



NELFA's Annual report 2014

(Approved at the Annual General Meeting, Konstanz, 28 March 2015)

This is the report of the Board of NELFA as regards its main work undertaken in 2014 prepared by the Secretary and which was submitted to the Annual General Meeting at Konstanz on 28.03.2015 and approved at the same AGM.

1. The Board

The third working Board was elected in March 2013 in AGM Maastricht of the following 13 persons:

President

Maria Von Känel, Regenbogenfamilien (Switzerland)

Vice-President

Lisa Green, LSVD (Germany)

Secretary

Angelo Berbotto, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)

Treasurer

Luís Amorim, ILGA Portugal (Portugal)

Board member

Anne Marie Thus, Meer dan gewenst (Netherlands)

Board member

Krisztián Rózsa, Foundation for Rainbow Families (Hungary)

Board member

Rita Marascalchi, FAMos (Austria)

Board member

Jordi Anton, FLG (Catalunya, Spain) ·

Board member

Sari Kempinen, Sateenkaariperheet (Finland)

Board member

Iina Särkkä, Sateenkaariperheet (Finland)



Board member

Nikos Chamtzoudis, OLKE (Greece)

Board member

Ilaria Trivellato, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)

Board member

Dominique Boren, APGL (France)

2. Administration

Internal Rules — the AGM of NELFA approved the Internal Rules of the association, this document is a working document, whose purpose is to further clarify or complement some aspects of our Bylaws (which formally require its existence). We will be amending it as appropriate in subsequent years, but we feel confident that this is a very good starting point. This was emailed to the members on 07.04.2014.

The board of NELFA said good-bye to Katy Pallàs of FLG, Catalunya, Spain, to Juha Jamsa of Rainbow Families, Finland and to Constantina Kosmidou of OLKE, Greece; they have been wonderful colleagues to work with and have contributed tremendously to our work in the past two years.

3- Board Meetings

During 2014, the Board had 9 meetings:

30.03.2014 in Maastricht

02.04.2014 by Skype

04.05.2014 by Skype

03.09.2014 by Skype

01.10.2014 by Skype

05.11.2014 by Skype

10.12.2014 by Skype

04.02.2015 by Skype

02.03.2015 by skype

27.03.2015 in Konstanz

4. Annual General Meetings (AGM)

The first AGM was arranged in March 2013 in London, and the second in March 2014 in Maastricht in line with the bylaws.



5. Membership

By the end of 2013 the association had 19 full members and 4 supporting members (in 15 European countries). In 2014 we welcomed the Hungarian Foundation for Rainbow Families as a new Full Member, expanding our membership to a new country in Europe.

6. Finances

All due membership fees were collected from full and supporting members in 2014 with exception of Hungary due to an oversight and Marriage Equality Ireland. These have now been rectified and there are no outstanding fees. Please refer to the Treasurer's report. The AGM 2014 will be presented with a motion to increase from the AGM 2015 the fees to €75 for full members and €40 for supporting members.

7. Communication

Members were informed of NELFA's actions mainly through NELFA's mailing list and the Facebook page. The website contains the press releases for 2014-2015 (www.nelfa.org). Twitter account was opened.

16 press releases were sent out during 2014 and 3 during 2015:

1. On 02.04.2014 a press release was issued announcing the new Board at its second Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Maastricht, the Netherlands on 29 March, 2014, hosted by NELFA's Dutch member organisation, Meer dan Gewenst.
2. On 04.04.2014 a press release was issued welcoming the adoption by the European Parliament on 3 April 2014, of a non-binding resolution on justice, freedom and security in Europe. NELFA welcomes in particular the resolution's strong wording on the freedom of movement of all families.
3. On 16.04.2014 a press release was issued congratulating Malta on enacting legislation to recognize same-sex civil unions and allowing same-sex couples to apply for adoption jointly making Malta the 22nd European country to legally recognise same-sex unions and 10th country in Europe to allow same-sex couples to jointly apply for child adoption.
4. On 30.04.2014 a press release was issued re the beginning of the 2014 European Family Meeting organised by the Network of European LGBT Families Associations starts tomorrow, 1 May 2014 in Cologne, German,



hosted by Lesben und Schwulen Verband in Deutschland (LSVD), one of NELFA's founding members. This was the third time since 2009 that European Rainbow Families met for a long weekend of networking, family fun and capacity building workshops and lectures on LGBT family issues, this year under the motto "Different Families, Same Schools".

5. On 01.05.2014 a press release was issued re 4 May 2014 is International Family Equality Day (IFED).
6. On 04.05.2014 NELFA issued a press release re the conclusion of the 2014 European Family Meeting that took place in Cologne, Germany between 1 and 4 May 2014. It had over 300 participants from 14 countries (Europe and Canada).
7. On 05.05.2014 the Network of European LGBT Families Associations issued a press release expressing dismay by news that a French Court (Versailles) denied second-parent adoption rights to a two-mothers couple, on the basis of them becoming parents through medically assisted reproduction in Belgium.
8. On 15.05.2014 NELFA issued a press release re the inclusive words of United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon re the IFED.
9. On 21.05.2014 NELFA issued a press release denouncing the Finnish Government's plan to leave out legal provisions protecting the children of rainbow families from their parenting bill, likely to be presented to the Finnish Parliament in June 2014.
10. On 26.06.2014, NELFA issued a press release regretting the results of the vote of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Finnish Parliament rejecting the introduction of marriage equality legislation for same-sex couples in Finland.
11. On 27.06.2014 NELFA issued a press release regarding Luxembourg joining on 8 June 2014 the group of progressive nations with marriage equality and equal adoption rights for same-sex couples. The legislation, supported by an overwhelming majority, will enter into force in January 2015.
12. On 21.07.2014 NELFA issued a press release to welcome the vote by the Croatian Parliament as regards the Law on 'Life Partnership', extending almost the same rights currently enjoyed by different-sex married couples to same-sex couples. Croatian parliamentarians voted overwhelmingly for the new law with 89 votes in favour and only 16 votes against it.



13. On 29 September 2014 NELFA sent out a press release about the conclusion of the Grundtvig Project: “Being an LGBT parent as an experience of democracy and active citizenship”. Although NELFA did not participate as a partner because at the time of putting forward the project NELFA had yet to be registered, members of the Board of NELFA were actively involved in the Grundtvig Project. Between 1 August 2012 and 31 July 2014, the five national NGOs Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy), ILGA Portugal (Portugal), Kosmos Horis Polemou Kai Via (Greece), Sateenkaariperheet (Finland) and Swiss Rainbow Families Association (Switzerland) were partners in this project that aimed at educating LGBT parents to practise active citizenship at a European level, struggle for equal rights and dignity for their families at a local and European level. The project has helped the partner associations and their volunteers to develop a better understanding of civic participation and of their active citizenship in a European context. The tools developed are accessible here: <http://lgbt-families.eu/outputs/>
14. On 22.10.2014 NELFA issued a press release expressing support to the mayors of Milan, Rome and other Italian cities, who decided to formally register the marriages celebrated by Italian same-sex couples abroad.
15. On 28.11.2014 NELFA issued a press release regarding the historical vote by the Finnish Parliament opening marriage and family equality for same-sex couples and their children in Finland.
16. On 06.12.2014 NELFA issued a press release re the enactment of legislation allowing the non-biological mother in a lesbian couple to be automatically recognised as the legal mother following the birth of their child thus avoiding the need to go through a sometimes long and cumbersome co-adoption procedure for the non-biological mother.
17. On 18.01.2015 NELFA issued a press release in relation to the ruling by the Austrian Constitutional Court to extend full adoption rights to same-sex couples, equal to those currently enjoyed by different-sex couples.
18. On 05.03.2015 NELFA issued a press release to welcome the vote by the Slovenian Parliament opening marriage and family equality to same-sex couples. Slovenia becomes the 11th European country to adopt equality legislation in this area.
19. On 25.03.2015 NELFA issued a press release about NELFA’s participation at the 28th Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.



8. European Meeting of LGBT Families

The 3rd European Meeting of LGBT Families took place in Cologne on 1-4 May 2014. A heartfelt thank you to Elke Jansen of LSVD and vice-president Lisa Green and their team. This was a joyous occasion. NELFA sponsored one Russian family to attend the 3rd European Meeting in Cologne by paying for their registration fee and LSVD for their flight tickets. Sadly, the German government did not issue a visa and the family could not travel to the 3rd Meeting. NELFA instead then sponsored a Polish and a Croatian family with their registration fee; they covered their own transport costs.

The video on NELFA's 3rd European Meeting of Rainbow Families hosted by LSVD "Different Families, Same Schools" can be seen here: http://youtu.be/Yfln_t1BIW4

NELFA contributed to the 3rd Meeting in Cologne in the following ways:

- a. Lisa Green made the welcome speech and facilitated two workshops: "Empowering our children to navigate the straight world".
- b. Angelo Berbotto moderated the round table discussion "The rights of the children of LGBT families across Europe - discrimination, legal challenges and strategies for change"
- c. Luis Amorim was a speaker in the panel "Bringing the rainbow into the schools of Europe – Coalitions and strategies" and made the welcome speech at the IFED celebration.
- d. Board member Ilaria Trivellato presented the workshop "Look, here we are!" on how LGBT families can help promote equality and safety in schools on their own and presented the EU learning partnership project "Being an LGBT parent as an experience of democracy and active citizenship"

The IFED 2014, was celebrated within the 3rd European Meeting. This was at the Coliseum, Cologne

On 18.10.2014, NELFA announced that Italian members, Famiglie Arcobaleno, had released the date for NELFA's 2015 Family Meeting in Rimini, Italy: 9 to 11 October 2015. On 24.02.2015 Ilga Portugal confirmed that they agreed to take over from Famiglie Arcobaleno and convened the 4th European Meeting from 15 to 18 October 2015, on the seashore near Lisbon.



9. Membership and representation

On 28.09.2014 NELFA asked its members to report on their membership. The last time this had been done was in 2013 resulting in a total of 10 805 comprising 3 438 families with children.

The reported membership for 2014 is of 23 570 individuals comprising 3 821 families with children. It should be noted that some member organisations did not respond to the request for statistics and that some organisations such as the German and Swedish members are generalist organisations. NELFA will strive to complete a more accurate collection of data during 2015.

10. Advocacy and lobbying

The third International Family Equality Day (IFED) was organised on 4 May 2014, in collaboration with associations from 48 cities in 22 countries worldwide (this is an improvement from IFED 2013 which had 44 cities in 17 countries worldwide). The report of IFED 2014 was published and Agnes Uherezky Director of COFACE (the Confederation of Family Organisations in the *European Union*) agreed to write a foreword for the IFED-Annual Report 2014.†: <http://www.internationalfamilyequalityday.org>

Nelfa's president Maria Von Känel attended the IDAHO 2014 Forum, at Valletta, Malta, where she addressed the meeting.

On 30.05.2014, Maria Von Känel took part in ILGA's event " Panel on International Human Rights Law and Sexual Orientation " with High Commissioner Navy Pillay, in Geneva.

On 29.09.2014 Maria Von Känel wrote to Manuel Picaud Co-president of the Paris 2018 Gay Games with suggestions to make the event inclusive of LGBT families. Mr Picaud responded saying that he would talk about it with the sport directors and the governing body, the international Federation of Gay Games. Maria included a list of suggested disciplines in which families could participate.

On 28 October 2014, Board member Luis Amorim represented NELFA at the conference "Tackling Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Discrimination" at the Council of Ministers of the European Union in Brussels. The Conference was organised by the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU. Please see his intervention at minute 03:53:15 in this link:



<http://fra.europa.eu/en/event/2014/tackling-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-discrimination-next-steps-eu-and-member/watch-live>

On 11.11.2014 Katy Pallàs, former president of NELFA, addressed the final session of the [RAINBOW HAS | Rights Through Alliances: Innovating and Networking BOth Within Hom esAnd Schools](#) with a power point presentation on NELFA and Rainbow Families in Europe. The project aims to create a European network of networks for diversity at school with the common aim of reaching an alliance for promoting respect and full social acceptance of sexual diversity rights and for supporting initiatives against homophobia and transphobia in schools. NELFA members FLG (as a project partner) and LSVD (as a project associate) also participated in this project.

On 24.02.2015 Maria Von Känel represented NELFA at a strategy meeting with MEPs from the LGBTI Intergroup that discussed common priorities for the upcoming 2,5 years and how different NGOs can work together to make progress. This was a key opportunity to see how the parliament/LGBTI Intergroup and other NGOs can be involved.

On 26.02.2015 it was confirmed that the European Parliament would celebrate IFED 2015 in Brussels.

On 26.02.2014 Maria Von Känel contacted the authorities in Montenegro to get invited to the upcoming 2015 IDAHO Forum in Montenegro.

Luis Amorim met twice in 2014 with the new Secretary of the Inter-group on LGBT rights of the European Parliament to discuss the celebration of IFED in the Parliament in 2015. He also met at the beginning of 2015 with staff from the European Parliament's Petitions Committee to discuss how NELFA could present a petition to MEPs on Freedom of Movement for rainbow families in the EU.

11. Communication and networking

On 07.04.2014 Nelfa replied to an email of the Rights on the Move project for their conference in Belfast on June 5, 2014 and provided them with the petition and case studies submitted to Commissioner Reding, dated September, 2013. As Barry may have already notified you, we are launching a Rights on The Move Handbook for Rainbow Families at our conference in Belfast.

In May 2014, Nelfa's president Maria Von Känel participated at the 5th European Transgender Council 2014 where she consolidated the links between Nelfa and the transgender community.



In May 2014, Nelfa's president Maria Von Känel **liaised with** Paul Barnes, Campaigns and Communications Director of the Gay European Tourism Association in relation to GETA's campaign to influence European governments at all levels (Europe, national, regional, local) and to provide an information service for gay traveller.

In May 2014 Isabel Gómez of the Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales de España, asked NELFA what our official stance was on surrogacy. The response given was that NELFA's Action Plan for 2014 included the decision to look at the issue of surrogacy and that it was unlikely that a position would be finalized before the General Meeting in March 2015.

On 16-17 October 2014, Maria Von Känel addressed the Rights on the Move conference in Trento, Italy where she addressed over 100 lawyers, experts and students met to learn about Rainbow Families and freedom of movement within the EU.

On 18.10.2014 NELFA responded to a request by Russian filmmaker Yulia Maligina.

On 18.10.2014 NELFA's treasurer, Luis Amorim, wrote to the national LGBT association of the Czech Republic with membership information for them to join NELFA.

On 09.11.2014 NELFA responded to an email of Alexandra Konopleva re a project in Russia.

On 24.11.2014 board member Jordi Anton met in New York with Gabriel Blau, Executive Director of Family Equality Council. They analyzed differences between both organizations and possible ways to collaborate in the future.

On 24.11.2014 NELFA responded to an email from "We Are Family" the UK's first alternative family magazine.

In November 2014 NELFA replied to an email by Jamie Campbell Naidoo, Ph.D. re the 4th European Family Meeting

On 15.12.2014 NELFA confirmed that it will disseminate information about the surrogacy and adoption event in Brussels in May 2015 but will not officially endorse it.

In January 2015, Daniel Martinovic of Zagreb Pride & Dugine obitelji contacted NELFA inquiring about membership. We sent him information on how to become a member.



On 04.02.2015 Famiglie Arcobaleno wrote to NELFA saying that would convene the 4th European Meeting from 15 to 18 October 2015.

On 03.03.2015 Carlos Domingues approached NELFA concerning an interesting Project ERASMU + KA2 Strategic Alliance to address “rainbow children” at school. However, at this time NELFA could not commit because of the requirement for NELFA to be able to cover expenses.

On 26.03.2015 Lisa Green wrote a summary analysis on the basis of the Polish study “Families of Choice” which was distributed to the members by email.

12. Other Communication

In March 2014 NELFA was approached by student Simon van der Burgt doing European Studies in The Hague, The Netherlands who wanted assistance from NELFA for his research dissertation on: ‘should the European Union implement one LGBT legislation in all the member states covering same sex marriage and adoption of children? It was not possible for NELFA to provide him with the information he requested in the timescales requested.

On 23/05/2014 a same-sex male couple from Spain contacted NELFA asking for financial assistance to to start surrogacy. NELFA wished them well but explained that could not assist them financially and referred them to the Spanish associations member of NELFA.

In October 2014 a male British same-sex couple with children through adoption contacted NELFA with questions about their impending move to Germany. Vicepresident Lisa Green answered their queries.

On 20.10.2014 NELFA’s secretary responded to an email by a Bulgarian-Pakistani male couple who sought advice as to their particular circumstances.

On 18.11.2014 NELFA responded to an email from a person who claimed to be a Jordanian refugee on grounds of sexual orientation. NELFA referred him to relevant NGOs.

On 01.02.2015, a same-sex couple from Turkey-Poland residing in Belgium contacted NELFA with a query about surrogacy in Mexico. We replied with information and issues to be aware of.

In December 2014 board member Jordi Anton met with Men Having Babies’ representative Ron Poole-Dayan in New York.



12. Capacity building

In April 2014, board member Ilaria Trivellato drafted and submitted an Erasmus+ project to obtain funds from the EU. The project was to develop one online training course (lasting 100 hours) on "rainbow families and school" to be published in 8 languages, an international conference on the impact of the training course, 2 transnational meetings to co-ordinate the project, 2 workshops on the innovative frontiers of the online training on lgbt issues and the second on the advocacy work with the european and international educational institution to compel national States to include lgbt curricula in the schools.

The project was to include some countries where LGBT parents are trying to get organized as associations: Slovenia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and the Czech Republic. Sadly, the project was not successful this time around. NELFA thanks Ilaria for all the hard work she put in this project and the delegates that worked to try to get this project off the ground:

- A. Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy), Ilaria Trivellato
- B. NELFA (EU - Brussels), Angelo Berbotto
- C. Društvo informacijski center Legebitra (Slovenia), Simon Maljevac and Ksenija Bartol
- D. Oikogeneies Ouranio Tokso (Greece), Stella Scocozza
- E. Szivárványcsaládokért Alapítvány (Hungarian), Milan Nagy and Krisztian Rozsa
- F. Ivairoves ir edukacijos namai (Lithuania), Vilma Gabrielute
- G. Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Osob LGBT Tolerado (Poland), Anna Strzalkowska and Marta Abramowicz
- H. Spolek Pod Borislavkou (Czech Republic), Tomas Sidlo

In August 2014, Maria Von Känel participated at the conference: "UN human rights treaty body reform: The outcome from a Swiss perspective" in Bern. Amongst others, Sir Nigel Rodley, Chair of the Human Rights Committee was invited as a referent. Maria asked him his views in connection with the adoption of the resolution: "Protection of the Family" (without reference to other existing forms of family) and in relation to family diversity and the recognition of rainbow families. In his Response, Sir Niger referred to Article 23 (The Family) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45139bd74.html> and the passed resolution: " 17/19 Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity" on human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity (<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G11/148/76/PDF/G1114876.pdf?OpenElement>) and the importance of the key role of governments (recognition of family diversity / legal recognition).



At Ilga-Europe's conference on 9-11 October 2014, "MOVEMENT: Leading Sustainable Change" Arja Voipio (TGEU), Maria von KÄNEL (NELFA) and Ulrika Westerlund (RFSL) jointly presented the workshop Challenges trans families face and ways to address them. The presenters combined their experiences in trans-questions, advocacy of rainbow family rights and hands-on-work to bring forward issues relevant for this area of work, which require further and more regular attention.

Maria von Känel, (NELFA President, Switzerland), Luis Amorim (NELFA Treasurer, Portugal), Iina Sarkka (NELFA Board Member, Finland) presented the following workshop: LGBT parents and their children – an engine for social change. In September 2014 NELFA became member of TGEU, the transgender organization of Europe in order to work closer with the transgender collective and reach out to trans parents.

Maria Von Känel participated at the ILGA-Europe training sessions on Community and Organisational Development to Lead Sustainable Change on 20-22 November 2014 in Ljubljana.

On 13.11.2014 the Fundamental Rights Platform conferred membership status to NELFA 18 months after this was initially requested.

On 18.11.2014, board member Rita Mariscalchi participated, on behalf of FAMOS, in a brief informal meeting at the first gathering of the Rainbow Cities Network in Vienna.

On 05.02.2015 Board Member Rita Mariscalchi filled out the online survey about NELFA for the Fundamental Rights Agency.

During 2014 and 2015, vice-president Lisa Green began collecting information on bibliography of children's books for the NELFA website as a resource for members.

13. Publications

The Nelfa Brochure (also found online on: <http://nelfa.org/index.php/nelfa-aisbl-leaflet>) was updated and improved thanks to board member Rita Marascalchi and her wife, they also designed the NELFA roll-up to take to events where NELFA has a presence.

A report of IFED 2014 was published and printed.



14. Co-operation with external partners

On 27.10.2014, NELFA gave a proxy to Juha Jamsa to represent NELFA at the Ilga World Conference in Mexico.

On 01.11.2014 NELFA distributed information to members about a project co-ordinated by the Unit of Systemic Clinic and Relational Psychopathology Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Liège who sought gay fathers through surrogacy for an important online research focused on gay father families who have a child born via surrogacy.

In 2014 UNICEF expressed that it supports the enactment of laws, which provide LGBT couples and their children with the legal recognition of their family ties. Legal 'recognition' (in addition to 'protection') of family relationships is important in fighting discrimination against LGBT parents and children, as parents without legal recognition are prevented from making decisions concerning fundamental aspects of their child's life, such as education and health care. Moreover, they are often not eligible for State benefits and fiscal privileges that are specifically designed to support families. Please see the link:

http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Position_Paper_Sexual_Identity_and_Gender_Identity_12_Nov_2014%282%29.pdf NELFA will look at ways of working with UNICEF in view of this statement.

During 2014 NELFA learned that the European Ombudsmen could be approached regarding freedom of movement. NELFA will investigate ways of working with the ombudsmen at European level

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/atyourservice/enoinroduction.faces>
