

NELFA Annual report 2021

(Covering the period from march 2021 until march 2022)

prepared by NELFA secretary Daniel Martinovic

1. Foreword

Despite the continuing COVID19 pandemic, 2021. was quite a successful year for NELFA. The network continued its growth, and the advocacy effort of the network prove yet again to be fruitful more and more each year. The new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy was joined by a new Strategy on the Rights of the Child, in which LGBTIQ* children and those living in rainbow families are mentioned several times. Our effort in raising awareness and sharing experiences were recognized also in the resolution on the rights of LGBTIQ* persons in the EU, adopted by the European Parliament in September. We were visible at this year WorldPride & Eurogames held in Copenhagen where children living in rainbow families shared their experiences. Many positive changes for same-sex couples who wish to become parents and those who already are, saw light in 2021; improved second parent adoption laws, recognition of coparenting, changes to medically assisted procreation laws, access to foster care or joint adoption; you can find more info further down in this report.

And, as an end-of-the-year present for rainbow families across Europe, a huge legal win was the ruling of the EU's top court that same-sex parents and their children must be recognised as a family in all Member States.

One of the major successes of NELFA in 2021 that we wish to highlight is the status as the observer of the EU Commission Expert group: Recognition of parenthood between Member States. NELFA president Eleni Maravelia and board member Björn Sieverding have contributed to the Expert group work so far, while our individual member Alina Tryfonidou is appointed to contribute as one of the expert members of the group, and our colleague Arpi Avetisyan from ILGA Europe is also an observer.

The group's mission is to help the Commission to analyze: (1) the problems faced by families in cross-border situations caused in the absence of Union legislation on the recognition of parenthood between Member States; (2) the scope of a possible Union's legislative instrument on the recognition of parenthood between Member States; (3) the existing relevant national, European, and international law on parenthood, nationality, free movement, and the rights of the child.

The group's task and main objective is to assist the Commission in the preparation of legislative proposals, policy initiatives that would further develop and implement the recognition of parenthood between Member States.

A proposal from the Expert group is to be expected in Autumn 2022.

The expert group had seven meetings since summer 2021, and five of the meetings have their minutes and information publicly available on the EU Commission website (the meetings held on the dates of 11/06/2021, 30/06/2021, 15/09/2021, 14/10/2021 and 02/12/2021).

More information can be found on the [EU Commission website link](#).

2. Nelfa activities in 2021 (compiled by Björn Sieverding)

BRUSSELS, 17 January 2021: NELFA is still grateful for the new [LGBTIQ Equality Strategy](#), launched by the EU Commission. We just tried to summarise the main messages for rainbow families. Read [more](#).

LUXEMBOURG, 09 February 2021: The European Court of Justice heard a very important case for rainbow families in EU cross-border situations and their free movement rights. It was about a same-sex couple who were refused a (Spanish) birth certificate in Bulgaria for their newborn daughter. Baby “Sara” is at risk to remain stateless. A decision is to be expected in spring (possibly March/April). NELFA Board member Denitsa Lyubenova is one of the lawyers of the couple. Read a [press release](#) issued by [ILGA-Europe](#) and endorsed by NELFA. You find more in our [newsletter](#).

GENEVA/HELSINKI, 09 February 2021: It’s a success for long term efforts of our Finnish NELFA member [Sateenkaariperheet ry](#). In a recent [decision](#), the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) underlines the primacy of the child’s best interests in an asylum case concerning a boy in a rainbow family from Russia! Finally, Finland will have to provide him with reparation. It’s the first time that the Committee decided in a case like this. NELFA was also involved in a third-party intervention. Read more in a official [Finnish reaction](#) and ILGA-World’s [press release](#).

BRUSSELS, 11 March 2021: The European Parliament adopted the “Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ* Freedom Zone! It’s a clear reaction on “LGBT-free zones” in Poland and worrying (legal) backlashes in other EU countries. Many thanks go to the EP’s [Intergroup on LGBTI Rights](#) and their powerful campaign. NELFA also participated via social media. Read the Intergroup’s [press release](#).

BARCELONA, 12 March 2021: Several NELFA Board members were interviewed by [Luca Tancredi Barone](#) who works at [Orgull Radio](#), an LGBTIQ* broadcaster. They talked about their home countries, the legal situation and the struggles for LGBTIQ* families. You can listen to the podcasts here: [Eleni Maravelia](#) (FLG, Spain), [Dominique Boren](#) (apgl, France), [Björn Sieverding](#) (LSVD, Germany).

BRUSSELS, 13 March 2021: NELFA just held its Annual General Meeting 2021 online. We welcome new Board members from Italy (Micaela Ghisleni, Margherita Leonelli, [Famiglie Arcobaleno](#)) and Malta (Christina Zammit La Rosa, [MGRM](#)) and say Good-bye to those who can’t continue (Giovanni Fantoni, Elaine Micallef, Giuseppina La Delfa)! In the picture: the AGM participants from all over Europe in support of the Hungarian initiative #acsaládazcsalád.

LJUBLJANA, 13 March 2021: NELFA stands with children’s books author Lawrence Shimel (Spain)! He faces homophobic attacks because of his stories about rainbow families. The Slovenian right-wing party DOM sees the need to boycott the books. We say: No censorship for the full diversity of families! LOVE IS LOVE and FAMILIES are FAMILIES.

POZNAN, 19 March 2021: NELFA’s member organisation [Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny](#) in Poland organised a webinar in the framework of a rainbow families’ project. It was about the current legal situation of LGBTIQ* parents and their kids in Europe. The special focus was on the perspective of the children who still face discrimination. NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding gave his input on “Rainbow Families in Europe: Children’s Rights at Stake”. You can find the presentation [here](#).

BRUSSELS, 22 March 2021: A new study reveals the current problems of rainbow families in EU cross-border situations. And it shows very clearly how the EU institutions should find solutions. Prof. Alina Tryfonidou and Prof. Robert Wintemute evaluated a questionnaire among Member States in summer 2020. You can find the full study [here](#) and another NELFA summary of the [key results](#).

BRUSSELS, 24 March 2021: The EU has adopted the new [Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#). It aims to protect and promote the rights of children and build the best possible life for them both in the European Union and across the world. NELFA contributed to the document with a [joint submission](#). LGBTIQ* children and those living in rainbow families are mentioned several times in the Strategy, especially the obstacles in cross-border situations.

ATHENS, 08 April 2021: NELFA President Eleni Maravelia shared her expertise in a Greek capacity building seminar, conducted at the National Center for Welfare in Attica. It was entitled “Same-sex parenting for the best interests of the child”. Our supporting member in Greece, [Oikogeneies Ouranio Tokso](#), contributed, too. Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS, 15 April 2021: The liberal political group in the European Parliament, [Renew Europe](#), organised a webinar, entitled “Improving the rights of Rainbow Families across Europe”. It was organised by MEP Liesje Schreinemacher (VVD, The Netherlands) and Sandro Gozi (Renaissance). NELFA Board member Björn Sieverding contributed with a [new presentation](#). See [more](#).

LUXEMBOURG, 15 April 2021: The Advocate General of the Court of Justice of the European Union issued a very [important opinion](#) on a [case of a rainbow family](#). According to this, Bulgaria must recognise familial ties that were established in Spain - at least for the purposes of free movement. This is an important step forward and a success for NELFA’s Board Member Denitsa Lyubenova! Read a joint press release of [ILGA-Europe](#), [Deystvie](#) and NELFA [here](#).

BERLIN, 14 May 2021: NELFA celebrated the International Day of Families. This year, our German full member [LSVD](#) invited rainbow families to take part in a cosy online meeting. LGBTIQ* parents from Ireland, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Croatia and Germany explained their current situation. The event was moderated by LSVD Board member Alfonso Pantisano (in German and English). You can see it [here](#). And ILGA-Europe published an additional [article](#) on the occasion.

KARLSRUHE, 26 May 2021: NELFA’s supporting member organisation ILSE in Germany has an online format for discussions: Themen ILSE. This time, it was about “Rainbow Families in Europe”. LGBTIQ* parents from Zagreb and Prague shared their experiences and the NELFA Board gave an overview about the situation in Europe. Read [more](#).

LYON, 11 June 2021: The television network [euronews](#) (author Ian Smith), headquartered in France, just published a very interesting article on rainbow families in Europe. We are very pleased that NELFA Board members were able to contribute!! Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS, 15 July 2021: This is a huge success for NELFA’s work! The European Parliament’s Committee on Petitions Committee called today EU Member States for upholding EU rights of rainbow families: (1) harmonisation needed for the recognition of marriages and partnerships; (2) full freedom of movement; (3) the Commission should take action against Romania, Hungary and Poland for rights issues and breaches of EU values. Read the full [press release](#).

COPENHAGEN, 12-22 August 2021: NELFA was official partner of WorldPride & Eurogames - [Copenhagen 2021](#). It was an amazing time in Denmark, with many occasions for the Network and allies to present rainbow family topics. We took part in a [Human Rights Conference](#), had our own [Break Out Sessions](#) and Søren Laursen from [LGBT komiteen](#) represented NELFA in the [1:1 Democracy](#) festival. Highlight was the Renew Europe seminar “[Securing access to all parents for children of LGBTI families](#)“, especially with three young ambassadors from Spain ([Galehi](#)) and their own [film](#).

BRUSSELS, 14 September 2021: In a [resolution on the rights of LGBTIQ* persons in the EU](#) (adopted with 387 votes in favour, 161 against and 123 abstaining), the European Parliament emphasises that these citizens should be able to fully exercise their rights, including the right to free movement. This is a historic success for NELFA after many years of raising awareness, sharing experiences and working on better rights for rainbow families!

STRASBOURG, 17 September 2021: It’s another success für rainbow families! A lesbian mother was forced to give up custody rights because of her relationship to a woman after she got divorced from her husband. The European Court of Human Rights saw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. NELFA was partner in a [third party intervention](#), together with [FIDH](#), [ICJ](#), [KPH](#) and [ILGA-Europe](#). Read [more](#).

ZAGREB, 02-06 October 2021: We are very happy that our [Erasmus+ project for rainbow families](#) continued - after a long corona-break! Seven participants from Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia &

Herzegovina took part at a training course “Strategic Management”, organised by NELFA’s partner “[In Dialogue](#)“! Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS, 23 October 2021: NELFA and the LGBTIQ* platform [All Out](#) have relaunched their campaign on free movement rights for rainbow families within the EU. LGBTIQ* parents and their children still experience difficulties when crossing borders, familial ties cease to exist, children sometimes remain stateless. We want to convince the European Union to realise the mutual recognition of civil status documents like birth or marriage certificates. Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS, 05-07 November 2021: NELFA attended the “[Men Having Babies](#)” conference and informed about rainbow families in Europe. Board members and allies i.e. from Belgium ([Homoparentalités](#)), France ([apgl](#)) and the Netherlands ([Meer Dan Gewenst](#)) also took part at a discussion about misconceptions and stereotypes around surrogacy, and resulting stigmas that face European families. Read [more](#).

SOFIA, 23 November 2021: The REC project “Rainbow Shield” slightly comes to its end. The partners, including NELFA, organised a final conference to discuss the situation of LGBTIQ* people in Bulgaria and other countries and how to enhance the legal protection of people concerned. You can see the full conference [here](#).

STRASBOURG, 30 November 2021: The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and its Task Force on LGBTIQ* issues held an online exchange of views with experts on legal and administrative challenges faced by rainbow families. Three legal experts, [Alina Tryfonidou](#), [Robert Wintemute](#) and [Lydia Bracken](#), as well as NELFA Board members Dominique Boren and Daniel Martinovic, participated in the discussions. Read [more](#).

3. Administration

NELFA currently represents [43 associations](#), of which 34 are full members and 9 are supporting members of the association.

Current [Board members](#) are:

- **President:** Eleni Maravelia, FLG (Spain)
- **Vice-President:** Dominique Boren, APGL (France)
- **Treasurer:** Christoph R. Alms, LSVD (Germany)
- **Secretary:** Daniel Martinovic, Dugine obitelji (Croatia)
- **Board members:** Jesús Santos Homobono, Galehi (Spain), Denitsa Lyubenova, Deystvie (Bulgaria), Joanna Śmiecińska, Fundacja Tęczowe Rodziny (Poland), Björn Sieverding, LSVD (Germany), Micaela Ghisleni, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy), Margherita Leonelli, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy), Christina Zammit La Rosa, MGRM (Malta)

Board meetings were held online during 2021 on these dates:

22/03/2021, 12/04/2021, 03/05/2021, 07/06/2021, 13/09/2021, 11/10/2021, 14/11/2021, 18/01/2022, 02/02/2022

Most of the **administrative tasks** were undertaken by the Executive team of the Board, with the assistance of board members (especially Björn Sieverding) when it comes to public relations and communication. Board communication was handled via a WhatsApp group, Bitrix24 chat and board polls as well as pcloud for data storage. Zoom and Google Meet were used for Board meetings, while a google groups is used as a mailing list.

Social media

Facebook: 3040 followers (100 followers increase since last year)

Twitter: 1496 followers (20 followers increase since last year)

The [most engaging facebook post](#) (6958 people reached) were the images from Copenhagen 2021 WorldPride & EuroGames, where we joined a seminar in the Danish Parliament and had the opportunity for children who grew up in rainbow families from Spain to talk to MPs and other seminar attendees.

4. Projects

We continue with the implementation of the Erasmus+ project started in 2020; eventhough the pandemic brought many different challenges, slowly we are approaching the end of the project (summer 2022).

The project „Rainbow Shield“, on which NELFA was a project partner (leading organisation Deystvie, Bulgaria), was finished in 2021. Project outputs and presentation will be available soon!

And our internal project, [RAFteens \(Rainbow Families for Teens\)](#) was further developed during 2021. with a full website and presentation arriving soon in 2022.

You can find a detailed overview of our projects on our website [here](#).

5. NELFA Membership activities (compiled by Björn Sieverding)

January

ZAGREB, 08 January 2021: The recent verdict, delivered by the County Court, is a success for NELFA's member [Dugine obitelji](#). The group had filed a lawsuit against Vigilare for launching a petition called “Stop state television's homo-propaganda. Let's stop fake rainbows, let's protect children and the family!”. Vigilare has to remove all discriminatory content. Read [more](#).

PRAGUE, 11 January 2021: The Constitutional Court does not recognise the adoptions of a gay couple (the men are from Czechia and Trinidad & Tobago). The two kids (American nationality) were adopted via court decision in New Jersey (USA). A regional court in Nymburk didn't accept the ruling and this decision was now backed by the judges - because same-sex partners are not allowed to adopt children in the Czech Republic... Read [more](#) (in German).

HILDESHEIM, 12 January 2021: A lesbian couple from Germany had filed a lawsuit because of the discrimination rainbow families face. While married heterosexual couples are automatically considered as legal parents, homosexual (lesbian) couples, respectively the non-biological partner, needs to undergo a stepchild adoption procedure. A court in Celle heard the case, but the couple concerned is ready to bring the case to the Constitutional Court. You can find more in this [article](#).

KOBLENZ, 14 January 2021: German historian Kirsten Plötz has published a new study about lesbian mothers in Rhineland Palatinate who lost their custody rights after their divorce. The Green Minister for Family Affairs, Anne Spiegel, apologised for the discrimination. Read the [study](#) and an [article](#).

TALLINN, 14 January 2021: Good news from Riigikogu, the Estonian Parliament. A majority of the MPs voted against a controversial marriage referendum bill (49 NO, 29 YES). The question was if the term “marriage” should be used for unions between men and women only. This means, the referendum won't take place in April. Read [more](#).

RIGA, 14 January 2021: In Latvia, there are efforts to establish civil unions for same-sex couples. But at the same time, there are strong attempts to worsen the current situation. Today, the Parliament (Saeima) transferred to the Legal Affairs Commission [a proposal](#) to amend the Constitution, to stipulate that the concept of a ‘family’ is based on a union between a man and a woman. Read an [article](#) and a [reaction](#) of the EP’s [Intergroup on LGBTI Rights](#).

ROME, 29 January 2021: A couple with two children split up. And the non-biological mother can’t get visitation rights (in Italy) because of the non-recognition of the familial ties that were once certified in Spain. The Court of Cassation decided not to intervene (inadmissible). Read [more](#).

February

BUDAPEST, 28 February 2021: Hungary has changed its adoption rules. For (LGBTIQ*) singles, it will be more difficult to become parents. The minister will decide on cases, not professionals (...). However, the revived Foundation for Rainbow Families - [Szivárványcsaládokért Alapítvány](#) - has started a successful campaign to support LGBTIQ* parents and their children. Just paint your hand!

March

BERLIN, 01 March 2021: In Germany’s capital, a second rainbow family centre has opened its doors for interested LGBTIQ* parents and children! It’s in the district of Lichtenberg and offers a range of services and seminars for people concerned. You can find the programme [here](#). It’s organised by “[LesbenLebenFamilie](#)” and NELFA ally Constanze Körner.

BUCHAREST, 9 March 2021: Romanian authorities continue violating their obligations under EU law by refusing to recognise right to freedom of movement and residence of same-sex spouse of an EU citizen. Adrian Coman and Claburn Hamilton take their case (decided three years ago at the EU Court of Justice) to the European Court of Human Rights. Read the [press release](#).

VATICAN, 15 March 2021: The Catholic Church won’t bless a “sin”. Same-sex unions would be a “choice” and a “way of life” that cannot be recognised as “objectively ordered” to the plans of God. The Pope approved the decision by the CDF, saying it was “not intended to be a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite”. However, priests i.e. in [Germany](#) want to continue blessing same-sex couples. Read [more](#).

STOCKHOLM, 18 March 2021: Good news from Sweden! Automatic co-parent-recognition through marital presumption - this is now law in the country. But there are remaining gaps for rainbow families and their parenthood rights, in particular for lesbian couples with medically assisted treatment abroad. Read the [press release](#) of NELFA’s member [RFSL](#).

CELLE, 24 March 2021: It’s a good step forward for rainbow families in Germany! Lesbian couples still need to apply for a stepchild adoption to become jointly parents. A court in Celle (near Hannover) found that this is unconstitutional. Now, the Supreme Court in Karlsruhe (BverfG) has to decide. Read [more](#). Only one day later, a similar decision came from Berlin. Read [more](#).

CORK, 31 March 2021: A lesbian couple in the second largest city in Ireland has become the first in the country to be officially recognized as co-parents of children. The occasion is a monumental point in history, as it marks a major step forward in the civil rights of those in the LGBTIQ* community. Read [more](#). The initiative “Equality for children” has started a petition to fill the existing gaps, as pointed out by a children’s rights expert. Read [more](#).

April

AMSTERDAM, 01 April 2021: Twenty years ago, at midnight, then-mayor Job Cohen married three gay couples and one lesbian couple in a joint ceremony at the City Hall in the Netherlands’ capital. Up until that point, same-sex couples could only enter into a registered partnership. In the picture, Jan van Breda (left) and his partner Thijs Timmermans cut the cake after their wedding. Read [more](#).

RIGA, 09 April 2021: The Constitutional Court in Latvia declared that the rule which requires a same-sex family partner to pay a higher state fee for the inheritance of the estate of their deceased

partner than spouses pay, shall be abolished. Such an approach would not correspond to the State's obligation to protect every family. Read [more](#).

LAUSANNE, 16 April 2021: The Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland decided on a rainbow family case. A lesbian couple broke up and the biological mother didn't want her partner to see the child again. But, the Court decided in favour of the second mother and in the best interests of the child. Read [more](#) (in German).

BERN, 27 April 2021: Switzerland will hold a referendum on whether to push ahead with same-sex marriage. MPs adopted a bill recognising same-sex marriage in December. But opponents of the law have gathered the necessary signatures (61.000) to call for a referendum, the authorities confirmed. Activists are still confident, because public opinion backs marriage equality. Read [more](#).

PRAGUE, 29 April 2021: The lower house of Parliament in the Czech Republic resumed debate on legalising same-sex marriages after a two-year break. The bill will be now discussed in the committees, a final vote is to be expected in autumn, after the general election in the country. Read [more](#). The Intergroup on LGBTI Rights sent a letter of support. Read it [here](#).

May

GENEVA, 2 May 2021: The International Family Equality Day - [#IFED2021](#) - was held once again all around the world. In record-breaking 214 cities in 67 countries, rainbow families, friends and allies joined forces to promote equal rights and celebrate the uniqueness of each family. Participating for the first time this year were Turkey, Vietnam, Latvia, Uzbekistan and Eritrea. Read [more](#).

VILNIUS, 4 May 2021: A group of Liberal MPs (including NELFA ally Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius) have proposed legalising gender-neutral partnerships without a right to adopt children. It's a first step in the right direction. Currently, Lithuanian laws do not recognise civil partnerships. Several previous attempts to legislate this fell through at an early stage of the parliamentary process. Read [more](#).

ZAGREB, 5 May 2021: The Croatian Rainbow Families organisation [Dugine obitelji](#) shared amazing news. The Administration court in Zagreb on a non-discriminatory procedure in the adoption system. Means: same-sex couples should have the right to jointly apply for an adoption. NELFA Board member Daniel Martinovic says, this was a historic judgment. Read the [press release](#) (in Croatian).

BUDAPEST, 12 May 2021: A Hungarian magazine made wrong accusations against a gay couple and their child concerning the adoption procedure. Finally, a court decided in favour of the couple - thanks to the efforts of NELFA's member organisation Háttér Society. Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS, 17 May 2021: [ILGA-Europe](#)'s annual [Rainbow Europe Map and Index](#), ranking the legal and policy situation of LGBTIQ* people in 49 countries, finds that over the past 12 months advances in LGBTIQ* rights have come to almost a complete standstill. Changes for rainbow families: Civil unions in Monaco and Montenegro, assisted insemination for single women in Norway. Read [more](#).

BERLIN, 17 May 2021: On the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, [TGEU](#) launched an [interactive version of its Trans Rights Map](#) in English and Russian. It illustrates the legal situation of 49 countries in Europe and 5 in Central Asia. This year's Map documents an alarming loss in rights. In the section "family", there are no changes. Read [more](#).

VILNIUS, 25 May 2021: Unfortunately, the Lithuanian Parliament voted against a courageous civil union bill (without adoption rights), in the middle of a controversial discussion in society. However, the majority was little (65 NO and 63 YES) and the activists and politicians behind this proposal are not devastated. MP Tomas Raskevičius promised a new trial in autumn. Read more [in English](#).

June

STRASBOURG, 1 June 2021: We welcome today's judgement from the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Association [Accept](#) (supporting member of NELFA) and others vs. Romania. The case concerned a protest against a screening of a film involving a same-sex family in 2013. The protesters were carrying far-right paraphernalia and cinemagoers had been verbally abused. [ILGA-Europe](#) has issued a [press release](#) with further information.

VIENNA, 7 June 2021: NELFA's member organisation [FAmOS](#) in Austria participated at Vienna Pride 2021, i.e. with an online webinar on rainbow families. If you want to know more about the situation of LGBTIQ* parents and their children in Austria, have a look at the [recorded session](#) (in German).

BUDAPEST, 9 June 2021: NELFA is delighted by the decision of the audience in Hungary! Our member organisation [Háttér Társaság](#) and the rainbow family initiative [Szivárványcsaládokért Alapítvány](#) have won the civic price in 2021! It's at least one good sign in between. Unfortunately, the government's "crusade" (quote Háttér) against LGBTIQ* people is ongoing. Read more [here](#).

BUDAPEST, 15 June 2021: Despite thousands of protesters, and a petition signed by more than 100,000 people, the Hungarian Parliament passed the propaganda law, thus banning LGBTIQ*-themed educational programs, products, and advertising for persons under 18 years of age. Read a [press release](#) of our member [Háttér](#) and an [article](#).

PRISTINA, 16 June 2021: The government of Kosovo has been working and developing its first ever Civil Code. And the [European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTI Rights](#) is asking for inclusive efforts - means a recognition of rainbow families (in particular same-sex partnerships). We hope that this will happen in the future! Read [more](#).

VADUZ, 16 June 2021: The Supreme Court in Liechtenstein decided that the ban on (stepchild or second-parent) adoption for same-sex couples is unconstitutional. A gay man wanted to adopt his partner's son - but this is/was forbidden according to the civil union law of the Principality. Read [more](#) (in German).

BRUSSELS, 24 June 2021: The European Parliament just adopted a landmark position on sexual and reproductive rights (SRHR). It's about the first SRHR report in almost ten years. It highlights the importance of accessing all essential SRH services, including comprehensive sexuality education, contraception, abortion, maternal health and fertility services; and of preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence. Read the full report [here](#).

STOCKHOLM, 22 June 2021: The Swedish Parliament passed a law (for January 2022) which allows all those who are spouses of someone who gave birth to a child to be automatically recognised as a parent, ending discrimination against same-sex couples and trans people. However, presumed parenthood can be annulled if the child came into being via home insemination or assisted conception abroad with an unknown donor. Read more on our member [RFSL](#)'s [article](#).

PARIS, 29 June 2021: The French Parliament approved the new bioethics law - including the access for lesbian couples and single women to assisted reproductive techniques. From now, both mothers can appear on the child's birth certificate. Conditions: a previous statement with a notary and the okay by the intended birth mother (before entering into the ART process). Read [more](#).

July

BERLIN, 1 July 2021: Good news from Germany for lesbian couples! Berlin will be the second federal state that sponsors fertility treatment, at least if medically indicated, for the second and third IVF/ICSI trial (after Rhineland-Palatinate in March 2021). Read [more](#).

STRASBOURG, 6 July 2021: In a landmark judgment, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled in favour of a trans woman in Moscow (case of A.M. and Others v. Russia) who was denied access to her children because of her gender identity and transition. The ECtHR unanimously found a violation of Article 8 (right to private and family life) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination). Read [more](#).

BUDAPEST, 7 July 2021: Actually, Lawrence Schimel's book "Early One Morning" is a nice story. It follows two children, both of whom have same-sex parents. However, authorities in Hungary fined the publisher (250,000 Forints) because it failed to "warn" parents about the "queer content". The news went viral. You can read many articles or see videos - for example in [Hungarian](#), [German](#), [French](#) and [English](#).

MUNICH, 8 July 2021: The District Court just decided in favour of two mothers and their co-parenthood! Normally, they would need to undergo a stepchild adoption procedure in Germany. In this case, one mother has also British citizenship. And the court ruled after UK law and for the child's best interest. Read [more](#) (in German).

BRUSSELS, 15 July 2021: The EU Commission is launching infringement procedures against Hungary and Poland related to the equality and the protection of fundamental rights. (1) Hungary: Banning LGBTIQ* content and book disclaimer. (2) Poland: 'LGBT-ideology free zones'. Read the [press release](#) and [statement](#) by [ILGA-Europe](#).

PODGORICA, 25 July 2021: One year after the decision on the introduction of same-sex civil unions in Montenegro, the first lesbian couple celebrated its wedding in the city of Budva. The new law came into force on 15th July. Read [more](#) (in German).

August

MOSCOW, 16 August 2021: A month after a Hungarian bookshop chain was fined for selling a children's story (Lawrence Schimel) about a day in the life of two children with same-sex parents, the same picture book has been published in Russia - but with an "18+" label on it in deference to the country's so-called "gay propaganda law". Read more - in [English](#) and [German](#).

BERN, 16 August 2021: In Switzerland, a referendum on 26th of September will decide on marriage equality and the access for lesbian couples to assisted reproductive techniques. Supporters organised a big [wedding event](#) to show the joy of diversity. Unfortunately, there is an ongoing ugly campaign against rainbow families and their rights. You can read an article about [recent attacks](#) and [how the anti-movement \(mis\)uses pictures](#).

September

STUTTGART, 1 September 2021: The German initiative "100 % Mensch" wants to publish a children's book on diversity in the country and distribute it for free in Poland. The book "Hundemüde & hellwach" was written by author [Lawrence Schimel](#), who is already well-known for his sweet rainbow family stories in many different languages. If you want to support the project, you can click [here](#).

VILNIUS, 6 September 2021: The lesbian author Neringa Dangvydė Macatė (who died in 2020) wrote a children's book, entitled "[Amber Heart](#)". It contains six stories, two of them are dealing with romantic relationships and marriages between persons of the same sex. Following a recommendation issued by the Lithuanian Inspectorate of Journalistic Ethics, the book was labelled as possibly harmful to children. Now, the case has reached the ECtHR. Read [more](#).

STRASBOURG, 7 September 2021: The Council of Europe issued a new thematic [factsheet](#) focusing on the execution of ECHR judgments concerning the rights of LGBTIQ* persons. According to the European Court of Human Rights, the principle of non-discrimination is “fundamental” and underpins the Convention along with the rule of law and the values of tolerance and peace. Read [more](#).

BERN, 26 September 2021: Congratulations to Switzerland! A law granting full marriage and adoption rights to same-sex couples has been accepted by almost two-thirds of citizens (64 %). The result makes the country the 30th worldwide with marriage equality. Read [more](#).

VILNIUS, 29 September 2021: The National LGBT rights organisation LGL in Lithuania held an [international conference](#) - as part of the R.I.S.E. project with other activists from Latvia, Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. The event addressed the legal and social issues of family diversity and the recognition of LGBTIQ* family rights. Read [more](#).

October

COLOGNE, 04 October 2021: NELFA welcomes its new full member from Germany! It is the new rainbow family section of the queer network in North Rhine-Westphalia - [Queeres Netzwerk NRW](#). The group’s goal is to empower rainbow families in cities but also in rural areas. Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS, 07 October 2021: The EU Justice and Home Affairs Council failed to adopt Conclusions on the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#). In their ongoing assault on LGBTIQ* children’s rights, Hungary and Poland vetoed said conclusions and blocked an opportunity to show commitment to positive legal developments for all children in all their diversity. Read a [statement](#) of the LGBTIQ* youth organisation [IGLYO](#), NELFA fully endorses.

BRUSSELS, 18 October 2021: [ILGA-Europe](#) just published a [blog article](#) about a recent judgment at the ECtHR in Strasbourg concerning a trans woman. Russia discriminated against her and violated her right to family life by denying her any contact with her children. If you want to remind the case, you can read this [report](#) or more detailed in this [ECtHR communication](#).

November

MADRID, 05 November 2021: The Spanish health minister Darias has signed an order extending free fertility treatment, including IVF, to queer women, single cis women, trans and non-binary people. While queer and single people were previously able to access publicly funded fertility treatments, in 2013 the conservative Popular Party rolled back this right. Read [more](#).

KASSEL, 10 November 2021: The Federal Social Court decided that the health insurance does not have to pay for the fertility treatment of married lesbian couples (as it is possible for heterosexual couples when they use their own gametes). There would be “no obligation” to balance financially the reproductive biological limits just because of the possibility of same-sex marriages. Read [more](#).

BRUSSELS/SOFIA, 10 November 2021: Regarding the recent attack against the LGBTIQ* community centre “Rainbow Hub” in the Bulgarian capital, the [European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTI Rights](#) is calling on the government to propose legislation to criminalise hate crimes and hate speech. The “Rainbow Hub” project is partly organised by NELFA’s member organisation [Deystvie](#). Read [more](#).

ANKARA, 13 November 2021: The Turkish government and media accuse a Dutch rainbow family to “abuse” their adoptive son (who was fostered by a lesbian couple after he was mistreated by his biological parents...). NELFA strongly condemns those fake news! Read [more](#) (in German).

BERN, 17 November 2021: Switzerland has announced that same-sex couples can get married beginning on 1 July, 2022, after marriage equality was approved in a referendum. Same-sex couples will be able to adopt children together and get access to IVF. The government also announced that, from January, the country will recognise the marriages of same-sex couples who marry abroad instead of treating the unions as civil partnerships. Read [more](#).

BERLIN, 24 November 2021: The new Coalition of Socialdemocrats, Greens and Liberals wants to better the situation for LGBTIQ* parents and their children. Highlights: co-parent recognition (for lesbian couples), legal multiparenting options and pushing for a mutual recognition of parenthood within the EU! Read [more](#) (in German)

December

LUXEMBOURG, 14 December 2021: This is again a landmark decision! The EU's top court has ruled that same-sex parents and their children must be recognised as a family in all Member States. The case came before the European Court of Justice (CJEU) after Bulgarian authorities refused to give a birth certificate to the new-born daughter of a same-sex couple on the basis that a child cannot have two mothers. Read ILGA's [press release](#).

WARSAW, 20 December 2021: A new survey reveals that a majority of Polish respondents backs rainbow families and marriage equality! Read the results [here](#).

ZAGREB/SOFIA, 24 December 2021: We are proud! NELFA Board member Denitsa Lyubenova is - for the platform "Balcan Insight" - Hero of 2021!! Read [more](#).

WARSAW, 30 December 2021: Good news at the end of the year. After an attack on a rainbow family picnic in Sopot 2017, a court finally punished the aggressors. Read [more](#).