

**Meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions (PETI) on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018. Petitioner: Elenia Maravelia (NELFA Board member)**

Thank you for inviting me in today's meeting. I decided to start a petition demanding the EU takes a clear stand in support of the rights of LGBT parents and their children and that it passes on legislation that will make birth and marriage certificates issued from one member state valid across the EU.

As I describe in my petition I am Greek and my wife is British. Our children were born in Spain where the law allows two women to be registered as the parents of a child even when they are not married or in a civil partnership. Our first daughter, Francesca was born before we got married. On her birth certificate you can read mother A and mother B. But both Greece and the UK claim that the Spanish birth certificate is not valid in our home countries therefore refusing to give our daughter a nationality and a passport. Francesca was diagnosed with cancer when she was 3 months old. Suddenly not having a passport took a new meaning. I am sure that those of you that have children would travel to the end of the world in order to find a cure. But my family didn't have that option, **we do not have freedom of movement in Europe.**

Fortunately, Francesca managed to beat cancer thanks to the great doctors in Spain. And because of her cancer the official responsible for transcribing her birth certificate turned a blind eye and made a partial registration of her birth. Partial because my wife's name was not included. If it wasn't for my daughter's very serious illness, we would still be fighting for a passport, her fundamental right to an identity, name, surname **and her nationality. Those are rights that we all take for granted but that my children do not have.**

Every time my family crosses the border of Spain my daughters lose a parent. We cannot move freely, we cannot make plans about starting a life somewhere else. If something was to happen to me while we were abroad, my children would become orphans. **They cannot enjoy the rights other european children have, just because they have two lesbian mums.**

The Right to Free Movement does not exist for my family. Can you imagine your children automatically having one parent everytime you travel abroad? Can you imagine your own country not recognising your children and the status of the other parent? **Can you imagine your own children, living in a democratic european country not having the fundamental civil rights?**

I understand that family law is competence of the member state but the EU cannot sit back while its citizens are facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation and children are denied their right to family life. In the Treaty of the Functioning of Europe in article 10 it states that the EU shall aim to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation. There is no denying that my family is discriminated. **All I ask is for our voice to be heard and our civil rights to be taken into account.** All I ask is for my children's birth certificates to be accepted across the EU even when the member state does not have national laws allowing same sex people to have children.

I hope that the Parliament would take my petition under serious consideration so a change in EU law can be implemented soon. **Bear in mind that LGBTI rights are human rights.**

Thank you.

