NELFA's Annual report 2013

Approved at the Annual General Meeting, Maastricht, 29 March 2014

This is the report of the Board of NELFA as regards its main work undertaken in 2013.

1. Administration

1.1. Internal Rules

The board of NELFA prepared draft Internal Rules of the association to be approved by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 29 March 2014. The draft Internal Rules were made available for consultation to the Full Members. No feedback was received in relation to the draft.

1.2. Board

The second working Board was elected at the AGM in March 2013 that took place in London. The board consisted of the following 7 persons:

President
Catalina Pallàs, FLG (Catalonia, Spain)

Vice-President
Juha Jämsä, Sateenkaariperheet (Finland)

Secretary
Angelo Berbotto, Famiglie Arcobaleno (Italy)

Treasurer
Luís Amorim, ILGA Portugal (Portugal)

Board members:
Lisa Green, LSVD (Germany)

Anne Marie Thus, Meer dan gewenst (Netherlands)

Konstantina Kosmidou, OLKE (Greece)

During 2013, the Board had nine meetings, of which eight were via Skype and one in person in London after the AGM. The Board also worked via a closed e-mail list that received 1522 messages in 2013 from Board members.

1.3. Annual General Meeting

The first AGM took place on 23 March 2013 in London, in accordance with the bylaws.

1.4. Membership

By the end of 2013 the association had 18 full members and 7 supporting members (4 associations and 3 individuals). RFSL (Sweden) and Gay Surrogacy UK (UK), became members of NELFA in 2013.

1.5. Finances

All due membership fees were collected from full members in 2013. Two supporting members (one association and one individual) did not pay their membership dues in 2013. Two individual donations were received of a total of 123,67 euros. For more details see NELFA draft financial report 2013.

2. Communication

Members were informed of NELFA's actions mainly through the NELFA's mailing list and the Facebook page. NELFA's Facebook page was kept regularly updated (604 posts in 2013) with relevant LGBT family news and grew in membership from 569 followers on 1 January 2013 to 870 followers on 31 December 2013.

Unfortunately, there was very little updating and maintenance of the Website (www.nelfa.org) during 2013. This was due to the resignation of the webmaster and the difficulties in securing an alternative webmaster. This issue seems to be resolved in 2014. A twitter account was opened in October 2013 but was not kept active. This needs to be revisited in 2014.

Eight press releases were sent out during 2013:

1. *The IFED 2012 Report is out!, 28 January 2013.*

2. *European Court of Human Rights: ban on same-sex second-parent adoption is discriminatory, Joint PR with Ilga-Europe, 19 February 2013.*

3. *NELFA rejoices in the recent vote (23 April) in the French National Assembly in favour of marriage and family equality, 26 April 2013.*

4. *5 May 2013 is International Family Equality Day (IFED) - Celebrating the Rainbow of Families Around the World!, 5 May 2013.*

5. *NELFA welcomes the positive outcome of the first vote of the co-adoption proposal in the Portuguese parliament, 17 May 2013*

6. *Spain must not move backwards on reproductive rights for all women, 30 July 2013.*

7. *NELFA tells European Commissioner Viviane Reding: - Children of LGBT parents should not lose their parents when they cross a border! You can change that, 24 September 2013.*

8. *The IFED 2013 Report is out!, 4 November 2013.*

3. Bi-Annual conference

The Bi-Annual conference of NELFA aisbl better known as the "European Meeting of LGBT Families" will take place in Cologne, Germany from 1 to 4 May 2014. The Board of NELFA is grateful to LSVD – ILSE for their hard work and dedication throughout 2013 in order to prepare the event.

4. Advocacy

4.1. Awareness campaigns

The second International Family Equality Day (IFED) was organised on 5 May 2013, in collaboration with associations from Canada, Israel and the USA. Over 70 organizations from over 40 countries participated. Ilga-Europe and the EP's Inter-group on LGBT rights were official partners. The report of IFED 2013 was published. The board of NELFA aisbl recognizes the work and dedication of Maria von Känel who co-ordinates IFED internationally.

At the Ilga-Europe conference in Zagreb in October 2013, Angelo Berbotto and Luis Amorim promoted the documentary Right2Love (they distributed 200 DVDs among individual participants, created a contact list, and followed up with an e-mail to check whether the film had been watched or shared and with what results).

4.2. Petition to Commissioner Reding

On 24 September, in Helsinki, Finland The Vice-President of the Network of European LGBT Families Associations (NELFA), Juha Jämsä, delivered a public petition to the Commissioner Viviane Reding on behalf of NELFA's 21 national member associations asking for true freedom of movement for LGBT parents and their children in the European Union.

4.3. Family, children and reproduction seminars and conferences attended by Board members on behalf of NELFA:

1. *LGBT Intergroup seminar "Free movement of LGBT families in the EU" in the European Parliament, 6 March 2013*
2. *Annual Conference of ILGA Europe, Zagreb, Croatia, October 2013.*
3. *Rome, "Rights on the move" - seminar, 15-17 November 2013*

4.4. European Union

NELFA maintained formal and informal contacts with the Secretariat of the European Parliament's (EP) Inter-group for LGBT rights. NELFA participated in the seminar of the Intergroup in March 2013 and collected experiences from actual families facing obstacles moving within Europe.

4.5. Council of Europe (CE) and European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

In February 2013, the ECHR ruled in favour of rainbow families in the landmark case of X v Austria. NELFA joined as a third party intervener in the case in 2012. A joint NELFA and Ilga-Europe Press Release was sent out.

4.6. Promotion of national law reforms

NELFA sent Press Releases on national law reforms in France (marriage equality), Spain (reproduction rights) and Portugal (second-parent adoption).

5. Capacity building

5.1. Starting new family groups

Board members reached out to new LGBT family groups in Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden and UK.

At the Ilga-Europe's conference in Zagreb in October, Board members organized workshops on how to build an LGBT family movement at national level.

5.2. Distributing good practices and strategies between members

NELFA board members participated in the Grundtvig Learning Networks project "Being an LGBT Parent as an Experience of Democracy and Active Citizenship" that arranged workshops for rainbow family activists in Geneva in May, in Helsinki in September and in Athens in November.

At the Ilga-Europe's conference in Zagreb in October, Board members and NELFA members organised the following workshops:

1. *LGBT parents and their children – by Luis Amorim and Angelo Berbotto*
2. *Surrogacy arrangements: Human rights and political issues at stake – by Luis Amorim*
3. *Teaching about LGBT families in schools – Famiglie Arcobaleno, Italy*

6. Publications

A report of IFED 2013 was published and printed.

7. Co-operation with external partners

7.1. Ilga-Europe

NELFA participated in Ilga-Europe's conference in Zagreb, Croatia and organised workshops and activists' meetings there. Board members distributed copies of DVD "Right 2 Love" and collected in exchange the contact details of the individuals who chose to take a DVD. This allowed NELFA to create its own distribution list of contacts of activists.

Meetings were held with Ilga-Europe and staff during the year, in order to [1] co-ordinate how to work better together and [2] to seek Ilga-Europe's support to obtain scholarships for families from Central and Eastern Europe to attend the 3rd European Meeting of LGBT Families.

7.2. Coface

NELFA maintained informal contacts with Coface. The board decided not to apply for membership before devising a clear strategy for participation in Coface activities, and having persons dedicated to pursuing this actively.

7.3. Grundtvig Project

In 2012 the associations of Rainbow Families of Switzerland, Finland, Italy, Greece and Portugal joined in a European mobility project having as an aim to empower parents to be active citizens and to get involved at community level on projects to advance the rights of LGBT families. In 2013 three workshops were arranged in three counries.