



## **POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS FOR LESBIAN COUPLES IN BELGIUM**

The Network of European LGBT Families Associations welcomes the finalisation by the Belgian Senate of the law allowing the non-biological mother in a lesbian couple to be automatically recognised as the legal mother following the birth of their child. The new law is expected to come into force on 1 January 2015, and will allow lesbian couples that become parents to avoid having to go through a sometimes long and cumbersome co-adoption procedure for the non-biological mother, and often disruptive for the whole family.

Maria Von Känel, NELFA President, said about the new law: *“NELFA is very happy with this decision. The new law acknowledges the fact that when a couple makes parenting plans, whether a same-sex or a different-sex couple, both parents-to-be deserve to be treated equally vis-à-vis their child. In this case, non-biological mothers in lesbian couples were being discriminated in relation to the male partners of heterosexual women. The process of registering a child's birth and obtaining parental recognition will now become much easier and fairer for all. The new law should be open to all families residing in Belgium, not just to Belgian citizens. NELFA will write to the Belgian authorities to raise this important question.”*

Luis Amorim, NELFA Board member living in Belgium, added: *“Belgium is moving in the right direction. The new law not only means that lesbian couples will have equal rights to their counterparts, it also means that the Belgian State recognises that the meaning of family goes way beyond the genetic link. Rainbow Families have been for many years at the forefront of a new understanding of family, underpinned by the values of love, care and actual parental involvement. I hope the new Belgian government will soon look at the situation of non-biological fathers in gay couples too, which deserve the same attention and rights. The best interest of children must always be the guiding principle, and children of gay couples who become parents through surrogacy deserve the same kind of efficient legal protection like any other children.”*

### **About NELFA:**

NELFA is the European platform of LGBT families associations, bringing together LGBT parents and parents-to-be from all over Europe. NELFA currently represents 23 organisations in 15 European countries with more than 23,000 members. NELFA is a member of ILGA-Europe and Transgender Europe.

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