

NELFA's Annual Report

March 2019 – March 2020

Written by NELFA Vice President Björn Sieverding and Secretary Daniel Martinovic

1. Foreword

In the last year NELFA continued its growth and became an even bigger key partner on a European level when discussing the issues, challenges and positive experiences of LGBTIQ* family organisations. The EU institutions, various other stakeholders and decision makers came to rely on NELFA's expertise for reports, expert articles, conferences, workshops while the Erasmus+ project handled by NELFA once again was highlighted as one of the best case examples when using Erasmus+ funding to strengthen NGO networks and improve the skills and competences of the participants. This year marked also the first time that NELFA takes part as a partner in a larger project funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme of the EU, with our Bulgarian member Deystvie as the lead organisation.

Even though NELFA became a well-respected voice in Brussels and Strasbourg when discussing topics such as freedom of movement for LGBTIQ* couples, document recognition for rainbow families or advancement of rights in new and future member states, the network itself is run primarily on a volunteer basis with most of the board members and active volunteers balancing their everyday jobs, parental tasks and the activist engagement.

There is still the need the full support of our membership, of more active volunteers everywhere and dedicated allies all over Europe. While freedom of movement seems to be the topic number one on the EU agenda when it comes to discussing rainbow families, there are various and diverse challenges we need to continue pushing into the spotlight: the precarious situation in countries as Poland or Hungary when it comes to protection of rainbow families, the fragile protection (legal and otherwise) of LGBTIQ* people and their families in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the everyday backlashes against full legal equality, recognition and protection and acceptance for rainbow family diversity by the alt-right movements across Europe, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic which affects us all in ways we couldn't even imagine.

See below a couple of highlights of our achievements and progress in 2019 and early 2020:

- NELFA had several face-to-face meetings with the EU Commission (DG Justice staff) to discuss freedom of movement struggles for rainbow families and the "list of action" to be taken. One major achievement was the participation of various Board members and allies in the Brussels conference on LGBTI Equality in late September 2019.
- NELFA has established a close relationship to the Intergroup on LGBTI Rights. We took part in a lunch seminar for MEP and staff members to talk about freedom of movement and the Coman case. Most recently, in March 2020, the Intergroups on LGBTI and Children's Rights

created a letter to Commissioner Dalli to better the conditions for rainbow families in cross-border situations. 60 MEP signed the call – some of them already contributed to the NELFA election campaign "What will you do for LGBTIQ* families?" in spring 2019.

- NELFA took part in two meetings of the Euro FLI (Family Law Institute) in Frankfurt. European LGBTIQ* Family lawyers and other experts discussed recent developments. In the meantime, NELFA created a new legal support mailing list for rainbow families in Europe. Subscribers can discuss court cases, possible interventions and strategic litigation.
- NELFA was partner of the rainbow families conference in Zagreb, organised by our Croatian member Dugine obitelji. It was an important network meeting with activists from all over the region, legal experts and researchers. The weekend was also the official NELFA event for the International Family Equality Day 2019. At the ERA Conference in Tirana (autumn 2019), NELFA again strengthened a network of rainbow families' activists in the Balkans.
- NELFA took part in IDAHOT events of the EU Commission and the Committee of the Regions with presentations about rainbow families in Europe. NELFA was also invited to the launch of the Gender Equality Index 2019 (Parental leave for rainbow families).
- NELFA Board members took part at a research event in Brussels, including presentations of Tanja Vuckovic-Juros (UC Louvain) and Salvatore d'Amore (ULB). NELFA was then invited to present the network at an international surrogacy colloquium at ULB University.
- NELFA joined the Family Pride weekend in Barcelona, organised by full member FLG. A lot of Board members waved their flags (and the new NELFA banner) also at national Pride events.
- NELFA finalised its third Erasmus+ project "Joining forces for the well-being of rainbow families" (15 training courses with "In Dialogue" in Copenhagen, Gouda, Berlin, Barcelona, Linz/Austria and 5 job-shadowing in Helsinki). A next project application is on its way.
- NELFA contributed to several ECtHR interventions, together with ILGA-Europe and other stakeholders: Schlittner-Hay vs. Poland, X. vs. Poland, A.S. vs. Poland. NELFA endorsed an intervention by Prof. Wintemute in the case A.D.-K. and Others vs. Poland. Most recently, we decided to support an application to intervene in Buhuceanu & Ciobotaru vs. Romania.
- NELFA launched its pilot project RAF.TEENS (acronym for "Rainbow Families for Teens"). The aim is to create a forum for LGBTIQ* parents and their adolescent children in order to organise cross-border exchanges. Another idea is a RAF.TEENS Erasmus project.
- NELFA took part in a meeting of the Permanent Representations to the EU concerning LGBTIQ* rights in the new legislature – organised by the Netherlands, Germany and Spain. Representatives of 20 Member States took part and NELFA was invited to talk about rainbow families in cross-border struggles. It was the beginning of a steady exchange.
- NELFA organised several campaigns with the platform ALL OUT (in total: more than 7.000 signatories), two individual petitions were also supported by LGBT Ireland and Deystvie in Bulgaria. In the case of an Irish-Polish couple, NELFA worked together with the European Network of Statelessness. In the meantime, one cross-border case is (partly) resolved.

2. Administration

2.1. Board

The current Board consists of the following eleven persons (from seven different countries):

- **President:** Eleni Maravelia, FLG (Spain)
- **Vice-President:** Björn Sieverding, LSVD (Germany)
- **Treasurer:** Giovanni Fantoni, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)
- **Secretary:** Daniel Martinovic, Dugine obitelji (Croatia)

- **Board Members:**
Juan Bastón, Son Nuestros Hijos (Spain), Dominique Boren, apgl (France), Marcos Jornet, Son Nuestros Hijos (Spain), Giuseppina La Delfa, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy), Jesús Santos Homobono, Galehi (Spain), Veneta Limberova, Deystvie (Bulgaria), Joanna Śmiecińska, Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny (Poland)

Juan Bastón, Marcos Jornet and Veneta Limberova have announced to leave the Board. The Board is very grateful for their contributions and wishes all the best for their future tasks.

2.2. Board meetings

The Board met 12 times within the past 12 months:

- 22 April 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 13 May 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 03 June 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 08 July 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 01 August 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 16 September 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 22 September 2019 (Brussels)
- 21 October 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 11 November 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 16 December 2019 (Skype Meeting)
- 13 January 2020 (Skype Meeting)
- 09 March 2020 (Skype Meeting)

2.3. Membership

In March of 2019 NELFA got a new Board. Eleni Maravelia (FLG, Spain) was elected President, Björn Sieverding (LSVD, Germany) Vice President. Giovanni Fantoni (Famiglie Arcobaleno, Italy) remained Treasurer of the Network and Daniel Martinovic (Dugine obitelji, Croatia) is new Secretary.

NELFA also welcomed new members. In April 2019, the **Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society** [MFWS] (led by Malta's former President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca) joined the network. In September 2018, they had launched a special Rainbow Families Network, together with the **Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement** (MGRM). MGRM became NELFA member in May 2019, as well as **Háttér Society** in Hungary. They don't have a special group of rainbow families but offer corresponding services (and just issued a report about LGBTIQ* parents and their children). **LGBT Ireland** joined NELFA as full member in September 2019. Furthermore, the **Rainbow Family Centre in Munich** became part of the Network as supporting member, as well as **Prague Pride** from Czech Republic. Both organisations offer (legal) advice for LGBTIQ* parents (to-be) and hold rainbow family gatherings. New full member of NELFA is **Samtökin '78**, the national LGBTIQ* organisation in Iceland. They also have a rainbow family portfolio. Last but not least, we welcomed **Flavio, his husband Drew and their daughter Carina**. They are new individual members from Portugal. In the meantime, NELFA has 41 member organisations representing 33 European countries.

2.4. Finances

Finances continue to be one of the most challenging aspects of the network. Most of the funding derives from membership fees and small donations, while Board members still cover their own costs by themselves or by their native organisations. Current projects don't offer ways to return much of the funds back to the organisation, and the challenges with finances persist – more ideas when it comes to fundraising, project planning and self-financing activities are still needed.

2.5. Administration and Communication

Most of the administrative tasks were undertaken by the Executive team of the Board, with the Treasurer taking care of the financial tasks, bank account and administration rights to digital services, while the Vice-President with the assistance of the Secretary took care of the content creation and publication of the various information across NELFA's public communication tools and social media.

Board communication is handled via WhatsApp groups, with Bitrix24 for board polls and pcloud for data storage. Skype is used for Board meetings, and a yahoo mailing list is used to communicate via e-mail.

As of March 2020, NELFA has 2.765 followers on Facebook (a 500 follower increase in one year) and 1.454 followers on Twitter (a big increase of 900+ followers in one year). Most of the tweets on NELFA's account are retweets on the topics related to #rainbowfamilies, but with a highly engaging content that led to this significant increase of followers.

The Facebook posts with the most reach were both NELFA's original content: 7,980 people reached on 2/8/2019 with the post titled "Joint call to Action: LGBTIQ* rights at risk in Poland", and following that 7,179 people reached on 11/10/2019 with the post titled "NELFA just launched its pilot project RAF.TEENS ("Rainbow Families for Teens")". The average post reach is in the hundreds (100-1000 people reached) per post, with the largest engagement on posts such as the celebration of marriage equality in Costa Rica or the repressive anti-LGBTIQ* system enforced in Russia.

NELFA issued 7 press releases and 4 newsletters, all viewable on the webpage under the “press” menu item.

The press releases were titled:

01/04/2019

EU elections 2019: Vote for rainbow families! – NELFA asks MEP candidates to show their support for LGBTIQ* parents and their children within the next legislature

22/05/2019

EU elections 2019: Let’s go to the polls! – NELFA encourages to vote for more recognition, protection, equal treatment and acceptance for rainbow families

28/05/2019

EU elections 2019: A new starting position for rainbow families! – NELFA encourages MEPs to become strong allies for LGBTIQ* parents and their children

24/06/2019

Rainbow Families in Europe: More acceptance through inclusive laws and more exchange! – Two new studies were just presented at a research event in Brussels

02/08/2019

Joint call to action: LGBTIQ* rights at risk in Poland! – NELFA, ENP and the European Forum of LGBT Christian groups demand a clear reaction from the EU

25/09/2019

Advancing the rights of rainbow families! – NELFA urges the European Union to take further action against the discrimination of LGBTIQ* parents and their children

07/02/2020

EU: Free movement for rainbow families! – NELFA just published a new report on the cross-border recognition of LGBTIQ* couples/parents with children

3. Advocacy, Lobbying, Events and Partnerships

3.1. EU Elections

The NELFA EU elections campaign was about the simple question "What will you do for LGBTIQ* families?". The campaign was addressed to all MEP candidates within the European Union. Rainbow families should know who will support them openly and actively during the next legislature from 2019 to 2024. A questionnaire was elaborated and the campaign was preceded and followed by various press releases as well as an specific part of the webpage that can be found here:

<http://nelfa.org/eu-elections/>

3.2. Other Advocacy and Lobbying activities

NELFA just created a new legal support group for rainbow families in Europe. Legal experts, activists and LGBTIQ* (family) lawyers are invited to join the mailing list (via info@nelfa.org). The aim is to have a certain task force whenever rainbow families need legal advice. In addition, we want to establish a platform to discuss court cases and strategic litigation on the European level. Currently, NELFA is involved in four interventions at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

July 2019, we contributed to written comments in **A.D.-K. and Others v. Poland**. The document was elaborated by Professor Robert Wintemute. It's about the recognition of a British birth certificate (stating two mothers) in Poland. Furthermore, NELFA and other NGOs (led by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights) submitted a joint amicus curiae brief in a case concerning the citizenship for children of a gay couple (**Schlittner-Hay v. Poland**). In addition, ILGA-Europe and others like NELFA sent third party interventions in **A.S. v. Poland** (later withdrawn) and **X. v. Poland**. In both cases, mothers lost their custody rights because of their lesbian relationships. Most recently, NELFA decided to support a application to intervene in **Buhuceanu & Ciobotaru v. Romania**.

For the first time, NELFA is involved in a third-party intervention before the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [**A.B. v. Finland (51/2018)**].

Together with ENP (European Network of Parents of LGBTI+ Persons) and the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, we demanded in August 2019 a clear reaction of the EU concerning anti-LGBTIQ*-statements and resolutions, free-zone stickers and attacks at Pride in Białystok. In October, we received an official reply by EU Commissioner Věra Jourová.

At the first public event of the new European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBTI Rights (4 February 2020), NELFA was able to highlight the struggles of rainbow families in cross-border situations. Together with Helena Dalli (Commissioner for Equality), we discussed major problems and possible solutions. On the occasion, we also published our second research report, written by Professor Alina Tryfonidou (University of Reading). It is entitled: "The cross-border recognition of rainbow families under EU law" and gives some advice how to address breaches of EU provisions and fundamental rights. Furthermore, NELFA presented its current petition campaign "Free movement for rainbow families" in the framework of All Out (with more than 5.400 signatories). The engagement was fruitful: The Intergroups on LGBTI and Children's Rights just issued a letter to Commissioner Dalli

with a request to better the conditions for moving rainbow families within the EU. And at the same time, the LIBE Committee is working on a free movement survey among the Member States

3.3. Events and activities

It was a very busy eventful year for NELFA! Here is a list of most of the activities NELFA took part, with more info on every event or activity mentioned here available also on our website (with pictures, presentations and reports where available).

BRUSSELS, 15 March 2019: NELFA had the possibility to meet staff members of the EU Commission (DG Justice) to talk about free movement rights for rainbow families and how to push this issue forward. Only a few days before (21 February), the European Parliament called on the Commission to sustain its LGBTI strategy (Intergroup press release). But, with regard to the actual political situation, it seems to be very complicated to achieve substantial relief for LGBTIQ* parents and their children. The promising way: strategic litigation.

BRUSSELS, 16 March 2019: NELFA President Eleni Maravelia participated at the 4th Annual Educational Workshop, organised by our full member FLG. It's a day of seminars regarding Gender, Activism by Rainbow Families and Education.

BRUSSELS, 21 March 2019: NELFA Vice President Björn Sieverding, individual member Alina Tryfonidou (University of Reading/UK) and legal researcher José M. Villaverde contributed to a lunch seminar, organised by the European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBTI Rights (Juliette Sanchez-Lambert). The aim was to inform EP staff members (around 20 attendees) about the current status of rainbow families rights in Europe, the Coman case and its implications.

VERONA, 30 March 2019: NELFA took part in a protest rally against the co-called World Congress of Families, an anti-LGBTIQ* event. Board member Giovanni Fantoni and many other activists from Famiglie Arcobaleno in Italy waved the flags for rainbow families in Europe, to demonstrate for diversity and equality. In total, there were at least around 30.000 people (source: police) who were in the streets to say NO against all hatred, sown by WCF.

POZNAN, 12-13 APRIL 2019: NELFA Board member Joanna Śmiecińska and the first Polish rainbow families organisation Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny had a wonderful activity weekend, including a seminar and a meeting of LGBTIQ* parents with their children! Executive Board members Eleni Maravelia and Björn Sieverding contributed with video messages about their own stories.

BARCELONA, 07 May 2019: NELFA took part in the Annual General Meeting of COFACE Families Europe. One aim was to talk about future tasks and possible cooperation. COFACE shared positive news about the work-life-balance directive and highlighted the upcoming conference: "Shaping a healthy environment for children" in October.

SANTO STEFANO DEL SOLE, May 2019: NELFA Board member Giuseppina La Delfa just published her second book about her family, entitled "Tutto quello che c'è voluto". It is about the long and difficult way to become parents as a lesbian couple. Giuseppina's first book "Peccato che non avremo mai figli" was already a success, a trilogy is planned.

BARCELONA, 09 May 2019: NELFA President Eleni Maravelia (FLG, Spain) took part in the conference "LGBTIQ Families. From legal recognition to actual rights", organised by "Doing Rights". It was another opportunity to raise awareness about the situation of rainbow families across Europe.

ZAGREB, 10-12 MAY 2019: The Rainbow Families Conference 2019 in Zagreb was a full success. NELFA's Croatian member Dugine obitelji had organised a weekend (10-12 May) with intensive discussions about the future in the Balkans. Vice President Björn Sieverding presented NELFA and the challenges that rainbow families face throughout Europe. Also recent research findings were presented, and the International Family Equality Day was celebrated - amazing and inspiring. The LGBTIQ* guests came from Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, France, Belgium and Switzerland. The attendees agreed on further efforts to create a vibrant exchange.

BRUSSELS, 17 May 2019: NELFA celebrated the International Day Against Homo-, Bi- and Transphobia (#IDAHOBIT2019). At a breakfast event with European Commission staff members (DG Justice), Vice President Björn Sieverding had the possibility to speak about rainbow families in Europe and their current legal problems. Director-General Tiina Astola and her team showed their support through a common picture. Three days later (20th of June), NELFA joined another #IDAHOBIT event at the Committee of the Regions: "Myths and truths about LGBTI parenting".

GENOVA, 15 June 2019: NELFA Board member Giovanni Fantoni (Famiglie Arcobaleno) and his family took part in Liguria Pride 2019. This year's edition was entitled "Genova better than this" and officially endorsed by NELFA. The Board decided to support as much Pride events as possible in the future, to make our European Network more visible to a public at large.

DUBLIN, 18 June 2019: NELFA Vice President Björn Sieverding held a keynote speech at the pre-Pride event "Recognising Rainbow families". It explored the current legal challenges facing LGBTIQ* parents and children in Europe and especially in Ireland. The event was arranged by OUTLaw, together with LGBT Ireland and the Lesbian Lawyers' Network, hosted by OneALG (the A&L Goodbody LGBT+ allies' network). In May, there were some legal changes in Ireland for some lesbian mothers, but others still have major problems to be recognised as families.

BRUSSELS, 20 JUNE 2019: NELFA co-organised a high-level research presentation in Brussels. Tanja Vuckovic Juros (UC Louvain) and Salvatore d'Amore (ULB) shared their current findings about rainbow families. Afterwards, the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society presented a video about LGBTIQ* parents and their children, and stakeholders from different EU institutions and organisations discussed the findings.

BRUSSELS, 04-05 July 2019: NELFA took part at a very inspiring meeting of LGBTIQ* networks – organised by ILGA-Europe. Major aim was to discuss the status quo and the development of all these umbrella organisations. In the future, they want to strengthen their ties and – occasionally – take action together. Besides NELFA, these networks were present: IGLYO, EL*C, ENP, OII, ICRSE, Europride and the European Forum of LGBT Christian groups.

TOULOUSE, 06 September 2019: NELFA and its French member apgl took part in a conference on Assisted Reproductive Techniques (ART) for single women and same-sex couples. Vice President Björn Sieverding contributed with a new general overview about the rights of rainbow families in Europe. At that time, there was a strong debate in France about the upcoming law on bioethics and the approval of the National Assembly (see below) was still pending.

SARAJEVO, 08 September 2019: NELFA Board member Daniel Martinovic took part in the very first Pride Parade in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Together with several members of the Croatian rainbow families organisation Dugine obitelji, he experienced a peaceful event without violent attacks of counter-demonstrators.

BRUSSELS, 20-22 September 2019: Several rainbow families organisations like apgl (France), Homoparentalités (Belgium), Meer Dan Gewenst (The Netherlands) and also NELFA took part in the

Men Having Babies (MHB) conference 2019. The event informed more than 320 prospective gay fathers from 20 European countries about parenting options through surrogacy. MHB marked the launch of an “Advocacy & Research Forum”, i.e. with expertise of family lawyers and legal experts.

SALAMANCA, 20-22 September 2019: The Spanish organisation FELGTB celebrated the 9th edition of Jornadas de Familias LGBTI. The motto was: “Ni un paso atrás diversidad” (No regression in diversity). The days were also accompanied by NELFA Board members Jesús Santos Homobono (Galehi) and Marcos Jornet (Son Nuestros Hijos).

BRUSSELS, 22 September 2019: NELFA Board members from France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Croatia, Spain and Bulgaria came together to discuss several upcoming tasks. The meeting in the Rainbow House (Salle Lollepot) had begun with a cosy exchange. Guests were Paula Fagan, CEO at LGBT Ireland (NELFA’s new full member organisation) and Rémy Bonny, researcher and expert of LGBT+ Politics in Post-Soviet Republics & Central Eastern Europe.

BRUSSELS, 23-24 September 2019: At an important conference of the Finnish Presidency and the EU Commission in Brussels, we had the possibility to hold a keynote speech at a workshop about cross-border issues. We published a press release, including a wishlist for the next EU legislature. Together with Prof. Robert Wintemute, we were finally able to present some common results.

HELSINKI, 03-04 October 2019: NELFA took part in the conference “Shaping a healthy environment fit for children”, organised by COFACE Families Europe. NELFA was present with a networking hot-spot (and new leaflets). Former Board member Juha Jämsä (Sateenkaariperheet ry, Finland) issued an updated NELFA presentation and some national findings about rainbow families.

AVELLINO, 11 October 2019: NELFA Board member Giuseppina La Delfa (Famiglie Arcobaleno) presented her rainbow family story and (long-term) struggles to be finally recognised at an event with the title “La famiglia reinventata. Nuove sfide, nuovi nuclei”.

BRUSSELS, 15 October 2019: NELFA Vice President Björn Sieverding (LSVD) took part in a panel discussion about parental leave for LGBTIQ* families and the experiences of (gay) fathers in child-care arrangements at the EIGE Gender Equality Index 2019 conference. The new Index reveals that rainbow families still don’t have access to parental leave in eleven EU countries.

PRAGUE, 23-26 October 2019: NELFA had a successful Annual Conference of ILGA-Europe in Prague. We presented our recent research findings concerning the rights of children in rainbow families (project: "Rainbow Family Mobility Map"), held our own workshop ("Advancing the rights of rainbow families") with a general overview of the legal status in Europe and offered a consultation space (i.e. concerning plans for Russian content on NELFA's website). There were a lot of other networking possibilities and one result of the conference is: NELFA is still needed.

TIRANA, 06-09 November 2019: The capital city of Albania hosted this year’s ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association conference #ERAcon2019. NELFA was represented by Board member Daniel Martinovic from Croatia (Dugine obitelji). He talked about rainbow families especially in the Balkans region). The next ERA conference will be in Novi Sad, Serbia, with a special rainbow families day.

BRUSSELS, 07 November 2019: Since 2016, NELFA has trained (so far) nearly 70 rainbow family activists in Erasmus+ projects. In September, our capacity building programme "Chances and challenges for rainbow families" (2017/2018) was even "best practice example of the month". This time, Erasmus+ coordinator Björn Sieverding (LSVD) was "ambassador" of the agency "aef europe" and presented the latest project to new applicants.

LONDON, 07 November 2019: The European Network of Statelessness just published a new blog, in cooperation with NELFA. Rainbow families in cross-border situations are very vulnerable because of the legal patchwork situation. Children sometimes even remain stateless – like Sofia. Meanwhile, her parents inform about the case also via Twitter. Next step be a campaign with the All Out fund - at first with Sofia and her mothers; then with several families.

BRUSSELS, 12 November 2019: NELFA gave some insights into the situation of rainbow families in Europe at a high-level colloquium about surrogacy. The event “Les nouvelles familles nées par la GPA” was organised by Professor Salvatore d’Amore and Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). NELFA’s presentation is available here. At the same time, NELFA took part in an extraordinary meeting of the Diversity Europe Group. The event was entitled “New Role Models for Societies in Europe”. NELFA Board member Dominique Boren (apgl, France) spoke up at a panel discussion, together with representatives of COFACE Families Europe and Eurochild.

POZNAN, 14 November 2019: During a week for more tolerance in the city, Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny (FTR) organised a training session for people who work with rainbow families. On the same day, the European Parliament had voted on a resolution to express the MEPs deep concern over a Polish draft law that could put teachers who provide sex education in prison. The event in Poznań was organised by NELFA Board Member Joanna Śmiecińska and active volunteer Jowita Wycisk.

ROME, 14-17 November 2019: NELFA was official partner of the first Youth Mundus Festival in Italy’s capital city. It’s a global short content and music festival platform, with an emphasis on raising awareness of culturally relevant and pressing courses to combat social injustice. NELFA was represented by Board member Giuseppina La Delfa (Famiglie Arcobaleno) and her teenage daughter Lisa Marie. They talked about their experiences as parts of a rainbow family.

BRUSSELS, 28 November 2019: NELFA presented current freedom-of-movement struggles at a meeting in the Dutch Permanent Representation in Brussels. We issued a comprehensive handout to the audience (representatives of 20 Member States). The outcome was interesting: nine EU countries confirmed that they recognise familial ties of rainbow families (that were established in another Member State) for ALL legal purposes! Others gave a general YES with some restrictions.

BRUSSELS, 14 January 2020: NELFA attended an input session for a new study of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The meeting was entitled “Demographic challenges in the EU in light of economic and development inequalities”. NELFA Vice President Björn Sieverding (LSVD) talked about the recognition of rainbow families.

BRUSSELS, 09 February 2020: NELFA took part at the Annual General Meeting of its Belgian member organisation Homoparentalités. The group plays a special role for the Network because it’s based in Brussels, means close by the EU institutions. Homoparentalités decided to send a candidate for the NELFA Board election in March (Fabien Gaudry). Besides this, a nice children’s programme was organised – for example a book reading with a drag queen from Liège.

BRUSSELS, 17 February 2020: NELFA Board member Giuseppina La Delfa (Famiglie Arcobaleno) took part at a conference, organised by the EU Commission. It was entitled “Preparatory action for a Child Guarantee” and gave an opportunity to discuss, with stakeholders, the findings of the feasibility study for a Child Guarantee. In a 2015 resolution on reducing inequalities with a special focus on child poverty, the European Parliament called on the Commission and Member States to introduce such an instrument.

FRANKFURT, 06-08 March 2020: Several NELFA (Board) members joined the 3rd edition of the Euro LGBT Family Law Institute meeting. It was a wonderful occasion for an exchange of current struggles

and future ideas how to advance the rights of LGBTIQ* people and their families. 16 legal experts from many European countries (and the USA) attended the meeting in the German banking hub, some followed the discussions online.

4. Capacity building and projects

We are still interested in capacity building as one of its goals is to improve the skills of our staff members and active rainbow family activists from all over Europe. We were part of a Grundtvig experience, we managed three Erasmus+ projects in a row and are currently partner in a new REC-project. Project based capacity building is still a challenge for NELFA, but more and more opportunities are becoming available with the increased visibility of the network.

NELFA successfully completed the third Erasmus+ project in a row, and was highlighted by the EU Commission as a positive example in the programme – again without any programme or financial difficulties with positive evaluations and feedback from both the managing bodies and the participants. The project was once again done in partnership with the consultancy corporation “In Dialogue”, and a new application for the fourth project was developed and submitted. Fingers crossed!

Currently NELFA is a partner on the project “Rainbow Shield: Enhancing the legal protection of LGBTI people in Bulgaria” where the specific objectives of the two-year project are to expand the scope of legal practitioners prepared to deal with LGBTI cases and enhance their expertise in doing so, to raise awareness among the community about possibilities for legal protection and to disseminate best practices. NELFA’s task will be a membership survey concerning legal needs and the preparation of a final international conference in late spring 2021. The leading organisation is Deystvie, partners are Bilitis (Rainbow Hub), Foundation GLAS, Asociatia Accept in Romania and NELFA.