#### Where are we starting from and where might we be going?

#### *Reflections on a consultation*

11<sup>th</sup> September 2018

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There has been a major growth in CE research and practice, especially in the form of mindfulness, including for children and young people, but it is a young and still rather unfocused field, dominated by the English-speaking world. CE seeks to address the whole person and is oriented to resilience and well-being to shape a positive, holistic and socially engaged approach to meet the social and environmental challenges of the 21st century, and in a digital age. Work on CE in Europe is developing from a wide range of approaches, but it is scattered, fragmented, and not well known. MLE intends to set up this new community to uncover and bring together work that can promote to support those working in the field and add the European voice to the international knowledge base.

#### **Mapping activity across Europe**

A consultation by survey and interview, involving 133 experts attempted to discover what work was happening in CE in Europe, what concepts and terminologies are being used, and what might be the role of a CCE.

Respondents were at the heart of CE in Europe and drawn from most countries. The picture of activity in Europe is rich and complex, with leadership from universities, networks and institutes, and from contemplatives, scholars, researchers, programme developers, policy makers and school personnel, at least 9 named programmes and 'bottom up' principles driven approaches. Interest in CE, particularly in the form of secular mindfulness in schools, and to a smaller extent contemplative pedagogy in higher education, is increasing but not mainstream in any country. Factors that help develop CE within countries include leadership from universities and contemplatives, well established adult mindfulness and networks, government support, an innovative approach to education and a cultural tendency to holistic thinking. Factors that hinder include a lack of funding, and the dominance of traditional educational methods.

#### **Clarifying what CE is in practice**

Respondents were keen on a broad scope for this initiative, and it was possible to identify the core elements with which they were currently actively engaged, in research, teaching, programme



development and theory creation, and which they wished to develop, which could be grouped under three broad and interrelated headings.

- **The contemplative core**, which is the unique contribution of the CE, including: mindfulness, contemplative pedagogy, meditation, compassion and neuroscience.
- **The educational framework**, within which CE is operating and engaging, including: holism, positive wellbeing, social and emotional learning, and a concern for mental health problems.
- **The social framework** to which CE contributes and within which it works, including: ethics and values, sustainability, peace and social change.

The paper discusses each of these in detail, exploring respondents' engagement with them, their understandings of what they mean in practice and the themes and issues that are emerging.

### **What next?**

The vision for what the CCE might look like and where it might go next included.

- **Developing the CCE as a 'hub'**, connecting people, sharing information, mapping activity in more detail.
- **Providing leadership and guidance** to the community, around programme development, implementation, research and teacher education, in collaborative partnerships across Europe.
- **Advocating for CE**, especially with policy makers.
- **Consolidating and promoting the science and evidence base**, including the therapeutic outcomes of MBIs, neuroscience, and across a broad range of fields and types of evidence, including contemplative pedagogy and its focus on first person experience.
- **Promoting the value of deep contemplative wisdom**, while also making clear that **CE is evidence based, human, secular and universal** approach, not a religion or a dogma.
- **Focusing on teachers and teacher education.**
- **Finding a flexible 'language'** that expresses the complexity and depth of the field, speaks to many different audiences, and translates easily.
- **Building a trans-European movement**, aiming for equity and relevance across the many regions, cultures and languages of Europe.
- **Forming active collaborative partnerships** with those at the forefront of CE activity at many levels and in many regions, to carry out these tasks.
- Attracting **stable long-term funding** to support the CCE.
- **Identifying small first practical steps** towards these aims.

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