



## NELFA's Annual Report March 2018-March 2019

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## 1. Foreword

NELFA celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and we can look back into a relatively short, but intensive and successful history of our Network. In the meantime, NELFA became a key partner for LGBTIQ\* (families) organisations on the European level and the EU institutions in Brussels. Our expertise is welcome and expected on different occasions, for reports, expert articles on rainbow families, for speeches and presentations at conferences, workshops or other meetings. In the framework of Erasmus+, NELFA was (and still is) able to organise three projects with around 60 participants in total, from various EU members countries.

NELFA is almost every day present on Facebook, with a new, comprehensive and steadily updated website, a newsletter and press releases on different topics send out regularly.

NELFA co-organised with its national member organisation, European Rainbow Families Meetings in Paris 2010, Lloret del Mar 2012, Cologne 2014, Oueiras 2015 and Berlin 2018 and we will have more in the future, hopefully. Not to forget our Rainbow Families Conferences: in Naples 2017, Lisbon 2018 or this year in Zagreb. And NELFA is contributing to the International Family Equality Day (IFED) since the beginning in 2012. This is really wonderful!

NELFA is stronger than ever, but at the same time extremely weak. NELFA still suffers from a very tight budget, our workload is high, but we don't have so many shoulders to distribute it. How can we improve our effectiveness in general, our advocacy and, yes, how we can manage to survive?

We still need the full support of our membership, of active volunteers everywhere and dedicated allies all over Europe. NELFA is not just the Board, it is, indeed, a Network of LGBTIQ\* parents (to-be) and their children, their relatives and friends. We can be powerful, we need to be powerful. We still have a wide range of unfulfilled topics on the agenda, especially in Eastern Europe and the Balkans: full legal equality, recognition and protection and more and more acceptance for rainbow family diversity.

See below a couple of highlights of our achievements and progress in 2018 and early 2019:

- NELFA's little European LGBTIQ\* Families Meeting in Berlin (+IFED celebration) with around 90 participants from eleven countries, co-organised with LSVD's Rainbow Family Centre
- NELFA's first attendance at the General Assembly of COFACE (Confederation of Family Organisations) in Brussels and the first celebration of the International Day of Families, i.e. with a picture collage by NELFA and the European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBTI Rights
- NELFA's support of the International Family Equality Day 2018 "Children's Rights Matter" which was commemorated in 111 cities in 48 countries worldwide. NELFA itself organised a stand at the OUT Village in Brussels' Royal Parc, together with its Belgian member Homoparentalités
- NELFA's keynote speech at the fourth equal opportunities office awareness event for IDAHOT 2018 in the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union in Brussels



- NELFA's successful Erasmus+ project "Chances and challenges for rainbow families" with 26 so-called mobilities in Copenhagen, Gouda/The Netherlands, Lisbon and Berlin
- NELFA's presentation at the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions in Brussels, including meetings with several Members of the Parliament (i.e. LGBTI Intergroup)
- NELFA's long-awaited website relaunch for [www.nelfa.org](http://www.nelfa.org) with a lot of new features
- NELFA's contribution to the comprehensive report and important resolution on rainbow family rights for the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Council of Europe
- NELFA's participation at ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference in Brussels, including a workshop on the Coman case and a panel discussion concerning the EU elections in 2019
- NELFA's presentation at the JURI Committee of the European Parliament in Brussels, for the hearing on cross-border family disputes ("Safeguarding children's rights")
- NELFA's participation in an advocacy weekend in Zagreb, including a Parliamentary hearing concerning a new foster care law and a panel discussion, entitled "Road to marriage equality"
- NELFA's publication of its first scientific article (the Coman case and its implications) during a meeting with the EU Commission in Brussels (Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality)

The report below presents an overview of the activities conducted by NELFA between the AGM in Lisbon (March 2018) and the AGM to be held in Helsinki (9 March 2019).

## 2. Administration

### 2.1. Board

The current Board consists of the following ten persons (from six different countries):

- **President:** Dominique Boren, APGL (France)
- **Vice-President:** Giuseppina La Delfa, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)
- **Treasurer:** Giovanni Fantoni, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)
- **Secretary:** Björn Sieverding, LSVD (Germany)
  
- **Board Members:**

Juan Bastón, Son Nuestros Hijos (Spain), Susana Cárdenaz, Galehi (Spain), Esteban Jiménez, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy); Marcos Jornet, Son Nuestros Hijos (Spain), Anu Kantola, Sateenkaariperheet (Finland); Veneta Limberova, Deystvie (Bulgaria); Eleni Maravelia, FLG (Spain); Daniel Martinovic, Dugine obitelji (Croatia); Jesús Santos Homobono, Galehi (Spain)



A new Board candidate is Joanna (Asia) Smiecinska from Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny (Poland). Esteban Jiménez (Famiglie Arcobaleno, Italy) has resigned his Board position. Furthermore, Anu Kantola (Sateenkaariperheety, Finland) and Susana (Gus) Cárdenaz (Galehi, Spain) won't continue their work. Many thanks for their contribution and support during their mandate!!

## 2.2. Board meetings

The Board met 12 times within the past 12 months:

- 17 March 2018 (AGM Lisbon)
- 10 April 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 08 May 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 09 June 2018 (Board meeting Paris)
- 03 July 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 11 September 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 09 October 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 13 November 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 11 December 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 08 January 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 05 February 2018 (Skype meeting)
- 09 March 2019 (AGM Helsinki)

Besides the Board meeting in Paris (June 2018), Board members had only a few possibilities to meet each other (with at least three Board members), i.e. in Berlin (April/May 2018 – Families Meeting and Erasmus+ course), Brussels (October 2018 – ILGA-Europe Conference) and Zagreb (December 2018). Unfortunately, some Board members couldn't find the time to take part in our regular meetings.

## 2.3. Membership

The past twelve months were rather successful regarding our membership. Our efforts to expand the Network to Eastern Europe and the Balkans seem to bear fruits: At the AGM in Lisbon 2018, we were able to welcome **Deystvie** in NELFA, a youth organisation in Bulgaria with a rainbow families' group. Chair Veneta Limberova became Board member and we had several occasions to cooperate, in particular for a workshop on the Coman case at ILGA-Europe's recent Annual Conference in Brussels.

We are also very pleased that the LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, **ERA**, joined NELFA as full member. The umbrella organisation covers a lot of countries which were – so far - not in our grasp: Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, FRY Macedonia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Turkey. The Croatian Rainbow Family Organisation **Dugine obitelji** became a full NELFA member in early 2018, the Albanian "Open Mind Spectrum" (**OMSA**) some weeks later a supporting member. Both ERA co-chairs take part in the current NELFA Erasmus+ project. We contributed to ERA's Annual Conference in Skopje with a workshop (Board member Daniel Martinovic). NELFA is dedicated to pursue a close relationship in the future for establishing an active rainbow families' movement in the Balkans.



The third new full member is **Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny**. It is the first officially registered rainbow families' organisation in Poland, seated in Poznań. The founders come from two supporting members of NELFA, **TRiP** and **Tolerado** (both since 2018). They took already part in several NELFA Erasmus+ mobilities and in the recent little European Rainbow Families Meeting in Berlin.

It is important to emphasise that the Erasmus+ projects offer a very good opportunity to reach out to activists and to connect their groups with NELFA. Two other organisations became supporting members through a participation of their staff in training courses or job-shadowing: **Eesti LGBT Ühing**, the Estonian LGBT Association (the first NELFA member in the Baltics), and **Accept Romania**. The latter also co-organised the Coman case workshop in Brussels, with Deystvie, ILGA-Europe and NELFA.

Finally, another Spanish association joined our Network as full member: **Fundación Triángulo** with their section for rainbow families. There are still some other groups with whom the NELFA Board is in contact. A group of rainbow families in the Czech Republic considers a closer cooperation as well as the Ukrainian LGBT Association LIGA. Another possibility to attract active volunteers may be the individual supporting membership which is possible after the bylaws. Besides our former Board member Luís Amorim (ILGA Portugal), we were able to integrate **Alina Tryfonidou** from UK. She is Professor at University of Reading and works on the legal situation of same-sex couples and rainbow families. She wrote the analysis on the Coman case, the first scientific publication of NELFA.

Unfortunately, we have also lost one full member organisation: **TransInterQueer e.V.** in Germany. Bundesverband Trans\* may be joining the NELFA Network. Trans, Intersex and Queer\* parenting should be further in the focus of NELFA. TGEU and OII could be partners for drafting parenting Guidelines. Both European Networks are very interested in a future cooperation concerning this topic.

The **Russian LGBT Network** is still in a very delicate situation while the second wave of persecutions and violent attacks against LGBTIQ\* people has started in Chechnya. Chair Mikail Tumasov stated in October 2018 that the organisation still suffers from a considerable shortage of money and won't be able to pay the NELFA fee. Luckily, Board members were able to sort out this delicate situation and manage to retain Russian LGBT Network as full member.

In early March 2019, NELFA included 27 full and 7 supporting member organisations, covering 28 European countries. After some up's and down's in the past, we achieved a new membership record!

## 2.4. Finances

Once again, the words of the last annual report may be reiterated: NELFA's budget is still very tight. It derives from membership fees and donations; Board members bear a large part of the costs on their own. Specific resources like NELFA's Erasmus+ projects do not give us a large financial scope.

We need substantially more financial possibilities: i.e. fundraising ideas, individual fees, long-year support via EU grants etc. to cover costs for Board tasks, bigger campaigns and/or paid staff to cope with the increasing workload regarding office duties (i.e. contact care, event overview, archiving).

Good news: The Erasmus+ project in 2017/2018 ended with a financial plus of 3.669,96 €. 1.300 € are remaining money out of the grant (co-called "organisational support") and 2.369,96 € are donations!



LSVD in Germany paid the membership fee for COFACE in 2018, many thanks again for this contribution! And NELFA is grateful to Board Members: Esteban Jiménez, Dominique Boren and Björn Sieverding for their additional 100 € (each) to cover the costs for the Rainbow Families Meeting in Berlin. And, of course, thank you for all the other contributions, we just forgot to mention here.

## 2.5. Administration

The administration tasks were less time-consuming than in 2017. We had no further changes in the Executive Board and therefore no need to update the “Moniteur Belge”. But nevertheless, sometimes a lot of patience is necessary to fulfil the bureaucratic duties of NELFA: Giovanni Fantoni, our treasurer, did not let up to solve the Network’s tax obligations in Belgium. We had to pay (twice) additional fees, because we didn’t provide the necessary declarations in time (it was the first time, NELFA was asked to do so...). At the end, Giovanni solved the problems in steady contact with the officials in Brussels.

NELFA’s treasurer is, to continue here, still responsible for our bank account at CRELAN in Brussels and he holds the main administration rights for NELFA’s website and the email provider, “Hostpoint” in Switzerland. Secretary Björn Sieverding manages inter alia the addresses [info@nelfa.org](mailto:info@nelfa.org) and [media@nelfa.org](mailto:media@nelfa.org) and the internal Email Board platform ([Board\\_NELFA@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Board_NELFA@yahoogroups.com)). He has access to the new website’s dash board, as well as Board member Daniel Martinovic.

The NELFA Committee email-address isn’t in use because of lacking administration rights. We need to revive this kind of network-platform as well as the planned ex-Board-member-Email-exchange.

NELFA still uses “Bitrix 24” for Board polls and “pcloud” for the data storage. Decisions are also taken via WhatsApp. The Board usually meets up via Skype, another tool was once Facebook messenger.

## 3. Communication

### 3.1. Mailing, Messenger exchange

NELFA receives quite often emails from members, external stakeholders and rainbow families who ask for our expertise on different topics. The Board tries to answer as fast as possible and to give advice or at least to provide some ideas or further addresses to contact others. In the meantime, this regular communication is also established via Facebook messenger and the website. We express support and mobilise resources, an elementary component of NELFA and to some extent its reason of existence.

- Cooperation with Deystvie and LGBT Denmark concerning a court procedure in Bulgaria (abduction of a child, Danish mother without any rights), NELFA connected the groups with Robert Wintemute and Kees Waaldijk for some further advice (March/April 2018)
- NELFA connected COFACE Families Europe and apgl in France to send a letter to President Macron concerning the Work-Life-Balance Directive (April 2018)
- NELFA connected a surrogacy expert in Germany (Florian Joos) with a German-Spanish couple in Madrid to learn more about the legal parenting possibilities (April 2018)
- NELFA cooperated with Ana Macedo (Portugal) concerning her website launch “TheKidsAreAllright.com”, i.e. with links and logos (May 2018)



- NELFA asked the membership to contribute to a new study on surrogacy parenting at ULB in Brussels, a project led by Professor Salvatore d'Amore (May 2018)
- NELFA connected a staff member of the Council of the EU with Homoparentalités to search for surrogacy parenting possibilities (June 2018)
- NELFA supported an open letter of Famiglie Arcobaleno to the city of Empoli concerning the wording in school forms (parent1/2 or father/mother) (June 2018)
- NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding wrote a commentary on a Pope's statement concerning rainbow families for the German newspaper "taz" (June 2018)
- NELFA helped the city of Cologne (Susanne Bonnemann) to prepare a rainbow family workshop in Klausenburg/Romania with Network's material (June 2018)
- NELFA subscribed to the FRA platform and took part in a survey concerning the (financial) needs of LGBTIQ\* organisations and their "real-life situation" (August 2018)
- NELFA asked the membership for spreading the boycott of the referendum in Romania concerning the term "family" in the Constitution (September 2018)
- NELFA connected a German/Austrian lesbian couple with LSVD concerning their non-recognition regarding certain tax credits (September 2018)
- NELFA exchange with LGL (Lithuania) about a court case (recognition of a same-sex marriage contracted abroad) (October 2018)
- NELFA support for a German-Kenyan gay couple and the possibilities of international adoption from Africa, suggested cooperation with LSVD (October 2018)
- NELFA connected Pedro Costa (University in Lisbon) and the membership to help with a new study on gay parenting through adoption (October 2018)
- After a first call for help from Galesh, NELFA supported Son Nuestros Hijos' campaign to respect families with children born through surrogacy: RespectMeRespectUs. Other subscribers of the manifest: i.e. Galehi, Famiglie Arcobaleno, Meer Dan Gewenst, Homoparentalités, LSVD, Sateenkaariperheet, Galesh, apgl (November 2018)
- NELFA exchange with Jelle Martens about funding opportunities with the foundation "giveadamfoundation" and a possible cooperation with "Workpride" (November 2018)
- NELFA exchange with Diana Adams who coordinates a LGBTIQ\* family lawyer network, invitation to a next common meeting in Frankfurt am Main in April 2019 (November 2018)
- NELFA advised a Greek/Spanish lesbian couple in Belgium how to get a common birth certificate for their child, cooperation with Homoparentalités (December 2018)
- Exchange with Zuzana Sluneczkova from Czech Republic who wants to join NELFA with her group (until now, they didn't come back with an application) (December 2018)
- Exchange with Deystvie/Bulgaria about the recent Parliamentary answer of the EU Commission about how to start a complaint if member states do not accept the free movement rights of EU citizens and their spouses (January 2019)
- NELFA connected US researcher Jamie Campbell Naidoo with the membership to provide children's books concerning rainbow families (January 2019)
- NELFA advised a Dutch/French lesbian couple how to obtain a common birth certificate in France (through a complaint in Nantes or a stepchild adoption process) (January 2019)
- NELFA supported Lawrence Shimmel's book translation via NELFA exchange (January 2019)
- Steady NELFA exchange with several same-sex couples with struggles: i.e. Jakub and Dawid Kwiecinski (plus lawyer), Leandro Barreto and François Souyri, Pavel and Yefgeni Stotsko



### 3.2. Facebook

NELFA is regularly online on Facebook and shares nearly every day at least one post. On **28<sup>th</sup> of January 2019**, 2.284 “likes” were recorded (2.029 in March 2018, 1.837 in March 2017 and 1.449 in March 2016). NELFA published 338 posts (stand: 27<sup>th</sup> of January). The most successful ones were in general: The Pope’s statement on 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 that “LGBTIQ\* are not families” (reach: 8.548 people, 1.600 clicks, 590 comments), the results of the US midterm elections with some rainbow family politicians, posted on 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 (reach: 7.805, 480 clicks, 594 comments) and a new US study concerning the well-being of children in rainbow families, posted on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2018 (reach: 7.555 people, 360 clicks, 631 comments). Regarding NELFA messages for the own community only, the US midterm election results were the most discussed, secondly the Council of Europe resolution on rainbow family rights (October) and thirdly, the election of the new NELFA Board in Lisbon (March).

Since Caroline Ausserer (TransInterQueer e.V.) left the Board in March 2018, Secretary Björn Sieverding (LSVD) remains the only administrator of NELFA’s Facebook account. Besides him, former Vice-President Luís Amorim is posting regularly. The other registered FB editors (7) were inactive.

### 3.3. Website

In September 2018, NELFA’s new website [www.nelfa.org](http://www.nelfa.org) went online. The relaunch took a long time, but finally, the result is highly satisfactory – thanks to the graphic design of Francesca Silvestri (Famiglie Arcobaleno) and new features like “news blog”, “NELFA input” and “NELFA exchange”. Secretary Björn Sieverding keeps the website updated, Board member Daniel Martinovic gives technical support.

There were a lot of positive echo after the relaunch, i.e. from COFACE and ILGA-Europe. It’s NELFA’s showcase and we should highlight it (also to reach out to possible financial supporters).

### 3.4. Twitter

NELFA is present on twitter (@NELFA\_LGBT), but only on a low level. We have (18<sup>th</sup> of February) currently 578 followers (457 in 2017, 295 in 2016) and we are following 175 twitter users (161 in 2018 and 127 in 2017). Within the last year, NELFA posted (only) 20 tweets (35 in 2017, 124 in 2016) and retweeted 316 messages (214 in 2017 and 114 in 2016). Editor is Björn Sieverding.

It would be good to have a new editor who is steadily taking care of the Twitter account and to attract a sort of NELFA community. Currently, our tweets get nearly no feedback at all.

### 3.5. Press releases

NELFA published in total ten press releases within the last year (14 in 2017, 32 in 2016). This means a declining number of media outcome. This has to do with the workload, but also with the low feedback. Our press releases go to the membership, some major allies and LGBTIQ\* (online) magazines. In addition, they are posted on Facebook and on the new NELFA website. In detail:



**19 March 2018:**

A refreshed crew for the rainbow families' movement in Europe! NELFA elected a new Board at its Annual General Meeting in Lisbon (17 March)

**01 May 2018:**

Children's Rights Matter: European Rainbow Families Meeting in Berlin (28/29 April)

**03 May 2018:**

Italy: A courageous decision and the triumph of reason! – A lesbian couple successfully registered their son. (Micaela Ghisleni, Chiara Foglietta and their case in Turin)

**05 June 2018:**

Coman case decision: Wind of change for rainbow families in Europe!? (ECJ judgment in Luxembourg concerning the term "spouse" in the freedom of movement Directive 2004/38)

**12 July 2018:**

Fundamental rights are not negotiable: Freedom of movement for rainbow families within the EU! (NELFA Board Member Eleni Maravelia at the EP's Committee on Petitions)

**07 September 2018:**

Rainbow families in Europe: A new home on the internet! – NELFA proudly presents its website relaunch and invites you to visit [www.nelfa.org](http://www.nelfa.org)

**03 October 2018:**

A leap forward for rainbow families in Eastern Europe and the Balkans! – NELFA welcomes new member organisations in Poland and Western Balkans/Turkey

**04 October 2018:**

Referendum in Romania: It's an attack against all families! – NELFA supports the boycott of the upcoming plebiscite on 6th and 7th of October 2018

**09 October 2018:**

Romania: The failed referendum should be a turning point! – NELFA demands new legislative efforts to recognise rainbow families in the country

**23 January 2019:**

New report on rainbow families' rights: The 'Coman judgment' and its implications. A clear work order for the EU institutions! – NELFA claims on further efforts to guarantee freedom of movement

Special thanks go again to Board member Eleni Maravelia and her wife Kate for the proofreading of press releases and newsletter texts! Another Thank you for similar help goes to Joe Hayer (Metro/UK).

### 3.6. Newsletter

Since 2016, NELFA already published eleven newsletters. The last ones were:

- A) NELFA Newsletter March 2018: <https://bit.ly/2Fcn5c5>
- B) NELFA Newsletter June 2018: <https://bit.ly/2HqXqN9>
- C) NELFA Newsletter October 2018: <https://bit.ly/2Um5ghY>
- D) NELFA Newsletter January 2019: <https://bit.ly/2B9yOsb>

In the course of the new General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR"), that came into effect on 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, we had to review our subscriber list by active confirmations. The result was a loss of a lot of recipients – from 194 to actually: 64. However, those "relevant" clients are important for NELFA



and we should continue with the newsletters. For example, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe gets information through this NELFA media offer. Recently, they asked us to send the new General Rapporteur on LGBTI Rights to our conference in Zagreb – because of the newsletter publication. Furthermore, it is a tool to archive NELFA activities, photos and links. So, at the end, it is a sort of collective memory for the whole Network and a source of knowledge about rainbow families.

One aim is still to keep the newsletter shorter. This would mean a publication at shorter intervals. But, again, this is mostly a question of capacities. A bigger “media team” would be gratifying.

### 3.7. Outreach

NELFA had different opportunities to communicate with other LGBTIQ\* experts during conferences, meetings and other events. See more below, Point 4.

## 4. Advocacy and Lobbying

### 4.1. European Meeting of Rainbow Families

NELFA co-organised a little European Rainbow Families Meeting in 2018, together with the LSVD Rainbow Family Centre in Berlin – on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of April. Both event days were attended by around 80-90 people who came from eleven different countries. We had expected much more participants from Germany. Unfortunately, the Rainbow Family Centre had encountered internal issues which may have contributed to a low participation. Nonetheless, it was a cosy “Welcome Party” in sunny Berlin and a successful IFED celebration. Those meetings are a core value of NELFA, and we should encourage member organisations to make such events possible also in the future. Luckily, there are some plans for similar activities in 2019: The Rainbow Families Conference of Dugine obitelji and NELFA in Zagreb (10-12 May), FLG’s Family Pride in Barcelona (28-29 June) and the Rainbow Family Festival on Aeroe Island in Denmark (26/07-02/08). However, the last edition of the Festival was cancelled due to a lack of participants. The wish to come together seems to be widespread, but the chance to realise such a European meeting is still complicated and expensive.

### 4.2. International Family Equality Day (IFED) and International Day of Families

On 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, the 7<sup>th</sup> International Family Equality Day (IFED) was celebrated in 48 countries and 111 cities worldwide. NELFA contributed i.e. with the Boat tour on the river Spree in Berlin (see above) and a common stand with our Belgian member organisation Homoparentalités at the OUT Village in Brussels’ Royal Parc. The motto was “CHILDREN’S RIGHTS MATTER”. Only some days before the official celebration, the new IFED Network was officially founded in Geneva, Switzerland. NELFA supports their work and decided already at the AGM in Lisbon to contribute with at least one event per year. In 2019, there will be a next OUT Village participation in Brussels and the possibility to have an IFED event during the Rainbow Families Conference in Zagreb, i.e. with Board member’s and local families. The upcoming claim of IFED 2019 will be “FAMILIES: UNITED WE STAND”. For current information, everybody is invited to subscribe the IFED Network’s newsletter or to visit their homepage.



NELFA's member organisations are free to decide if they would like to join IFED events or not. Some may prefer to celebrate the United Nation's "International Day of Families" which is held on 15<sup>th</sup> of May (i.e. Son Nuestros Hijos did it). In 2018, Board Member Marcos Jornet attended the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of COFACE Families Europe (and their AGM) in Brussels. At the same time, NELFA published a picture collage which was created with support of the EP's Intergroup on LGBTI Rights.

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

Board members attended a wide range of events on behalf of NELFA.

##### **April 2018:**

- NELFA Board member Marcos Jornet participated at ILGA-Europe's Network Meeting in Brussels (together with TGEU, OII, IGLYO, EuroBiNet, the European Lesbian Conference etc.)
- Board member Daniel Martinovic started Dugine obitelji's promo-tour for their rainbow families' children's book (i.e. in Belgrade/Serbia) and introduced NELFA to the public
- NELFA Board members Dominique Boren, Jesús Santos Homobono and Björn Sieverding took part in the European Rainbow Families Meeting in Berlin, together with other active volunteers

##### **Mai 2018:**

- NELFA Board members Dominique Boren, Giuseppina La Delfa, Veneta Limberova and Jesús Santos Homobono attended the Erasmus+ training "Inspiring facilitation, teaching and training for LGBT" in Berlin-Moabit with other activists (i.e. from Croatia and Sweden)
- Board member Björn Sieverding presented NELFA at a common stand with the Belgian member organisation Homoparentalités in Brussels (OUT Village) to celebrate IFED 2018
- NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding held the keynote speech at the IDAHOT event in the Council of the European Union in Brussels. On the same day, Board member Daniel Martinovic talked at a meeting of the Spanish Embassy (i.e. with Marc Brell López from Galesh)
- NELFA Board member Marcos Jornet participated in the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of COFACE Families Europe and their AGM in Brussels (see above)
- NELFA Board members took part in several Pride and summer events (also in June): i.e. Giovanni Fantoni and Esteban Jiménez in Genova, Giuseppina La Delfa in Avellino, Marcos Jornet in Madrid, Veneta Limberova in Sofia, Dominique Boren in Paris etc.

##### **June 2018:**

- NELFA President Dominique Boren invited the Board to Paris for a common face-to-face meeting. It was attended by Eleni Maravelia, Gus Cárdenaz, Marcos Jornet, Giovanni Fantoni, Jesús Santos Homobono, Esteban Jiménez and Björn Sieverding
- Board member Björn Sieverding represented NELFA at ILGA-Europe's Equality Gala in Brussels

##### **July 2018:**

- NELFA Board member Eleni Maravelia presented her own family case at the EP's Committee on Petitions and met up with several MEP's and Intergroup representatives

##### **September 2018:**

- NELFA Vice-President Giuseppina La Delfa took part in the QueerLab event in Vitulano
- Board members Marcos Jornet and Jesús Santos Homobono attended the FELGBT "Jornadas de Familias" (after the meeting, Fundación Triángulo applied for a NELFA membership...)

**October 2018:**

- Board member Daniel Martinovic took part in ERA's Annual Conference in Skopje (FYR Macedonia) and held a workshop on rainbow families (including NELFA)
- NELFA Board members Dominique Boren, Eleni Maravelia, Daniel Martinovic and Björn Sieverding participated at ILGA's Annual Conference in Brussels, held i.e. a workshop on the Coman case, joined a panel discussion with MEP's and organised a little book sign-in with former Board member Luís Amorim (Filipe de Bruxelles)

**November 2018:**

- Board member Veneta Limberova hosted an international conference on rainbow families "on the move" in Sofia and introduced some facts about NELFA
- Active volunteer Joanna Smiecinska (FTR) attended the first Erasmus+ course in the new NELFA project "Joining forces for the well-being of rainbow families" in Copenhagen
- Active volunteer Regina Dzugkoeva (Russian LGBT Network) took part in another training with "In Dialogue" (Copenhagen), our partner organisation in the current Erasmus+ project
- NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding presented cross-border cases of rainbow families at a JURI Committee hearing in the European Parliament
- Active volunteers Dragana Todorovic and Arber Kodra took part in the Erasmus+ training "Inspiring facilitation, teaching and training for LGBT" in Barcelona and met up with Board member Eleni Maravelia (FLG hosted the training course in their venue!)
- NELFA President Dominique Boren took part in a meeting with French President Macron

**December 2018:**

- Board members Giovanni Fantoni and Esteban Jiménez took part in a protest march against the non-recognition of a lesbian couple as mothers of their child in a birth certificate (Genova)
- Board member Daniel Martinovic invited President Dominique Boren and Secretary Björn Sieverding to an advocacy weekend in Zagreb, i.e. to discuss a new foster care law in Croatia and to take part in a panel discussion about marriage equality (paid by the French embassy)

**January 2019:**

- Active volunteer Isidora Isakov (Serbia) took part in another training course within the Erasmus+ project "Joining forces for the well-being of rainbow families" in Copenhagen
- NELFA President Dominique Boren and Secretary Björn Sieverding met up with Monika Ladmanová (EU Commission) in Brussels to talk about a closer relationship in the future
- Board member Björn Sieverding took part in an information seminar of AEF Europe in Brussels to be able to apply for a new Erasmus+ KA2 project (in 2019 or 2020)
- NELFA Vice-President Giuseppina La Delfa took part in a ILGA-Europe workshop in Brussels concerning the "anti-gender movement"

**February 2019:**

- *NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding presented NELFA and its tasks at a meeting with EU Commission staff to discuss freedom of movement obstacles and common goals*
- Active volunteer Boris Vrdoljak (Dugine obitelji) took part in a "Inspiring facilitation, teaching and training" course of "In Dialogue" in Gouda/The Netherlands, joined by Björn Sieverding

**March 2019:**

- Six active volunteers (from Poland, Romania, Serbia [ERA] and the Russian LGBT Network) participated in the Erasmus+ job-shadowing in Helsinki, hosted by Sateenkaariperheet



## 5. Capacity building

In summer 2018, NELFA received funding for the third Erasmus+ project in a row, entitled “Joining forces for the well-being of rainbow families” (period: 01 June 2018 – 30 June 2019). 19 mobilities in total are granted, through some changes in the budget we will be able to realise 21 at the end. Up to now, the training courses went well. In 2019/20, NELFA could be able to run a new type of Erasmus+ project (KA2), i.e. to realise an innovative product or to reinforce former relationships and knowledge. To apply successfully, NELFA needs at least two partner organisations and a clear common goal.

The last project “Chances and challenges for rainbow families” (2017/2918) was evaluated by external controllers and they gave 83 of 100 possible points (which is a high level). Board members and active volunteers took part in 16 training courses of the consultancy corporation “In Dialogue”. The aim was once again to strengthen NELFA especially towards its educational activities. The participants trained themselves in leadership skills, teaching and consulting skills, as well as guidance skills. Besides the courses, NELFA organised a job-shadowing with ILGA-Portugal in Lisbon with ten attendees, incl. volunteers from Finland, Croatia, Poland and Albania. Financially, the project was a success.

The NELFA Board decided in autumn 2018 to be possible partner in another project (“Rainbow Shield”) of the EU Commissions Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. Our Bulgarian member Deystvie would be the leading organisation, NELFA is foreseen as partner for a survey, toolkit/report and an international conference. Topic: Free movement rights – legal advice. The grant decision is to be expected in summer 2019. Project coordinators are (for the moment): Dominique Boren and Giuseppina La Delfa (wage: 2.200 – 2.400 €). Another opportunity to join a REC-project as partner is the plan of “In Dialogue” (The Netherlands) to apply for the “Call for proposals to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, young people and women (REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2019)”.

In general, NELFA should consider applying for EU grants. One possibility could be the current REC-call “for proposals on capacity-building in the area of rights of the child and child-friendly justice (REC-RCHI-PROF-AG-2019). An idea could be to create a guide for lawyers or other stakeholders.

Besides the Erasmus+ projects, NELFA Board members had the opportunity to share their knowledge at conferences, hearings, workshops etc. (see above). The presentations are listed on the website.

## 6. Cooperation with external partners

### 6.1. COFACE Families Europe

NELFA attended COFACE’s last Annual Meeting in Brussels and the celebration of the Network’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary (15-16 May 2018, see above). And we still accompany the campaign for a better Work-Life-Balance. In early 2019, the co-legislators have reached a provisional agreement for the Directive. Apart from that, the cooperation is on a low level. Up to now, we had no possibility to share our expertise in COFACE’s working groups and did not get any concrete offer to contribute. The supporting membership in COFACE costs 500 € per year. This amount was approved after a review of NELFA’s budget. If ever our financial situation will change, we would need to pay a higher fee.



Besides COFACE, the Board discussed already to join other organisations which may fit better in our general portfolio, for example Eurochild or CRIN (Child Rights International Network).

## 6.2. European Union

NELFA has started a closer relationship to all three main institutions within the last year.

In 2018, we cooperated on different occasions with the European Parliament, especially with the Intergroup on LGBTI Rights. In April, Co-chair Terry Reintke took part in NELFA's European Rainbow Families Meeting in Berlin. In May, we launched a little picture collage campaign to celebrate the International Day of Families (see above). In July, the Intergroup was involved in NELFA's attendance at the Committee on Petitions. At ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference in Brussels (October 2018), NELFA Board members took part in a panel discussion with Intergroup MEP's to talk about the upcoming EU elections. In November, NELFA was invited to a JURI Committee hearing to present the situation of rainbow families in cross-border situations. In December, Intergroup Secretary Juliette Sanchez-Lambert came to an advocacy meeting with NELFA in Zagreb. A next cooperation is planned for 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2019 (lunch seminar on the Coman case) and possibly on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 for a panel debate at "Salle Lollepot" in Brussels (NELFA will co-organise a scientific research presentation).

NELFA also found a way to get together with the EU Commission on different levels. DG Justice employee Wester Meijdam invited the Network to present current tasks, i.e. in the framework of free movement rights. In January 2019, we had a first meeting with Monika Ladmanová who is adviser in the team of Commissioner Vera Jourová (Justice, Consumers, Gender Equality). We handed over the very first copy of NELFA's report on the Coman case implications and another important working paper of Alina Tryfonidou from University of Reading concerning children's rights. Further meetings with staff members of the EU Commission are expected in the course of the year.

In spring 2018, NELFA was asked to hold the keynote speech at the 4<sup>th</sup> equal opportunities office awareness event for IDAHOT in the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union in Brussels. After two preparation meetings with staff members, NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding presented NELFA and the current situation of Rainbow Families in Europe. There is now a steady contact to the Personal Assistant to the Director General, Rory Spellman. To be continued.

## 6.3. Council of Europe

After the conference on "Private and family life for LGBTI people" in Copenhagen (March 2018), NELFA was invited to further contribute to the report and resolution on rainbow families' rights, drafted by rapporteur Jonas Gunnarsson (Sweden, SOC). The report highlights for example the speech of Gabriel, the son of Board member Jesús Santos Homobono (Spain). NELFA raised awareness of some necessary, tiny changes in the draft documents. The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was very pleased with these amendments and adjusted the texts. The Assembly adopted the resolution (and report) on 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2018. It calls for the elimination of all unjustified differences in treatment in the field of private and family life based on grounds of sexual orientation. A milestone! The good connection between NELFA and PACE recently



led to the possibility to invite the new General Rapporteur on LGBTI Rights, Violeta Tomic, to the next Rainbow Families Conference in Zagreb. Dugine obiteljci is in touch with PACE's secretary Sarah Burton.

The participatory status with the Council of Europe (since 2016) has not been used yet. We couldn't attend any meeting of the INGOs. So far, we couldn't find someone to be present in Strasbourg.

#### 6.4. ILGA-Europe

The contact to ILGA-Europe's staff in Brussels is regular and always very collegial. Advocacy Director Katrin Hugendubel meets NELFA Secretary Björn Sieverding from time to time at work lunches.

NELFA contributed and officially endorsed the second review report of the Council of Europe Recommendation on LGBTI Rights (ILGA-Europe, TGEU and OII Europe), which was published in October 2018. Furthermore, NELFA contributed to ILGA's Annual review in early 2019.

Several Board members attended ILGA's Annual Conference in Brussels (see above) and participated at a common workshop with Deystvie and Accept Romania (after some struggles with the first proposal on the EU elections). Board member Marcos Jornet took part in a Network meeting in April 2018 and Board member Daniel Martinovic in another strategic meeting in October 2018. Vice-President Giuseppina La Delfa participated at a seminar (anti-gender-movement) in January/February 2019.

ILGA wasn't able to attend the AGM in Helsinki but will try to participate at the research presentation in June 2019 and, at least, to send a video message to the NELFA conference in Zagreb. The general aim is to cooperate in the future concerning strategic litigation. ILGA-Europe also works on a toolkit for rainbow families in legal struggles. Another project could be the extension of ILGA's Rainbow Map to create a sort of "Rainbow Family Map". ILGA still offers access to their data collection. To avoid unnecessary overlaps, ILGA would like to be involved in NELFA's cooperation with the EU Commission.

### 7. Publications

NELFA has ordered a new range of posters and info postcards, but still needs to update the Network's leaflet. Soon, we should consider launching a new poster campaign with a renewed design.

For the first time, NELFA didn't grant the IFED Annual Report (October 2018), but provided pictures and additional texts. Some copies we handed out i.e. at ILGA's Annual Conference in Brussels.

Together with individual member Alina Tryfonidou, NELFA was able to send out the very first scientific report in January 2019, entitled: "An analysis of the EJC ruling in case C-673/16 Coman. The right of same-sex spouses under EU law to move freely between EU Member States".

In February 2019, the NELFA Board adopted new Guidelines on Adoption and Foster parenting.