



**International
Family
Equality
Day**

Celebrating the Rainbow of Families in our World!

The International Family Equality Day (IFED) Network **Annual Report 2015**

IFED 2015 Tel-Aviv, Israel



Photo credit: Tal Udi Or





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IFED 2015 Salerno, Italy

Editorial

Regardless of different legal, political and social circumstances around the world, the dramatic increase in the numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) people choosing to raise children is a global phenomenon.

The **International Family Equality Day (IFED)** was launched as a sign of solidarity and strength and to promote equality for all families. On 6 May 2012, several events were held throughout Europe, Canada, Israel and the U.S. Families, friends, interested parties, experts from government agencies and other institutions as well as politicians and representatives of all parties were invited to celebrate the rainbow of families in our world.

This annual report introduces the organizations involved in IFED as well as the work done by the IFED Committee, and highlights the activities that were held in the different countries to celebrate this day. The annual report aims to serve as an inspiration for the Fourth International Family Equality Day, which will take place on **May 1st 2016**.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the countless activists who tirelessly champion the visibility and equality of rainbow families around the world!

Happy reading. Yours cordially,

The International Family Equality Day (IFED) Network



Celebrating the Rainbow of families in our world!

Making progress for LGBTI families

Time and again there are these positive surprises in my professional life which show that, yes, the times they are a-changing', and to the better for us LGBTI-people, and our families!

Since my last foreword for the IFED publication in 2013 many positive things have happened. While not ignoring the negative ones, including anti-equality referenda in Croatia and Slovakia (the latter one luckily without success), and more outspoken homophobic organisations and politicians at all levels, positive tendencies prevail. And – being Austrian and European – I have to say that I am convinced that Conchita Wurst's victory in 2014 at the Eurovision Song Contest and her wise public statements have been a very valuable contribution to that process of changing people's minds and hearts which is at the core of what we want to achieve. LGBTI families with their children and straight allies have been the biggest and most visible group on many Prides, and the legal situation for rainbow families has improved.

Even in countries (still 10 of them inside the EU) where no partnership and/or family equality legislation exists and which are known for strong public homophobia, the movement is gaining ground.

I was specifically impressed by the first regional conference organized by LGBTI parents in Kyiv, Ukraine, in April of 2015, where mostly mothers of lesbians, gays and trans people from around the world exchanged views and experiences and strategized how to move on to change laws and abolish prejudices.

In May the LGBTI-Intergroup at the European Parliament (together with NELFA) organized the conference 'families without borders' which turned out to be a great awareness raiser. A young woman, Lena Green, talked candidly about her two mothers and her very positive and 'normal' experience growing up with same-sex parents. Her speech culminated in her saying:

I always have to go everywhere, like yea I have two moms . . . But then I always have to add: I'm alright, I'm normal. And that's really weird and difficult for a child. The problem is not having two moms, it's having to say I'm alright, I'm normal.

And then of course the marriage-YES-vote in catholic Ireland, that was a highlight this year! Before that the Austrian constitutional court had ruled – after a ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in 2013 to allow step child adoption – that full joint co-adoption needs to be legalized.

And then in July of this year firstly an Italian court ruled unlawful the ban on granting non-Italian same sex-couples married or registered abroad and living in Italy the same rights as straight couples. This was just before the European Court of Human Rights ruled the absence of same-sex partnerships or marriage for same sex couples a violation of human rights.

So it is clear that the rainbow shines brighter for LGBTI people and our families than it did two years ago. We are making progress, although we still have some way to go, in legal terms, and for all of us adults as well as our children and wider families, when it comes to living lives free from fear and discrimination, in full visibility, recognition and acceptance – the basis of happiness.

At the European Parliament I personally, together with our allies at the LGBTI Intergroup, am at the moment working on two relevant topics: One is to finally make the equality directive, stuck in the European Council since 2009, a reality, and the second one is to bring European life into the 'roadmap against homophobia' which the European Parliament under my authorship has demanded the Commission to prepare in February of 2014. Both issues will, once in force, also contribute to making lives easier for same-sex families.

All in all, the rainbow has been growing brighter and wider, and lesbian and gay families with their children have becoming a cornerstone of our common movement.

Let's then move on together and make this world a brighter place for LGBTI people and our children – and thus for society as a whole!

Ulrike Lunacek (Greens/Austria)

Vice-President of the European Parliament
and Co-Chair of the LGBTI Intergroup of the EP.



No more discrimination against LGBT people; LGBT rights and the role of regional and local authorities

Today, sexual orientation and gender identity are recognised as prohibited grounds for discrimination. However, in spite of the numerous international texts on human rights standards, LGBT people are still prejudiced against and face discrimination on a daily basis. It is important to remember that the responsibility for countering that prejudice is shared by all public authorities at different tiers of authority, and it is part of the role of local and regional bodies to protect the rights of citizens regardless of their sexual identities.

In this context, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has adopted a resolution on “Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people’s right in Europe: a responsibility for Europe’s towns and regions” at its March 2015 session (Resolution 380 (2015)). It invites local and regional authorities to initiate measures to introduce human rights education in the curricula of schools and other educational establishments so that children and young people understand the importance of respect, equality and dignity. It also recommends that elected representatives and persons in position of authority publicly denounce all incitement to hatred against LGBT people. The legal vacuum where national legislation is lacking should be filled by

local provisions, and clear anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies should be implemented for public administration staff. Finally, the resolution calls on local and regional authorities to set up municipal coordination offices in order to coordinate LGBT policies.

In her report Ms Renström noted that that local authorities can organise awareness-raising campaigns and events such as the International

Congress Rapporteur and first Vice-President of the PES Group in the Committee of the Regions Yoömi Renström with Maria von Känel, IFED founder and editor of the IFED Annual Reports.



Family Equality Day (IFED) to promote positive awareness and disseminate good practice through networks such as the “Rainbow Cities”.

In March 2015, Congress rapporteur Yoömi Renström, the mayor of the Municipality of Ovanåker in Sweden, participated in a conference in Paris that tackled the subject “Being homosexual in Europe during the 2nd World War”. The commemoration of the victims of discrimination is an important issue that cities such as Berlin, Amsterdam, San Francisco and Tel Aviv have already taken on. The creation of a European network of cities which have created or plan to create memorials is supported by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

The issue of LGBT rights will continue to be part of the Congress’ agenda in coming years.

Yoömi Renström (Rapporteur)
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
Council of Europe



1. International Family Equality Day (IFED)

The first International Family Equality Day took place on May 6th 2012. Fifteen organizations from nine countries participated then and numbers have been increasing ever since! (see below) A few snapshots and short reports of the latest events can be found throughout this brochure; additional information and impressions (videos, personal reports of the events) can be found on the IFED website.

2. Chronicle of the International Family Equality Day

In terms of legal, political and social equality, rainbow families face very different standards depending on where in the world they live. In many countries these families have no protection at all, a fact which entails massive social, financial and legal uncertainty.

In July 2011, LGBTQ family activists from around the world gathered for the first ever International Symposium of LGBTQ parenting organizations. The symposium provided an opportunity to establish ongoing international cooperation in areas such as research, visibility and advocacy, and the development of resources and programs for LGBTQ families worldwide. The goal of the symposium was to help foster a sense of global community among the families, to increase the visibility and raise awareness about the challenges that rainbow families must overcome for social and legal acceptance.

As a key outcome of the symposium the involved family organizations from the U.S. (Family Equality Council), Canada (LGBTQ Parenting Network) and Europe (NELFA) took the opportunity to launch an official day for equality and recognition of all types of family: the International Family Equality Day, which takes place every year on the first Sunday in May.

IFED aims to highlight the diversity of family structures and to strengthen solidarity among families. At the same time it calls on administrative, institutional and political representatives to support equality and recognition for all families.



May 6th, 2012: 15 cities in 9 countries
May 5th, 2013: 44 cities in 17 countries
May 4th, 2014: 48 cities in 22 countries
May 3rd, 2015: 67 cities in 32 countries
May 1st, 2016: "Families Without Borders"

www.internationalfamilyequalityday.org

**5th European conference for rainbow families and IFED
Greece, 27th April - 1st of May 2016**

Dear Friends from All around Europe,

We are very happy to welcome you to Greece for the 5th European LGBTI Families Meeting hosted by OLKE and NELFA!

The heritage of the classical era is still evident in the country; it is amply represented by ancient monuments and works of art, the most famous being the Parthenon in Athens, considered a key landmark of early Western civilization.

As we welcome you to ancient and modern Greece, the birthplace of Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles and many other philosophers, poets and scientists, we hope you will discover your own Greek drama (from the ancient Greek word "drama") or Greek comedy (from the ancient Greek word "komodia")!

OLKE is excited to organise the 5th European LGBTI Families Meeting in central Greece. Given the dire situation of human rights issues throughout many parts of Greece, this conference will be an opportunity to assist and strengthen Greece's LGBTI communities on family issues.

The European LGBTI Families Meeting will provide our families with visibility, solidarity, experience and a chance to speak more openly with the conservative Greek society!

The local organising committee is ready to welcome you for this great and memorable event!

Athenians know about "philoxenia" (hospitality) and about reinventing classical myths! Let's keep on making history together!

Panagiotis Damaskos
Head of board of OLKE

Konstantina Kosmidou
The coordinator of the 5th
European families meeting



Panagiotis Damaskos

Konstantina Kosmidou

“UNICEF supports the enactment of laws which provide LGBT couples and their children with the legal recognition of their family ties. Legal ‘recognition’ (in addition to ‘protection’) of family relationships are important in fighting discrimination against LGBT parents and children, as parents without legal recognition are prevented from making decisions concerning fundamental aspects of their child’s life, such as education and health care. Moreover, they are often not eligible for State benefits and fiscal privileges which are specifically designed to support families.”

Unicef Current Issues n.9, November 2014

**ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHILDREN AND PARENTS
BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY**

http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/Current_Issues_Paper-_Sexual_Identification_Gender_Identity.pdf



Austria

Hello! Our Group "Regenbogenfamilien Oberösterreich" has been in existence since 2011 in Linz (Austria). In spring 2015 we joined "FAmOs". Last May we celebrated IFED for the first time, and it was a great experience! The feeling that we are not alone is overwhelming and warms our hearts. Our group in Linz has about 30 participants, including 8 kids plus 2 more on the way – we're growing every month! We are really looking forward to the next IFED! We are unstoppable! Thanks for bringing IFED to life!

Gay families from Belgium, Netherlands, France, Germany and the USA celebrated International Family Equality Day in Brussels with special activities for children, including a clown, balloons, and face painting. Current and future parents also saw a film about surrogate parenting and participated in a symposium about "Legal and societal challenges for gay fatherhood across Europe."



Belgium

't Kwadraat, the Flanders Rainbow families organisation and Het Roze Huis (LGBT Center Antwerp) joined forces with the city of Antwerp for IFED at Planckendael zoo. Although it was a typical rainy day in Belgium, about 50 families joined the event. At noon everybody gathered for a cosy picnic and pride group photo.



Croatia

Around 20 people gathered for the 2nd IFED celebration in Croatia on Saturday, 2 May. The event was organised by Dugine obitelji (Rainbow Families). We talked about the registered partnership law for same-sex couples that was adopted in Croatia in 2014. We also discussed family planning based on the experiences of two couples with children, who also gave advice to people interested in starting a family. NELFA president Maria von Känel joined us by video call, and we also saw some video greetings. In the end we had a brunch, which was an opportunity for informal conversation.



Canada

The LGBTQ Parenting Network hosted our fourth annual International Family Visibility Day Picnic at Christie Pits Park in Toronto, Canada. About 300 LGBTQ parents and their children, friends, families, and allies joined us for grilled hot dogs, burgers, a special circle time, songs, and games. Next year, we'll be holding the picnic at the new playground that opened this summer. We encourage all LGBTQ parents and families to join us on Sunday, May 1, 2016 at Allan Gardens.



Belgium

US Family Equality Council

In many ways, the kids are all right. They are being raised by LGBTQ people in households filled with love all over the world, and on June 26, our Supreme Court here in the U.S. ruled that same-sex couples could get married in all our 50 states — a decision that marked the culmination of decades of litigation, advocacy and public education efforts by many in the LGBTQ community. I'm particularly proud of the role Family Equality Council played in elevating the voices of our children in front of the nine justices of the Court in our "Voices of Children" amicus brief, which included contributions from more than 30 American children, teens and adults ranging in age from 10 to 44.

Still, there is a lot that is not yet all right for kids of LGBTQ parents in our global community. And that's why Family Equality Council — which supports the 3 million LGBTQ Americans who are parents and their 6 million children of all ages — is focused on advancing protections and equality for our families. We have set a clear strategy to pursue and win legal and lived equality in the U.S.: we engage and empower communities with events such as International Family Equality Day. We pursue policy reform at the federal and state level through legislation and regulatory change — especially in the southern part of our country — and are leading the reclamation of family values with our comprehensive "Family Values Forward" campaign for 2016 (www.familyequality.org/familyvaluesforward). And we inform our families, the population and this country's leaders through our groundbreaking public education campaigns.

This year's Family Equality Council IFED celebrations featured numerous opportunities for LGBTQ parents and their children to unite at local

levels. The 2015 celebrations were held in 16 locations across the U.S. and were attended by more than 1,000 LGBTQ-identified parents and their families. Says our Director of Programs, Brent Wright: "From picnics in local parks to family dances to beach outings, our events offered the chance for LGBTQ people to build their communities and connect with others with families like theirs." Aside from IFED, our Program team also produces similar events around the country, such as the annual Family Weekends in the Midwest, Southwest, in DC and at Disneyland — and more than 500 LGBTQ-led families attended the 20th anniversary of our Family Week in July in Provincetown, Massachusetts, alone.

All year long, Family Equality Council's hard-charging Policy team works tirelessly to ensure protections for our families. LGBTQ people and their children still face discrimination in crucial aspects of American life such as employment, housing and public accommodations. The current patchwork of limited protections means that in many states, LGBTQ Americans can still legally be fired for putting up a wedding photo at work, be denied an opportunity to shop for a home, or be refused service in a restaurant. Says our Director of Public Policy, Emily Hecht-McGowan: "Marriage equality was a historic win, but it's far from enough. As a movement, we need to harness the momentum of the Supreme Court decision and continue to work for nationwide non-discrimination protections, greater adoption and foster care rights, and increased security for working LGBTQ parents and their families. We still have much work to do."

One particular area of the United States especially needs our attention: The South. Family Equality Council has established a strong foothold in this region of the country, where we now have full-time staff and run legal clinics for lower-income LGBTQ-led families. Though these states





have the fewest legal protections for LGBTQ people, they are also home to a full 30 percent of our families. Family Equality Council has met these families on the ground, setting up legal clinics in Mississippi and Alabama, developing detailed, state-specific family legal guides, and partnering with local leaders and organizations. These unique, impactful programs have helped get these families proper advice on everything from adoption and foster care laws to trusts and estates, and opportunities to connect and build communities.

That brings us to another significant part of what we do: empowering families not just to protect themselves but to get involved and share their stories. We offer our constituents various ways to lend their voices to the movement, with programs such as our Outspoken Generation, in which those with LGBTQ parents are given platforms to tell what it is like to grow up in their families. Another program, Pearls of Wisdom, celebrates the grandparents in our community, encouraging them to share their experiences and knowledge regarding the importance of family.

Lastly, Family Equality Council is committed to bringing our issues front and center for all of America through our public education campaigns. Featuring a wide variety of LGBTQ-led families from around the country sharing personal tales of their victories and challenges, these Web and social media campaigns have connected hugely with LGBTQ people across the globe and the allies who care about us. Each campaign – set around topics such as adoption, foster care or safe and more welcoming schools – has reached 20 million people, showing them we need to put our children first.

We had a lot of reasons to celebrate in 2015. But there is still so much to be done, here in the U.S. and around the world. We won't rest until all LGBTQ people – and their children – are protected, supported and respected. Only then will we definitely know that the kids are all right.

Gabriel Blau
Executive Director
Family Equality Council



Gabriel Blau with his husband Dylan and their son Elijah

International Family Equality Day (IFED) celebrated at the European Parliament for the first time

The Network of European LGBTI Families Associations (NELFA) celebrated on 5 May 2015, International Family Equality Day (IFED) in the European Parliament in Brussels. This was the first time IFED was celebrated in the European Parliament. The event was made possible with the support of the Intergroup on LGBT Rights of the European Parliament. A conference - "Families without borders" - addressed in particular the situation of European rainbow families as regards freedom of movement, calling on European Union institutions to take all the necessary measures to make freedom of movement also a reality for rainbow families.

Rainbow families from Spain/Catalonia, Belgium, Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland joined the event with their children. The adult children of rainbow families also added their voice to the debate in the European Parliament, a "first" in the history of our movement.

Maria von Känel, NELFA's President, said: "this a historic day for rainbow families in Europe. IFED is a day of visibility for our families, a day that celebrates our diversity and reclaims our right for equality. I am very pleased to see many families from all over Europe here today. Their commitment is a source of inspiration to all of us".

Luis Amorim, NELFA Board Member, added: "freedom of movement is one of the cornerstones of the European Union. Our families deserve the same rights as everybody else. Our children in particular deserve the same level of legal protection of every other child in the European Union. We want European institutions to work together towards making freedom of movement a reality for our families. We should not lose our parenting rights when crossing borders, that is creating a new kind of exclusion for our children and is unacceptable".

Lena Herrmann-Green, the adult child of two mothers, said: **"I feel tired of having to prove to people that I am 'normal' and that I'm alright. I feel tired of hearing people say that if I do or say something different it's because I have two mums. My family is like any other family"**.



IFED 2015 in the European Parliament, Brussels

Is there true freedom of movement?

People move, as do families. The European Union counts the freedom to move and reside in any Member State among its most fundamental achievements. Since the onset, European integration held that there is no true freedom if you cannot settle in another Member State with your family members.

Sixty years after the launch of the integration process, we should ask the Union whether it has delivered on its promise to safeguard the family life of its people when they try to make use of one of the most fundamental rights associated with their status as EU citizens. The project Rights on the move – Rainbow families in Europe focussed on this question for over two years. The results are now available.

An EU-wide survey has shown that, despite public discourses against equal marriage or the recognition of foreign acts, Member States have de facto construed a notion of spouse under the Free Movement Directive (Directive 2004/38/EC) that includes same-gender spouses. While some smaller incidents at national borders have been recorded, we did not consider what may have been occasional mistakes by border police officers to be the official position of the respective Member States' administration. We looked at administrative instructions and case law. We found only one negative decision, by the Cyprus Supreme Court in 2010. Despite considerable theoretical debate on the issue, the reality seems unproblematic. This may also explain why the Court of Justice has not yet had any opportunity to address the matter. However, the situation might change in future, and there is no official or binding document from the EU that clarifies how the term "spouse" should be interpreted. This unfortunate situation will hopefully end when Brussels issues guidelines on an inclusive interpretation of the term "spouse".

Families also, and foremost, include children. We were unable to find any real-life problems with regard to the Directive and the right to enter and reside in a Member State. But again, there might be difficulties in future, especially if neither the only parent recognized by the host State nor the child is an EU citizen.

Despite the fact that same-gender parenthood often meets stronger opposition in conservative parts of society than does the recognition of same-gender unions, the protection of the best interest of the child awarded by the law has led to a surprising outcome: With the notable exception of Portugal, there are

more Member States that legally recognize two parents of the same gender than those that recognise two same-gender spouses. This is an important comparative result.

However, the position of children of rainbow families remains highly vulnerable. Societal discrimination is increasing in some contexts, with aggressive strategies to challenge non-discrimination policies and curricula in schools. Those children also suffer greatly from the poor legislation in some Member States. Political tides are a menace, as ideological juxtaposition may lead to legislative reforms resulting in even worse standards of protection. Although we may expect to sort things out once and for all very soon with additional groundbreaking European rulings, at present many families face a situation of great legal uncertainty. Whereas some judges may have ruled in favour of second-parent adoption or full recognition of a foreign birth certificate, others fiercely oppose such outcomes. The children are discriminated against when it comes to citizenship, to getting the care they deserve from both working parents (not just from the one the state recognizes), a death of a family member, alimony, etc.

The project Rights on the move has looked at these serious inequities in the daily life of rainbow families. Guaranteeing the right to residence under the Directive is not enough. We believe we have convincingly argued that freedom of movement does not stop at the prescriptions of the directive. As a fundamental freedom entrenched in the treaties, it has direct effect and requires all inconveniences and obstacles be removed. It mandates the full recognition of the crucial relationship between a parent and her or his children. No EU citizen should be asked to relinquish the right to be a parent just because they exercise their right to move.

The fight for full equality and unabridged dignity has a long way to go. The European Union is based on common values. The core of these values are human rights and fundamental freedoms. The legal protection of rainbow families is undoubtedly a great challenge for the process of European integration, but it's a challenge worth assuming. Only by facing and overcoming obstacles will European values live on and remain true to their very essence. This is what European citizenship is really about.



Alexander Schuster

Coordinator of the project [rightsonthemove](http://rightsonthemove.eu)
University of Trento

www.rightsonthemove.eu



Alexander Schuster, IT

3. Network of International Family Equality Day

As a sign of solidarity and strength and to promote equality for all type of families, the LGBTQ family organizations LGBTQ Parenting Network, Family Equality Council, NELFA and Coalition des familles homoparentales took the opportunity to establish ongoing international cooperation in areas such as research, visibility and advocacy, and the development of resources and programs for LGBTQ families worldwide.

Each organization puts forward representatives for the IFED Committee. The organizations and their respective representatives are introduced below:

LGBT Family Coalition

With over 1300 families the LGBT Family Coalition (Coalition des familles LGBT) is the largest LGBT organization in Quebec. We offer services and resources in both English and French. The LGBT Family Coalition is the only advocacy group for families with LGBT parents in Quebec. The media has become increasingly focused on alternative families, as adoption, surrogacy and assisted procreation have become “hot” issues. But even as we have increasingly gained legal recognition, society’s institutions still have much to learn about our families and our particular needs.



The Coalition works for the legal and social recognition of our families in collaboration with government bodies and the media. We work to increase our visibility and to raise public awareness about our diverse realities.

Another mandate of the LGBT Family Coalition is to create new resources that can be used in primary and secondary schools, day-care, doctors’ offices, community organizations and social services to sensitize the public about the diversity of family structures, as well as the impact of homophobia, heterosexism and gender-based harassment. Our training sessions have reached out to over 10,000 professionals across Quebec.

www.famillesLGBT.org

Family Equality Council



Over the past 30 years, Family Equality Council has become a leading advocate in the United States for the three million parents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and their the six million children. We are changing attitudes and policies to ensure that all families are respected, loved, and celebrated – including families with parents who are LGBT.

A significant focus of current efforts revolves around Family Equality Council’s commitment to empowering LGBT families to share their story. We do this by creating both local and national level opportunities for LGBT parents to advocate for equality through programs like our Outspoken Generation – a program in which young adults with LGBT parents are given platforms to tell what it was actually like to grow up in their family. Another of these programs, our Pearls of Wisdom program, celebrates the grandparents in our community, encouraging them to share their experiences and their wisdom regarding the importance of supporting our families.

This summer marked the 18th year of our signature annual event, Family Week. It is the largest gathering of the LGBT family community in the United States and takes place in the iconic setting of Provincetown, Massachusetts. Family Week features unique opportunities for LGBT parents and their children to come together in an affirming community, creating life-long connections. Family Equality Council helps support and foster similar experiences for LGBT parents at the local level, such as through our work with Parent Groups around the country. For Parent Groups we provide programming tools and a community space for LGBT parents and for those considering parenthood to connect with one another. In our Policy department, we strive to educate the American public on issues relevant to the LGBT community in a way that is accessible and genuine – changing as many hearts and minds as possible along the way. We work to ensure that the laws that govern our country best recognize all individuals who have made the commitment to be parents.

Through all of these initiatives, Family Equality Council is hoping to create a better world - a world where all loving families are recognized, respected and celebrated equally.

www.familyequality.org

LGBTQ Parenting Network

The LGBTQ Parenting Network is a program of Sherbourne Health Centre, an innovative health centre located in downtown Toronto, Canada.



The LGBTQ Parenting Network promotes the rights and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer parents, prospective parents and their families through education, advocacy, research, social networking, and community organizing. In 1997, Dykes Planning Tykes (DPT), a course for lesbian/bi/queer women considering parenthood, was born in Toronto. This course is now part of a set of family planning courses that we continue to offer in partnership with Queer Parenting Programs at The 519 Church Street Community Centre. Together, these courses offer family-creation learning, exploration, and community building opportunities for up to 200 LGBTQ people every year.

The work of the LGBTQ PN grew from and was informed by the content of these courses, and we strive to bring the same community development model to our research, advocacy, resource, and program creation.

The goal of the LGBTQ PN is to counter historically entrenched, and often internalized, negative ideas about LGBTQ-led families, and to foster the attitude that LGBTQ people not only have the right and the ability to be parents, but that LGBTQ families provide children with unique and interesting opportunities.

We affirm the existence and visibility of LGBTQ families through events, workshops, and the development of resources. We add to knowledge of LGBTQ parenting by conducting community-based research that informs our practice, and we advocate for LGBTQ parents and prospective parents, individually and systemically, in areas such as assisted human reproduction, adoption, family recognition and schools.

www.lgbtqparentingnetwork.ca

NELFA

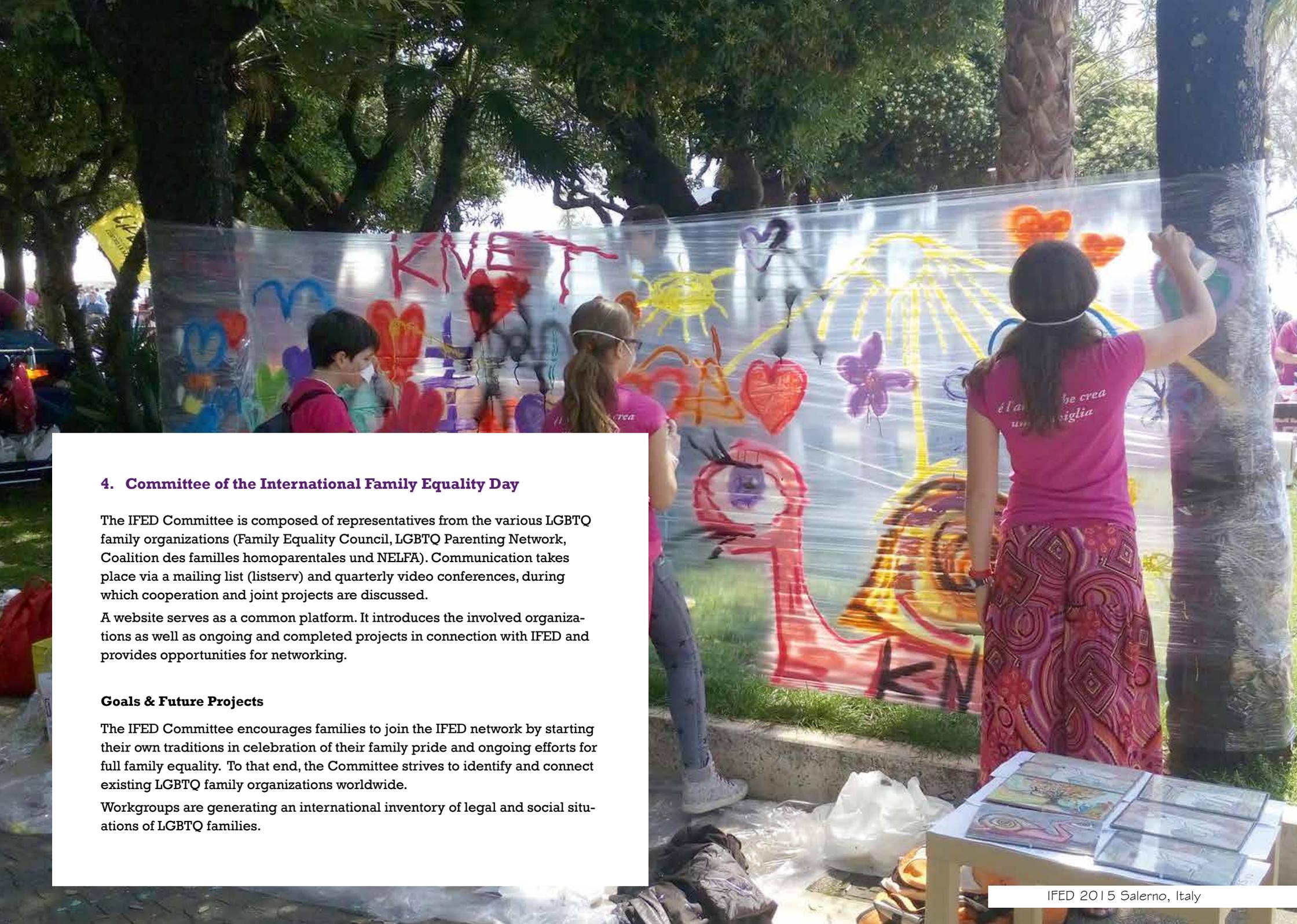
The Network of European LGBT Families Associations (NELFA) was created on 1 May 2009 to unite European associations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents and their children under one umbrella organization representing Rainbow Families at the European level.



With 25 associations representing 17 European countries and thousands of LGBT families, NELFA promotes the exchange of information among its members and assists in creating and developing LGBT families associations in Europe. NELFA works to ensure that children raised in LGBT families in Europe are granted the same rights as children from other families. NELFA encourages European governments to adopt legal systems and equal opportunity policies that do not discriminate against LGBT families, whether it be legally, financially, educationally or socially. NELFA also works to ensure the freedom of movement of LGBT families within the European Union without their family life being compromised by entering or settling in another Member State.

NELFA was incorporated under Belgian law as an international non-profit association (AISBL) on 12 March 2012. The official NELFA headquarters are located in the Rainbow House in Brussels. With the incorporation of NELFA aisbl, thirteen NELFA founding members from Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland took a major step towards further consolidating NELFA's work on behalf of LGBT families in Europe.

www.nelfa.org



4. Committee of the International Family Equality Day

The IFED Committee is composed of representatives from the various LGBTQ family organizations (Family Equality Council, LGBTQ Parenting Network, Coalition des familles homoparentales und NELFA). Communication takes place via a mailing list (listserv) and quarterly video conferences, during which cooperation and joint projects are discussed.

A website serves as a common platform. It introduces the involved organizations as well as ongoing and completed projects in connection with IFED and provides opportunities for networking.

Goals & Future Projects

The IFED Committee encourages families to join the IFED network by starting their own traditions in celebration of their family pride and ongoing efforts for full family equality. To that end, the Committee strives to identify and connect existing LGBTQ family organizations worldwide.

Workgroups are generating an international inventory of legal and social situations of LGBTQ families.

Hello

We are the

IFED

Committee



Maria von Känel, CH

"I am very happy that the representatives of local and regional authorities in Europe recognise the importance of celebrating diversity, including family diversity, and that they have included IFED among the list of activities that can be developed locally to promote a culture of acceptance in our towns and regions." Maria von Känel - wife of Martina, mother of 2 children and General Manager of the Swiss Rainbow Families Association and president of NELFA.



Catalina Pallas, ES

"Democratic States should not deprive LGBT people of their right to marry, as there are no social or legal reasons to go against it. LGBT families do exist and so do their children, therefore policies to protect them should be developed urgently."



Brent Wright, US

"By collectively raising our voices, parents and children alike, we dispel myths and misinformation about our families. We are making great strides forward in the legal equality of LGBTQ parents in the U.S. right now and by also fostering supportive communities and educating the public, we also advance their LIVED equality." Brent Wright is the Director of Programs at Family Equality Council. He and his husband, Sandis, are raising two daughters.



Ono-Haru, JP

Founder and Representative of Njiurokazoku. Raising 3 children with my same sex partner. All of them are now in their in puberty and it's not easy, but I'm very grateful to be with my family.

Juha Jämsä is the Executive Director of Finnish Rainbow Families Association (Sateenkaariperheet). He has studied sociology of family and conducted numerous studies in the field of gendered parenthood, gay fathers and the welfare services of Finnish rainbow families. Mr. Jämsä has three teenagers with his husband.



Juha Jämsä, FI



**International
Family
Equality
Day**

Celebrating the Rainbow of Families in our World!



Rachel Epstein, CA

Rachel Epstein has been an LGBTQ parenting activist, educator and researcher for close to 20 years and coordinates the LGBTQ Parenting Network at the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto, Ontario. She has published on a wide range of issues, including assisted human reproduction, queer spawn in schools, butch pregnancy, and the tensions between queer sexuality, radicalism and parenting. She is editor of *Who's Your Daddy? And Other Writings on Queer Parenting* (Sumach Press, 2009) and is the 2008 winner of the Steinert & Ferreiro Award (Community One Foundation), recognizing her leadership and pivotal contributions towards the support, recognition and inclusion of LGBTQ parents and their children in Canada.



Mona Greenbaum, CA

As LGBT parents, many challenges lie ahead of us in terms of the social recognition of our families. Even though we have increasingly gained legal recognition, certain institutions in society still lack knowledge about our families and are not aware of our particular needs. Social service employees, as well as health care practitioners, must be made aware of the diversity of family structures. Myths and stereotypes about our families need to be exposed. Combating homophobia in primary and secondary schools is the major area where we need to apply our efforts, because this is where our children experience exclusion.

"I am thrilled to see how IFED is becoming a wide tradition and a real force for visibility for our families." Ron Poole-Day, husband to Greg, father of twins, and the Executive Director of Men Having Babies.



Ron Poole-Day, US

"LGBT families are changing perceptions of parenting and the notion of family worldwide because they create alliances everywhere they go, be at school, their neighbourhood, with health service providers, etc and this is due to their VISIBILITY and their openness. They have left the closet behind and their VISIBILITY means opportunities to educate others and to dispel prejudice in their communities.

LGBT families and their children are a positive contribution to society."

Andy is the Health Promoter for the LGBTQ Parenting Network. He is a proud trans single papa by choice to Elise. Andy has pursued projects related to trans parenting since participating in the creation of the first course for transmasculine people considering parenthood in Toronto in 2005.



Andy Inkster, CA

The IFED is the perfect day to celebrate Rainbow families but also a good moment to empower them and to create a network.

Chloé Lenaerts, coordinator Het Roze Huis - çavana Antwerpen. Mother of two cuties.



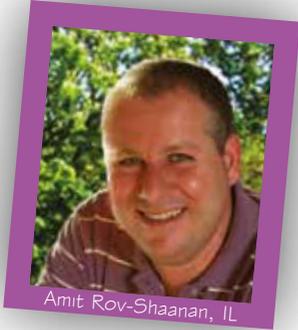
Boris Vrdoljak, HR

At our IFED celebration and monthly gatherings, LGBTI families share their experiences with other. Also, some of the families have recently published their stories in newspapers and LGBTI portals. I am very pleased to see how all this activities empower and encourage LGBTI people who want to be parents.



Angelo Berbotto, UK

We are here and we will stay, because we are in the correct side of history, because what makes a family is love, and because with us enjoying full rights and protection our societies improve, we help to create more tolerant and caring communities!



Amit Rov-Shaan, IL

"I feel so inspired and empowered organizing and participating IFED picnics in Israel, because every year I see more and more new families.

I believe that it is also important for the kids".

Amit Rov-Shaan, co-founder of the Association of Israeli Gay Fathers.

Has 3.5 years old twins with his husband.



Chloé Lenaerts, BE

"I am very pleased to see such a great support for diverse families. I am also very proud of LGBT families in Lithuania, who are gradually opening the door to their homes and are stepping out of the shade into the light"



Vilma Gabrielute, LT

Wife, mother and 'out & proud' secondary school teacher. Claire is also the co-founder and creator of www.LGBTparents.net which helps to connect LGBT parents throughout the world and helps to show our children they are not alone.



Claire Wood, UK

Get Involved

International Family Equality Day - 1st May 2016

Families Without Borders

Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and USA are already planning their IFED 2016 Events.

Make sure to join us next year by organizing your own local event as part of the International Family Equality Day!

Community organizations who wish to participate please contact the IFED Network by email.

info@internationalfamilyequalityday.org



Maria von Känel, CH

Maria von Känel (founder, coordinator of the IFED network and editor of the IFED Annual Report) invites all rainbow families and their friends and advocates, as well as institutions, NGOs, family organisations and politicians across the globe, to enjoy this wonderful day and feel the empowerment of this global event. See you in 2016!



Best Practice - NGO

IFED 2015 in Zagreb, Croatia organised by Dugine obitelji

Around 20 people, including 3 children, gathered on Saturday, 2 May, for the second IFED celebration in Zagreb, Croatia. The event was organised by Dugine obitelji (Rainbow Families), the organisation that also organises monthly rainbow family meetings.

In the beginning of the IFED celebration, some members of Dugine obitelji gave a short speech about International Family Equality Day and its celebration across the world. We also discussed the registered-partnership law for same-sex couples that was adopted in Croatia in July 2014. In the first year, around 80 partnerships of same-sex couples were registered. Although it is a significant step forward, these families have no right, for instance, to adopt children. Furthermore, there is persistent homo/bi/transphobia in society. Therefore, there are still many steps to take to achieve family equality.

In the second part of the gathering, we discussed family planning based on the stories of two lesbian couples with children, who shared their experience and gave advice to people interested in starting a family. One of the couples shared their impressions of the European IFED celebration in Cologne 2014, and they stressed that the most important message

they had heard in Cologne was the importance of rainbow families being visible. We saw a video from the 2014 Cologne IFED celebration, followed by video messages from Norway from a Croatian lesbian couple with a child. They had participated in our 2014 IFED celebration but had moved to Norway since then.

Mirela Holy, leader of the OraH (Sustainable Development of Croatia – a green left-wing party), participated in the IFED celebration, and Lisa Rücker, member of the Austrian Green Party and Graz city councillor, sent us a video message to support our celebration. NELFA president Maria von Känel joined us by video call and talked about NELFA's actions in raising visibility and freedom of movement for LGBTI families.

Later we had a brunch, which was an opportunity for informal conversation.

A report on our IFED celebration was published on a Croatian LGBT portal, including the stories the two couples with children had shared with us.



Boris Vrdoljak
Dugine obitelji



Boris Vrdoljak, HR



Best Practice - Institution

The Office for Gender Equality of the Municipality of Zurich, Switzerland

The Office for Gender Equality of the Municipality of Zurich is looking forward to celebrating International Family Equality Day (IFED) in 2016 in Zurich. Zurich is a member of the Rainbow Cities Network and is committed to furthering LGBT policies in its community and to share our experience and expertise with other Rainbow Cities. The Zurich Office for Gender Equality has a specific mandate to promote and support equality for all sexual orientations and all gender identities.

One of the key aspects in the action plan for gender equality 2014–2018 of the Zurich City Council concerns the variety of families and life forms. Among other things, measures are taken in the mayor's office and in the departments of School and Sport and of Social Services. The celebration of IFED in cooperation with the Swiss Rainbow Families Association is one of the items in the action plan.

The legal and social frameworks in Switzerland and in other countries do not yet take sufficient account of the existing varieties of families. Furthermore, demeaning and derogatory behaviour towards people who live in non-traditional families is still too common in our society. Discrimination sometimes happens out of ill will, but more often it is due to lack of knowledge. It is our mandate to change this. We print brochures, organise events and launch public campaigns in order to inform, discuss and raise public awareness on behalf of the interests and needs of LGBTI people and their families.

As the head of the Office for Gender Equality, I am happy that the City of Zurich is part of the network for equality for all families: rainbow, straight, patchwork families. We want to send a clear signal for the inclusion and participation of all families in our society. The celebration of IFED in 2016 will be a great opportunity to send this signal. IFED creates visibility for LGBTI people and their families. It shows the diversity of people and families living in Zurich. It is a strong message for the whole population and for other institutions: to join the fight for equality and the celebration of diversity.

Anja Derungs, Head of the Office for Gender Equality in Zurich





Best Practice - Politics

IFED 2015 in Graz, Austria, organised by Graz City Councillor Lisa Rücker

“I invite other city councillors in Austria and other countries to follow our example in 2016 and celebrate IFED to strengthen the cohesion within society and to push for social change.”

The weather was windy and the temperature felt a little bit too cold for the beginning of May. So it did not seem to be the perfect day for a picnic.

But we were prepared for everything and determined to celebrate IFED for the first time in Graz on 3 May. In the middle of town, in a public park called Augarten, we wanted to show how colourful our city could present itself. Around 100 people showed up, and we chatted, laughed and played together and enjoyed pretzels, cake and other delicious food. Graz had been booked for the children’s entertainment, and they offered the kids a fun afternoon of games and fanciful face paintings. The Berki Trio played traditional Roma and Gypsy swing music for the older kids and the adults and animated us to dance. The people who participated in the picnic were very diverse. There were rainbow families, patchwork families, friends of the LGBT community and

straight allies. Two Muslim families who were already in the park also joined our picnic. It was a complete success and the great ambiance even kept the rain away. We are looking forward to celebrating IFED again next year!

“For me as a green politician, it is important to send a public signal, to show the variety and visibility of all forms of families. Today’s family is much more than the nuclear father-mother-child model.

Family should not be defined according to the parents’ sexuality or gender identity. Rainbow families are as much families as any other families, and they should enjoy equal rights and recognition.

IFED is an important sign of inclusion, because together we create a great, strong family network”.

Lisa Rücker is a city councillor in Graz and a member of Grüne Andersrum, the queer organisation of the Green Party. She is openly gay and lives with her two daughters.



IFED 2015: The Kids Are All Right!

Rainbow families throughout Germany demand respect and equality for their kids

On the first weekend in May rainbow families in six German cities from all over the country joined together to celebrate the fourth International Family Equality Day with their children, grandparents, relatives, friends and straight allies. Although the weather was mixed, our families proudly raised their rainbow flags. While the German Rainbow Family Center in Berlin organised a picnic in the park with local politicians, families in Stuttgart tackled the Killesberg tower. Afterwards, the children frolicked on the playground while their parents had time to share their experiences.

By celebrating IFED in Germany, we hope to touch the hearts and minds of politicians and society at large in our quest to finally achieve full equality for rainbow families. Additionally, the world needs to know that our children are not only “all right” but they are thriving in their rainbow families!

Lisa Green / René Mertens



“International Family Equality Day is an annual celebration of all the progress that has been made in gay rights. Nonetheless, marriage equality is the next step in achieving equality for rainbow families in Germany!”

Dr. Lisa Green, Vice-President NELFA aisbl, LSVD member



Lisa Green, DE

René Martens, DE



France

APGL celebrated IFED 2015 during its annual national gathering in Sète in the south of France, on May 15. 210 persons – adults, teenagers, children and babies, families and families-to-be – made the trip from all over France and APGL’s local organisations to be part of this event.

This year IFED was truly the occasion to celebrate two pieces of good news. APGL has been officially appointed an active member of UNAF, the French National Organisation in charge of Family Affairs – a governmental NGO dealing with public authorities for all matters regarding family issues – after a lengthy process marked by two unsuccessful attempts where LGBT families were considered “abnormal” families by UNAF officials! And in Sète, the week before APGL’s gathering, the French Reformed Church (France’s main protestant church) had approved by an awesome majority same-sex marriages and baptisms for children of LGBT families.



Finland

246 people took part in happenings around 8 cities: Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Kotka, Pori, Seinäjoki, Tampere, Turku and Vantaa. There was a fairy tale workshop, obstacle course, family picture workshop, wind chime crafts, face painting, games and performances. In some cities families undertook an excursion to the funfair and to the adventure park. Of course, the gatherings included food – there were potluck parties, picnics, dinners and one great rainbow cake. Schoolchildren and their played traditional Finnish games.

On 3 May 2015, Greece celebrated, for the third time, International Family Equality Day, this time in Athens at Plato's Academy Park. This year the Sunday School of Immigrants joined the celebration, which led to a very interesting discussion about how racism, transphobia and homophobia start from the same causes and how ignorance can make things worse.

But most of all, the family picnic was a celebration of equality, with everyone playing games – surrounded by a bunch of colourful balloons – telling stories, eating rainbow cakes, singing songs and letting their creativity run rampant with water pistols full of rainbow paint!



Greece

This year about 40–50 people, adults and kids, gathered to celebrate International Family Equality Day in Hungary for the second time. Just like the previous year, the Hungarian Rainbow Family Organisation put together a two-part event: in the morning we hosted a more formal event, with workshops about the legal and psychological aspects of LGBT parenting, and in the afternoon we invited our guests for a picnic, where we continued to celebrate IFED 2015 in a less formal setting.



Hungary

For the fourth time since 2012, LGBT families from many cities throughout Israel gathered at Ganey Yehoshua Park in Tel-Aviv. About 400 people came to the IFED celebration, which took place on 2 May. The event was organised by the Rainbow Families organisation, Gay Fathers, the "MamaDyke" forum and volunteers from the LGBT community. It included some group games to help people meet each other, children's activities like Gymboree, storytelling, motor boat sailing in the nearby lake and a family group photo. We hope to see even more families next year on Saturday, 7 May 2016!



Israel



Rete Genitori Rainbow (Rainbow parents network of LGBT people with children from heterosexual relationships) launched multiple events in Italy. Tunn, Modena, Florence and Rome were chosen to host meetings. The events aimed to celebrate International Family Equality Day together, with families and friends, each and every one of us in all our diversity. The programmes included special events and activities for children, such as laboratories and games focused on the existence of a plurality of families. A day-long party touched these four cities, moving across the country like a virtual rainbow wave.



Italy

Famiglie arcobaleno, the Italian association of same-sex parents, made IFED coincide with the 7th edition of its main annual event, the Festa delle Famiglie, a nationwide celebration of families of all kinds. This year the Festa delle Famiglie took place in Salerno, a city in the south of Italy, and gathered rainbow families from all over the country as well as different groups, associations and citizens that believe in making a statement for equality and inclusion in society. The event drew around 5,000 people, 100 associations and more than 30 local organisations were actively cooperating on the programme of this incredible family celebration. The IFED event in Salerno was a day-long jamboree of games, tales and music with the aim of celebrating all families and providing fun for their children.

We had our 4th annual Japan IFED picnic at Yoyogi Park in Tokyo, on 26 April, along with Tokyo Rainbow Pride events. We had a booth set up as a resting area for families to mingle, relax and nurse their babies. This was the second year we had an official LGBT family-themed booth at Tokyo Pride. We enjoyed meeting new LGBT families and talked to many LGBT people who were interested in having babies. This year we included an exhibition of members' family photos, which many curious people stopped by to look at.

The Tokyo Rainbow Pride was held soon after the city of Shibuya took a step to recognise same-sex partnerships. As a result, there was more focus from the media, with even more people coming out to show support.

In Japan, the number of LGBT families is slowly growing; however, most families are still living invisibly in this society. Japan is not as open-minded as some other Western countries on this topic, but the media are starting to discuss LGBT issues, and some have even started to talk about LGBT families with children. This is a big movement for us, and we hope it will bring more positive changes.



Japan



Spain

Another year for FLG, the LGBTI family association of Catalonia, to celebrate IFED. This was a special year, as it also marked the 10th anniversary of marriage equality in Spain. Today our families have the same rights as heterosexual ones, including the right to adopt, the right to have both parents in the birth registry, etc. We also celebrated the first anniversary of the approval of the Catalan law against homophobia, one of the most advanced laws protecting LGBTI rights in the world. It has been a long journey, and still there are issues to resolve, but our message that day was of joy. This

year FLG decided to celebrate IFED outside the big cities, and we travelled to Vic, 75 km north of Barcelona, where we spent the weekend with the LGBTI families of our association. They were two incredible days!



Switzerland

We celebrated the 4th IFED at the Cafe Kairo in Bern. We enjoyed to meet with other families. We all painted and danced, chatted, laughed and ate - everybody had a great time! The City council of Bern, Franziska Teuscher Director of Education, Social Welfare and Sports welcomed all families and friends and expressed support for the legal recognition for rainbow families. We look forward to many families and a unforgettable IFED 2016, next year in Zurich and Geneva.



USA

On May 3, 2015, Family Equality Council celebrated the fifth annual International Family Equality Day (IFED) with a variety of community partners and events across the U.S.A., from coast to coast, in 17 cities, with over 1,600 American families. Today, more and more children are growing up in US families where one or both of their parents identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) - yet each of these "rainbow families" still have very different "lived equality" experiences, often depending on what state they live in. Although we saw incredible progress in the legal recognition of the rights of our nation's LGBTQ community this year, in some regions our families still face overt discrimination every day. By celebrating International Family Equality Day 2015, Family Equality Council helped further raise awareness among our politicians and the mainstream American public about the need for equal treatment and recognition of all families, regardless of the sexual orientation or gender identity of their family's members. Our 2015 IFED events took many shapes and forms, from a picnic gathering in a park, a beach day, a story-telling panel, a museum outing - whatever scale was right for that community ... and community organizers are already making plans for even bigger celebrations in 2016!



Portugal

Last May, Lisbon celebrated IFED at a sunny outdoor picnic full of colours and fun. Many activities for children, a DJ set on a city park as well as a performance by the LGBT choir ColeGaS were some of the contributions to a wonderful day. The celebration took place in one of Lisbon's most well-known terraces, on the top of one of its hills - a unique spot for a perfect afternoon!

Cooperating Partners

ILGA-Europe

ILGA-Europe, the European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, works for equality and human rights for LGBTI people at the European level. It is an international umbrella organisation bringing together over 400 member organisations from 45 of the 49 countries in Europe.

www.ilga-europe.org



European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTI Rights

The LGBT Intergroup gathers 152 elected Members of the European Parliament from 23 European countries and 7 political groups. They are committed to upholding the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

www.lgbt-ep.eu



ECSOL

The European Commission on Sexual Orientation Law (ECSOL) is a non-governmental and non-political network of legal experts. Its origins lie in the European Group of Experts on Combating Sexual Orientation Discrimination which appointed by the Commission of the European Communities operated between 2002 and 2004.

www.sexualorientationlaw.eu



TGEU

TGEU is a European umbrella organization working to advance the equality and human rights of all transgender people through advocacy, collaboration, empowerment and research. Founded in 2005, today, the organization counts over 80 member organisations and over 60 individual members in 41 countries.

www.tgeu.org



Grün Andersrum

The Municipal Council of Graz consists of 48 members. The Green Party is represented by 6 local councillors. Lisa Rücker is city councillor and responsible for the department of culture, health and environment.

www.graz.gruene.at/gruene-andersrum



Rainbow Rose

Rainbow Rose, the LGBT network within the PES (Party of European Socialist), works to promote LGBT rights, equality and diversity throughout Europe. It is an umbrella organization relaunched in 2013, gathering 22 social-democrat structures. It works at local, national and European levels with politicians and political parties member of the PES.

www.rainbowrose.eu



Participating Associations



5. Overview of Research on Same-Sex Families (non-exhaustive)

by Martine Gross

Research on children raised by homosexual parents has been conducted for close to 40 years, starting in the 1970s in the United States. In 1996 Charlotte Patterson published a summary of this research, which was updated in 2005. The first studies covered women who became mothers as part of a heterosexual couple prior to entering into a lesbian relationship. The objective of these studies was mainly to address two concerns: first, whether the children from these families were stigmatized by their peers, leading to the development of psychological issues, and second, whether they suffered from gender identity or behavioral disorders. The results of these studies are highly consistent: Children of lesbian mothers do not develop any pathology in their psychological development, do not experience difficulties in their relations with friends, do not suffer from gender confusion, and do not behave differently from boys and girls brought up by heterosexual parents. And a longitudinal study covering the time span from early childhood to adulthood that was conducted on young adults raised by lesbian parents demonstrates that they continue to do well as adults (Tasker & Golombok, 1997).

More recent studies of children raised since birth by lesbian mothers who were either single or living in a couple found no difference between these children and those of heterosexual parents in terms of gender development, relations with peers or psychological well-being (see, e.g., Bos, 2004; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Del Mar Gonzales, 2003). An extensive, ongoing longitudinal study by Henny Bos and Nanette Gartrell, which was initiated in 1995 in the United States, on children raised from the time of birth to legal age by lesbian mothers confirms these results and also explores other topics, such as the effect of stigmatization and remedial strategies (Bos & Gartrell, 2010). This study found that daughters of lesbian mothers are more likely to have a bisexual experience during their adolescence (Gartrell,



Bos & Goldberg, 2010). In and of itself, this result is good news: it means that bisexuality and lesbian sexuality are increasingly considered acceptable. A study conducted on adolescents reared in lesbian-mother families compared their psychological well-being to that of a matched comparison group of adolescents with heterosexual parents. This study found no differences (van Gelderen et al., 2012). An Australian study whose aim was to describe the physical, mental and social well-being of children with same-sex-attracted parents, and the impact that stigma has on them, was conducted among 390 parents who self-identified as same-sex attracted. The study concludes that these children score higher than population samples on a number of parent-reported measures of child health and well-being despite the fact that perceived stigma is negatively associated with mental health (Crouch et al., 2014).

Setting aside sexual orientation, a meta-analysis by Biblarz and Stacey (2010) demonstrates that the parents' gender has no "measurable effect" on the psychological adjustment of children or their social success. A literature review conducted by the American Sociological Association regarding the well-being of children raised within same-sex-parent families compared well-being outcomes of children residing within same-sex- and different-sex-parent families. Differences that exist in child well-being are largely due to socioeconomic circumstances and family stability (Manning et al., 2014).

Significantly fewer studies have been performed on children of gay fathers, who are vastly outnumbered by lesbian mothers. However, those studies suggest that children of gay fathers do equally well. Recent research demonstrates that young children adopted by gay fathers are no different, in terms of their psychological adjustment, than those adopted by heterosexual parents (Farr et al., 2010). Note, however, that most studies related to children of gay fathers focus on children born into a heterosexual environment, which implies the painful experience of their parents' separation, or adopted children who suffer from abandonment-related trauma. There are very few studies on gay fathers who have raised their children since birth. The findings of a study on adoptive gay-father families indicated more positive parental well-being and parenting in gay-father families than in heterosexual-parent families. Child externalizing problems were greater among children in heterosexual families,

and it was parenting stress, rather than family type, that was found to be a predictor of those issues (Golombok et al., 2014).

Michael Lamb, Suzanne Golombok, Henny Bos, Olivier Vecho and I recently received a grant to study the parental behavior of gay fathers with very young children born of gestational surrogacy and oocyte donation, and the relationship quality during the child's first year. This will be the first study on children brought up from infancy by gay fathers.

A quantitative synthesis of the available literature has been conducted to investigate the effects of parental gender and sexual identity on child and adolescent outcomes. Results indicate that outcomes, including child sexual orientation, cognitive abilities, psychological adjustment and gender identity, are not moderated by parent gender or sexual orientation (Fedewa et al., 2014).

A large number of studies have sought to demonstrate the innocuousness of homosexual parenting in the face of homophobic prejudice and heteronormative biases. In so doing, research has neglected for too long many issues that can only be studied among these families, like a sort of social laboratory (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Many questions merit the attention of researchers but have not yet been the subject of a great number of studies: the impact of invisibility on spousal and parental relations, the effects of homophobia and related child-protection strategies, the sharing of household and parental tasks, family functioning and dynamics, intergenerational relations, how to deal with donor anonymity, the passing on of values and religious identity. Today, the research is leaning somewhat less toward the future of children brought up by same-sex parents and more toward the functioning of families. In particular, the distribution of household and parental tasks – as gender no longer in and of itself assigns household and parental tasks to women and bread-winning to men – has been the subject of an increasing number of publications over recent years. Recently, a study examined the functioning of 624 same-sex couples with children, including questions on their economic behavior (Gross & Courduriès, 2015 forthcoming). Another interesting issue is that of the nature of relationships between gay or lesbian parents and their extended families (Courduriès & Fine, 2014; Gross, 2014). Regarding insemination with a known or unknown donor, some studies examine how the children who were raised by lesbian parents construct their relationships with their known donor (Goldberg &

Allen, 2013) and their discourse about fathers and “daddies” (Malmquist et al., 2014) while others compare satisfaction levels with known, open-identity vs. unknown sperm donors reported by lesbian mothers of adolescents (Gartrell et al., 2015).

With regard to the effects of homophobia and related child-protection strategies, one of my studies (Gross, 2011) on lesbian mothers indicates that the most effective strategies seem to be openness with early childcare personnel and teachers; parental involvement in school life, in particular the involvement of the social mother; and finally, welcoming the child's friends into the child's home. The visibility of same-sex parents, at least in early school years, is very effective in eliminating homophobic comments. One study examined the direct and indirect associations between heterosexism and adolescents' adjustment using a sample of 50 dyads composed of lesbian mothers and their adolescent children. The mothers' experienced heterosexism and the adolescents' perceived heterosexism were negatively associated with the adolescents' adjustment. Consistent with previous research on younger children of lesbian mothers, the findings underlined the role of school, family and social networks in protecting the well-being of adolescents raised by lesbian mothers (Vyncke et al., 2014). Another study compared internalizing and externalizing problem behavior of 67 Dutch adolescents in planned lesbian families against 67 adolescents in heterosexual-parent families. The results revealed no differences in internalizing and externalizing problem behavior associated with family type. Offspring of lesbian families who reported more experiences of homophobic stigmatization also demonstrated more internalizing and externalizing problem behavior (van Gelderen et al., 2015).

Regarding the effects of various legal situations, a technical report by the American Academy of Pediatrics concludes that lack of opportunity for same-sex couples to marry adds to family stress, which affects the health and welfare of all household members (Perrin & Siegel, 2013).





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NORWAY – Special Country Feature

Rainbow Families LLH–Oslo, Norway.

In Norway there are several groups organising activities for LGBT families and parenthood. The biggest group is located in Oslo and is managed by the national LGBT organisation LLH–Oslo chapter (LLH - The National Association for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender persons). Rainbow Families LLH–Oslo doesn't have members, but people sign up for a closed Facebook group. As of August 2015 this group counted 479 people. Rainbow Families LLH–Oslo has a 35-year history going back to 1979. The first group was for and by lesbian mothers. Today men and women are active participants. There is a fast-growing representation of gay dads having children by surrogacy, but many different constellations of rainbow families are represented in the group. The group has had different names but was renamed Rainbow Families in 2013. The Rainbow Families group receives financial support from the mother organisation LLH, but participants also contribute by paying an "entrance fee" when attending certain activities.

Rainbow Families organises gatherings for families with smaller children once a month. The activities are adapted according to the number of people attending and, of course, the Norwegian weather. We go barbequing in the summer (actually, in the winter as well) and sledging during the snow season. During every Pride week in Oslo, there is a rainbow family picnic and a creative painting workshop for children. In the Pride Parade, rainbow families have their own section, and in 2015 there were approximately 200 people walking together.

Rainbow Families LLH–Oslo is mainly a group for social activities. The legal status of rainbow families in Norway is good, and the main need for rainbow families is to meet similar families for friendship and trading experiences.

Rainbow families in Oslo are happy to add International Family Equality Day to our annual activities and to celebrate family diversity worldwide and standing for those families who still face discrimination, supporting them on their path to equality.



Rainbow families contact information:

Email: regnbuefamilier-oa@llh.no

Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/regnbuefamilierOA/>

LLH website: http://www.llh.no/nor/fylkeslag/llh_oslo_og_akershus/aktivitetsgruppene/regnbuefamilier_oslo_og_akershus/

POLAND – Special Country Feature

This year Tolerado is running a rather pioneering venture. Powerful Rainbow Families is a first-of-its-kind nationwide project in Poland, focused on anti-discriminatory support of our LGBT families. Our activities are directed at both the families as well as the wider public – the project is bursting with diverse ideas such as a multi-channel social campaign, a families' festival, a well-stocked resources website on rainbow parenting, numerous educational workshops, film screenings and debates, a family drawings competition, a brand-new mini-documentary, and even a theme song with a video clip. "All the events are designed to break down the stereotypes and bust the myths surrounding LGBT parents and their children," say Tolerado chairwoman Ania Strzalkowska and project creator Marta Abramowicz, who are mothers to a 2-year-old son.

Through this project we want to create a snowball effect in Polish society, which seems prejudiced and uneducated in matters of rainbow parenting. Therefore, we offer several workshops aimed at those willing to engage in further social activism in Poland, for example by organising support groups, educational events or integration activities. There has already been a hugely positive response from existing informal rainbow associations. Additionally, to address the lack of unbiased information, our members and their

associates are developing an information website on LGBTQ parenting that is a first for Poland. Marta Kosinska, the project coordinator explains: "What we have in mind is a virtual exchange, a meeting place, if you will, which will provide reliable resources for LGBT families but also for teachers, service providers, social scientists and the media."

The most exciting part of the project is the social awareness campaign which aims to break down stereotypes by providing unbiased, scientific information on the topic in satirical form. We are engaging the main social media channels, and working with a Polish celebrity musician on the theme song and music video to sweep away the masses. Our main focus is on engaging LGBT allies through encouragement and myth busting. The campaign will have its grand finale at the national 6th Rainbow Families Festival in late November 2015. Guests will be joining us from all regions of Poland to enjoy expert debates, documentary screenings and an integrational family picnic full of fun and games for all ages.

We at Tolerado are supremely excited about this project, and we are sure it will go down in history as the beginning of a rainbow family revolution in Poland!

The project Powerful rainbow families is run as part of Citizens for Democracy, funded by EEA Grants.



The debate "Rainbow families in Poland and Europe" at the European Solidarity Centre with Gdansk's vice-president Piotr Kowalczyk, Slupsk's president Robert Biedron, together with experts Mania von Känel (Switzerland) and Mona Hovland Jakobsen (Norway). It was the first of its kind international debate in Poland, involving state representatives, experts and social change initiators discussing a better future for LGBTQ families. 30 May 2015.



SWEDEN - Special Country Feature

Barn av vår tid (Children of our time)

(A project by the non governmental organization RFSL Stockholm in Stockholm City. RFSL is the Swedish organisation that works for LGBTQ-rights.)

Barn av vår tid is a project that aims to support and strengthen children in rainbow families and LGBTQ persons who are or wants to become parents.

This is done by creating safe spaces where rainbow families and those who wish to become parents can come together and meet others in similar situations. We organize support groups, parent seminars and social venues. These activities will continue during the project period, three years, and hopefully a long time there after.

We have also create the website www.hbtqfamiljer.se that contains accurate, specific and updated information on the legal, political and practical issues that are relevant for the target group. In autumn 2015 and spring 2016 , we will also translate the website into English, Spanish and Arabic

During the project we also offer trainings to professionals that meets the target audience to increase awareness of LGBT issues and to ensure that all families are to be acknowledged on equal terms. Barn av vår tid will run for three years, starting april 2014.

Barn av vår tid is funded by Arvsfonden and we will during the project collaborate with MVC Mamma Mia Södermalm, Association for surrogacy, DU (the anti-discrimination office in Uppsala) and Femmis.

Do you want to know more about the project or participate in the social and supportive activities? Send an email to hbtqfamiljer@stockholm.rfsl.se

www.hbtqfamiljer.se





Special Thanks

To all the people who are actively involved in bringing visibility to the diversity of family forms in society, to all who are prepared to stand up for the rights of every one of these diverse families.

To our sponsor of the IFED Annual Report 2015:

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