

Summary of ECA July 2019 - by Sanghanistha

On Monday the 22nd of July, the European Chairs' Assembly returned to Padmaloka for its summer meeting, this was the first time the meeting had been held at Padmaloka since the opening of Adhithana. As well as chairs, directors and representatives from across Europe, the meeting was also attended by members of the College and guests from Australia, India, the U.S.A and Canada.

After the welcome and dedication of the first evening, the first morning was given over to home groups which provided a context for reporting in and sharing our experience as chairs. In response to a request at a previous meeting, these groups reconvened throughout the meeting as a context for discussion.



The plan for the meeting was to hold a strategic review. To ensure this stayed grounded in the Dharma and our shared Going for Refuge, Jnanadhara very kindly gave an excellent talk on *pratityasamutpada* and led a five-minute reflection before the morning sessions thereafter. The strategic review was prepared by Viryanaga and Subhadassi, both very busy people who invested a great deal of time and effort in this. After the first session it became clear that we needed to take several steps backwards, before we could do a strategic review. This was in many respects due to the high turnover of chairs in recent times, the vast majority of chairs present not having been at the previous strategic review. Suryagupta and Bodhivamsa very courageously stepped forward to lead the sessions that had been given over to the strategic review, looking at what the chairs needed to proceed with a strategic review. By the end of the meeting it was felt that we were in a position to proceed with a strategic review at the January meeting.



Around this we had many excellent presentations including:

- Sadayasihi talking about the excellent work of the Buddhist Centre Online.
- Jnanadhara, Bodhivamsa and Prasadacarin updating the meeting about the International Council.
- The College presentation occurred in two parts. The first looking at the work of the Adhithana kula in response to the recent Observer article as well as initiatives that were already being looked at, such as the possibility of an independent audit/external review of our Safeguarding procedures. The second looking at updates on various things the College and the College Chairs Council have been looking at including the launch of the new College website, 'vihara

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periods' at Adhithana and Dharma themes that might bring people's shared inspiration together.

- Suryagupta, Bodhilila and Vimalasara led a morning on people of colour and diversity, this is something that the meeting hadn't looked at in this much depth before and was much appreciated.
- Jayaraja facilitated an Open Space session. The feedback from previous meetings had been very appreciative for this format and it again proved a very helpful approach.
- Dhammamegha brought us up to date with the inspiring work of the Sikkha Project.
- Munisha gave a presentation on the safeguarding work that's been going on and how this might be developed in the future. As ever there was profound appreciation for all that Munisha and Amaladipa do in this regard.
- Finally, we had an excellent presentation on the Young Buddhists strategy from Prajnaketu via pre-recorded video, afterwards Prajnahridaya and Sanghadhara fielded questions. The project has helped to begin to stem the increasing average age of those Ordained, but there's still much to do.



There was also an international afternoon and evening with presentations from:

- Amrutasiddhi on his life and work as movement co-ordinator in India, a post made possible by Future Dharma
- Padmatara on the San Francisco Buddhist centre
- Danadasa on the San Francisco centre's retreat centre
- Vimalasara on the Vancouver Buddhist centre
- Samacitta on the Sydney Buddhist centre

There were of course a development fund update and an exploration of the proposed budget, which after some discussion was agreed during the AGM. We have less to give away than in previous years and it was felt that we needed to make the most effective and creative use of the resources we have, as well as looking to increase the funds we have available by looking at ways to encourage centres to contribute more and by encouraging people to attend The International Gathering.

The feedback session was done in a written feedback session, with plenary, followed by a session led by Jayaraja where people were asked various evaluation questions and asked to stand at various points in the meeting room which corresponded to scale of how they would respond to the question. The overwhelming majority were on the positive end of the spectrum. Though people felt sad that many chairs weren't able to attend the whole meeting.

During the final reporting out a great deal of gratitude and appreciation was expressed for the meeting, for the Padmaloka support team, for all those giving presentations, for the development team and for the exec responding to the needs of the meeting.