



# NELFA's Annual Report 2015-March 2016

Approved by the AGM, Barcelona, 12 March 2016

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## 1. Foreword:

A lot has happened since NELFA became incorporated as a legal association in March 2012. Since then we have continued to work to ensure that LGBTI parents and their children can enjoy the same rights and freedoms enjoyed by other citizens in Europe. We have also made sure that the voice of LGBTI parents and their children is adequately heard both inside and outside the LGBTI movement.

NELFA has taken initial steps to formally and explicitly include families of Intersex people in its community by adding an “I” to its name and changing it into Network of European LGBTI Family Associations.

We have organised 4 European Family Meetings so far (Paris, France; Lloret de Mar, Spain; Köln, Germany; Oeiras, Portugal) and are planning a 5th one in the beautiful island of Evia, Greece between 21 and 24 July 2016 (<http://nelfa.org/european-meeting/>). These meetings would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of national organisations and the enthusiastic participation of families from all over Europe.

Since May 2012 we have been active in promoting and organising International Family Equality Day (IFED) around the world (<http://nelfa.org/european-meeting/international-family-equality-day/>). This has become one of our flagship projects and it has opened many doors to NELFA, while raising the visibility of our families among communities at large.

Our organisation has been growing steadily, we are now 29 organisations in 18 European countries, and we expect our numbers to grow further in 2016.

Some highlights of our work and progress in 2015 include:

- Six new full member organizations.
- First time ever celebration of IFED in the European Parliament.
- The fourth European LGBTI families meeting held in Oeiras, Portugal, in October 2015.
- Mention of IFED as a good practice in a resolution by the Council of Europe’s Congress of local and regional authorities.
- Active participation by NELFA in 9 international events and 7 substantial inputs presented to international organisations (UN, EU and Council of Europe) to promote equal rights for rainbow families.



The report below provides an overview of the activities conducted by NELFA between the 2015 AGM, held in Konstanz, in mid-March 2015, and the 2016 AGM to be held in Barcelona, on 12 March 2016.

## 2. Administration

### 2.1. Board

The current Board consists of the following 13 persons:

- President: Maria von Känel, Regenbogenfamilien (Switzerland)
- Vice-President: Lisa Green, LSVD (Germany)
- Secretary: Angelo Berbotto, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)
- Treasurer: Luis Amorim, ILGA Portugal (Portugal)
- Board Members: Anne Marie Thus, Meer dan gevenst (Netherlands); Krisztian Rozsa, Foundation for Rainbow Families (Hungary); Rita Marascalchi, FAMOS (Austria); Jordi Anton, FLG (Spain); Sari Kemppinen, Sateekaariperheet (Finland); Iina Särkkä, Sateekaariperheet (Finland); Nikos Chamtzoudis, OLKE (Greece), Ilaria Trivellato, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy); Dominique Boren (APGL (France).

Its mandate will expire at the Barcelona AGM on 12 March 2016.

### 2.2. Board meetings

The Board met 7 times:

- 12 March 2016 (Barcelona)
- 7 March 2016 (Skype)
- 01 February 2016 (Skype)
- 07 December 2015 (Skype)
- 02 November 2015 (Skype)
- 07 September 2015 (Skype)
- 28 March 2015 (AGM Konstanz)

### 2.3. Membership

By the end of February 2016, the association had 25 full member organizations, covering 18 European countries, and 4 supporting members.

In 2015, NELFA welcomed the following new Full Members:

- Rainbow Families LLH–Oslo (Norway)
- Rainbow Families in Brighton (UK)
- OII Intersex (Iceland)
- Russian LGBT Network (Russian Federation)



In early 2016, NELFA welcomed the following new Full Members:

Transföreningen FPES Full Personality Expression Sweden (Sweden)  
FPES  
TransInterQueer e.V. (Germany)  
LSVD Landesverband Berlin-Brandenburg  
Coming Out (Russian Federation)

In early 2016, NELFA welcomed the following new Supporting Members:

Familyship (Germany)

NELFA sincerely thanks the following individuals who contributed to its work as individual supporting members: Luís Amorim, Jarl Mattsson, Juha Jämsä; Dominique Gourod Boren, Jérôme Gourdon Boren, Maria von Känel, and Anne Marie Thus.

#### *2.4. Finances*

Membership fees for 2015 were collected from the majority of Full and Supporting Members. At the time of writing, two Full Members and one Supporting Member had not yet paid their 2015 dues. It is worth highlighting that in 2015, NELFA received a total of 10598,13 euros in donations from members, Board members and other individuals.

#### *2.5. Change of name*

NELFA has taken initial steps to formally and explicitly include families of Intersex people in its community by adding an “I” to its name and changing it into Network of European LGBTI Family Associations.

#### *2.6. Scheduling of the AGM*

The possibility of scheduling the AGM later than in March, as currently foreseen in its bylaws, is also being explored to allow for more flexibility in combining the meeting with other events in order to facilitate greater participation and impact.

### **3. Communication**

#### *3.1. Mailing lists*

NELFA used its membership network and mailing lists to share and disseminate information, with special focus on relevant European developments, as well as to express support and mobilize resources on a number of issues, including:

- Calling for support to the making of a video for promoting IFED in Russia (February 2016).
- European Citizens’ Initiative “Mum Dad and Kids” (January-February 2016).
- Public campaign in favour of civil unions legislation in Italy (January 2016).



- Sharing information on funding opportunities from EU and other sources (January 2016).
- Invite members to participate on a TV show (January 2016).
- Mobilize and raise financial support for the participation of children of rainbow families in the Eurochild's 2016 European conference - Why Europe needs to invest in children - to take place in Brussels on 5-7 July 2016 (January 2016).
- Supporting a fundraising campaign to publish the second edition of the currently only book in Greek about rainbow families (January 2016).
- Supporting the first social campaign about rainbow families in Poland by NELFA's member TOLERADO (November 2015)
- Inform members about relevant developments and documents adopted by EU institutions, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the Council of Europe and UN agencies (continuous).
- Disseminate information among members about funding, surveys, campaigns, research, studies and networking opportunities (continuous).
- Inform members about relevant legal and political developments in European countries (continuous).
- Facilitate contacts between interested individuals and member organizations (continuous).

### 3.2. Facebook

In March 2015, NELFA Facebook page counted 1219 fans, at the end of February 2016, the number of fans has risen to 1,449. The page is kept regularly updated with the support of 3 volunteers.

### 3.3. Website

NELFA website was hacked in September 2015. A provisional simplified version of the website is on-line with basic information. Work is in progress for launching a revamped website in the coming months.

IFED website is also in process of being improved both in its structure and design to make it more professional and flexible, allowing for inputs by national coordinators.

### 3.4. Twitter

NELFA Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/>  
Followers: 117

### 3.5. Press releases

- 26 February 2016: Italian Senate voted on draft civil unions law - NELFA is not in a celebratory mood
- 31 January 2016: NELFA in panel discussion 'Rainbow Families with(out) borders', organised by Ulrike Lunacek, Member of the European Parliament.
- 18 December 2015: Final vote in Portuguese Parliament opens joint adoption to same sex couples!



- 18. October 2015: The fourth European Rainbow Families Meeting was held in Oeiras, Portugal
- 15 October 2015: 4th Annual European Meeting of Rainbow Families - Welcoming family diversity in Portugal between 15 and 18 October 2015
- 7 September 2015: 1 May 2016 is International Family Equality Day (IFED) This year's motto: "Families without borders"
- 24 May 2015: NELFA welcomes Ireland to the family! (Celebrating the result of the civil marriage referendum in Ireland on 22 May 2015, extending marriage equality to same-sex couples).
- 6 May 2015: International Family Equality Day (IFED) celebrated at the European Parliament for the first time.
- 25 March 2015: Towns and Regions of Europe promote family diversity through IFED
- 5 March 2015: Slovenia joins the family!
- 18 January 2015: Adoption equality for all couples in Austria

### 3.6. Other Communication

Through its email and Facebook contacts, NELFA responded to several requests for information and guidance by individual and groups, including on issues related to:

- Social research on topics of relevance to rainbow families;
- Publicizing events and initiatives by member associations;
- Information about networking and funding opportunities by non-member associations.

### 3.7. Outreach

- NELFA initiated contacts with authorities and civil society in Estonia to promote IFED in the country, as a tool to enhance rainbow families' visibility and wider acceptance while forging stronger institutional alliances (February 2016).
- Contacts were established with the International Federation for Family Development in order to explore venues for future cooperation (February 2016).
- The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, US, was contacted to gather information on challenges faced by rainbow families in the US when moving from one state to another (January 2016).
- The US based Association Mormons Building Bridges was approached to engage them in the celebration of IFED 2016 (January 2016).
- NELFA Board member Dominique Boren met Harlem Désir, Secretary of State for European Affairs of France and presented NELFA activities (November 2015)
- NELFA established contacts with Eurochild in view of enhancing co-operation (October 2015)



## 4. Advocacy and Lobbying

### 4.1. European Meeting of LGBTI Families

The 2015 European Rainbow Families Meeting, organised by NELFA and ILGA-Portugal, took place in Oeiras, Portugal, on 15-18 October 2015. Parents and their children from Belgium, Brazil, Finland, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and USA met for a long weekend of networking, family fun and capacity building workshops and lectures on LGBTI family issues. Under the motto "The Kids are Alright" the meeting brought together European LGBTI family movements and it was a great opportunity to highlight the reality of European LGBTI parents and their children.

During the meeting, NELFA's Vice-President, Lisa Green, facilitated a workshop on "Empowering our children to navigate the straight world".

NELFA was also actively involved with ILGA-Portugal in organising the meeting's 'Rainbow Talks', in particular, the following 3 presentations:

#### Rainbow Talks - Part 1

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtxAmu\\_O\\_u0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtxAmu_O_u0)

Brune and Pablo Seban talked about growing up with two mothers and one father.

#### Rainbow Talks - Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZLJxv7TO9Q>

Lena Herrmann-Green talked about being the daughter of two mothers;

Luís Amorim (NELFA Board Member) talked about the impact of gender in his life as a parent.

### 4.2. International Family Equality Day (IFED)

- In 2015, the IFED was celebrated in 32 countries and 67 cities worldwide.
- NELFA celebrated IFED, on 5 May 2015, in the European Parliament in Brussels, with the participation of rainbow families from Spain/Catalonia, Belgium, Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The event marked the first time IFED was celebrated in the European Parliament and the first time that adult children of rainbow families addressed the European Parliament. A conference - "Families without borders" - addressed in particular the situation of European rainbow families as regards freedom of movement, calling on European Union institutions to take all the necessary measures to make freedom of movement also a reality for rainbow families. The celebration was made possible with the support of the Intergroup on LGBT Rights of the European Parliament.

### 4.3. Events attended by Board members on behalf of NELFA:

- NELFA's President, Maria Von Känel, participated in the panel discussion 'Rainbow Families with(out) borders', organised in Vienna, Austria, on 29 January 2016 by Ulrike Lunacek, Member of the European Parliament (The



Greens). In her statement, NELFA's President encouraged European institutions to work together to make freedom of movement a reality for rainbow families ensuring that their family relationships and parental rights are legally recognized and protected with no discrimination across Europe. [http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20160125\\_OTS0170/dziedzic-massive-probleme-fuer-regenbogenfamilien](http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160125_OTS0170/dziedzic-massive-probleme-fuer-regenbogenfamilien)

- NELFA joined the subcommittee on NGO LGBTIQ/SOGIE human rights, a network of associations working together to promote LGBTI rights in the UN. Maria von Känel, NELFA's President, participated in the subcommittee's first meeting on 15 January and also on 19 February 2016.
- NELFA joined FamiliesAndSocieties Third Annual Consortium Meeting in Vienna, January 13-15 2016. Maria von Känel, NELFA's President represented NELFA.
- Board member Nickolas Chamtzou represented NELFA at the European conference "Families beyond borders - What is the impact of migration on families?", co-organised by COFACE and the Bulgarian Center for Women Studies and Policy, on 5-6 November 2015 in Sofia, Bulgaria.
- NELFA's President, Maria von Känel, participated in the 2016 European Pro-Bono Forum organized by PILNET, the Global Network of Public Interest Law, contributing to the Session on Freedom of Movement in Europe for LGBT Families, in Rome, Italy, on 12 November 2015.
- NELFA's treasurer, Luis Amorim, represented NELFA at the seminar on free movement for LGBT families within the EU, organized by RFSL - The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights –during the Stockholm Pride (July 2015).
- NELFA's treasurer, Luis Amorim, made a presentation on behalf of NELFA at the Round Table organized by ILGA-Europe in Riga on 18 June, focusing on the plight of Rainbow Families, including those with children, in Europe.
- NELFA was also represented by board member Luis Amorim at the Equality Gala night organized in Brussels by ILGA-Europe on 24 June 2015, which provided a good opportunity for networking with high-level EU and member states officials.
- Association for LGBT Tolerado from Gdansk, Poland, invited NELFA's President, Maria Von Känel to participate in a debate on Rainbow Families on 30 May 2015 on the occasion of the First Equality March in Gdansk. <http://www.trojmiasto.pl/I-Trojmiejski-Marsz-Rownosci-imp401038.html>
- The third International Ministerial IDAHO 2015 FORUM, International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia, on "Ending hate crime and violence", held on 10-12 May in Montenegro, was attended by NELFA's President, Maria Von Känel.





## 5. Capacity building

- In January 2016, in cooperation with In Dialogue, NELFA applied to the programme Erasmus+ call 2016 – with the project “Adequate and equal legal protection for rainbow families” offering funding opportunities for professional competence development of individuals and capacity building of LGBT\* organizations through professional trainings, job shadowing, conferences and meetings. The outcomes of the candidacy will be known in April 2016.
- NELFA’s President participated in International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in the US on 6-19 July.
- On the occasion of the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference, on 28-31 October 2015, NELFA contributed by sharing its experience at the ILGA-Europe workshop entitled “Let’s talk about family diversity!”. NELFA also organized a workshop on “International Family Equality Day - raising awareness and forging new alliances”
- NELFA held a Skype conference with the Croatian rainbow families association, Dugine Obitelji, for sharing information on how to organize IFED events and to exchange experiences about challenges faced by rainbow families (May 2015).
- NELFA held a Skype conference with the Russian rainbow families association "Future4you" from Moscow and "Rainbow Future" from Saint-Petersburg, for sharing information on how to organize IFED events and to exchange experiences about challenges faced by rainbow families (March 2016).
- NELFA held a Skype conference with the Australia rainbow families association "Rainbow Future" from Sydney, for sharing information on how to organize IFED events and to exchange experiences about challenges faced by rainbow families (March 2016).

## 6. Co-operation with external partners

### 6.1. United Nations

- NELFA submitted written input to the report by the UN Human Rights Council on “Protection of the family: contribution of the family to the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for its members, particularly through its role in poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development” (October 2015). An Advanced Unedited Version (A/HRC/31/37) of the report was published online already, together with the various submissions made by NGOs (including NELFA’s). The report will be delivered by the High Commissioner in March 2016.  
[www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/ProtectionFamily.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/ProtectionFamily.aspx)
- Through the Council of Europe's Conference of International NGOs, NELFA submitted input to the UN Special Rapporteur on issues related to the impact of fundamentalism on freedom of assembly and association, in January 2016.



- NELFA submitted a written contribution to the preparation of the UN Secretary General's report to the General Assembly on "Protecting children from bullying" (July 2015).
- NELFA promoted actively the UN video campaign for IDAHOT 2016, by asking member organisations to send in videos of rainbow families, following the specific request for NELFA's collaboration by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in February 2016.

### 6.2. European Union

- NELFA mobilized its members and submitted input to the European Commission's Questionnaire on LGBTI Campaigns. A planned EU-wide campaign aiming at reaching out to the moveable middle and increase social acceptance for the rights of LGBTI people (February 2016).
- As member of the Fundamental Rights Platform, NELFA responded to the stakeholders' consultation by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and submitted its comments to the FRA draft annual work programme 2017 (November 2015).
- In response to the EU Commission's "Consultation on EU Citizenship: Share your opinion on our common values, rights and democratic participation", NELFA reiterated the need to guarantee freedom of movement for rainbow families and their children in the EU (October 2015)

### 6.3. Council of Europe

- NELFA provided input to the survey conducted by the Council of Europe (CoE) on good practices in the area of "education for intercultural dialogue" (December 2015).
- NELFA organized an information stand in the framework of the presentation of the report "Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and regions" at the Council of Europe on the occasion of the 28th session of the Congress of local and regional authorities, in Strasbourg, on 23 March 2015, when a resolution on "Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and regions" was adopted by majority vote. The resolution invited local and regional authorities to, among other things, commit to diversity policies inclusive of LGBT rights; to work closely with LGBT advocacy organisations and human rights NGOs; to promote good practice through networks such as the "Rainbow Cities" and to ensure the delivery of discrimination-free policies and services. The report mentioned for the first time the importance of celebrating International Family Equality Day (IFED), a NELFA initiative, under local activities aimed at raising awareness to promote a tolerant and cohesive society.

### 6.4. Ilga-Europe

- NELFA maintained regular contacts with ILGA-Europe. It participated in and contributed to ILGA-Europe Annual Conferences, including by organizing thematic workshops.



- A bilateral meeting to co-ordinate ILGA-Europe and NELFA strategies on family equality is being planned.

### 6.5. ILGA

- NELFA continued sharing information and co-ordinating with ILGA, particularly in relation to advocacy and lobby activities towards the UN system.

### 6.6. Others

- In 2015, NELFA became a member of a newly formed NGOs committee on LGBTIQ/SOGI human rights issues, aiming at coordinating actions, responses and lobbying with regard to the activities of the UN Human Rights Council.
- Information about 2015 IFED Annual Report was published in the November 2015 issue of the European Rainbow Cities quarterly newsletter. Several Rainbow Cities are actively involved in organizing IFED 2016 together with local rainbow families associations.
- European Rainbow Cities mentioned for the first time the IFED in the fourth edition of their newsletter, in April 2015. The importance of celebrating IFED was highlighted with an invitation to join in with local activities aimed at raising awareness to promote tolerant and cohesive societies.

## 7. Publications

- The IFED 2015 Annual Report was published, printed in 1000 copies and posted on the IFED website. It was used again as a practical toolkit to address lobbying strategies and as a means to strengthen the visibility of rainbow families around the world as well as to form alliances with representatives from public services, institutions and political subjects in order to foster the recognition of all families. The report featured contributions by Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/Austria), Vice-President of the European Parliament and Co-Chair of the LGBTI Intergroup of the EP and by Yoömi Renström (Rapporteur) in the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Council of Europe.
- The NELFA leaflet was updated, printed and posted on the NELFA website.

Rita Marascalchi  
Board Member  
12/03/2016