



**International  
Family  
Equality  
Day**

*Celebrating the Rainbow of Families in our world!*

## The International Family Equality Day (IFED) Network **Annual Report 2017**

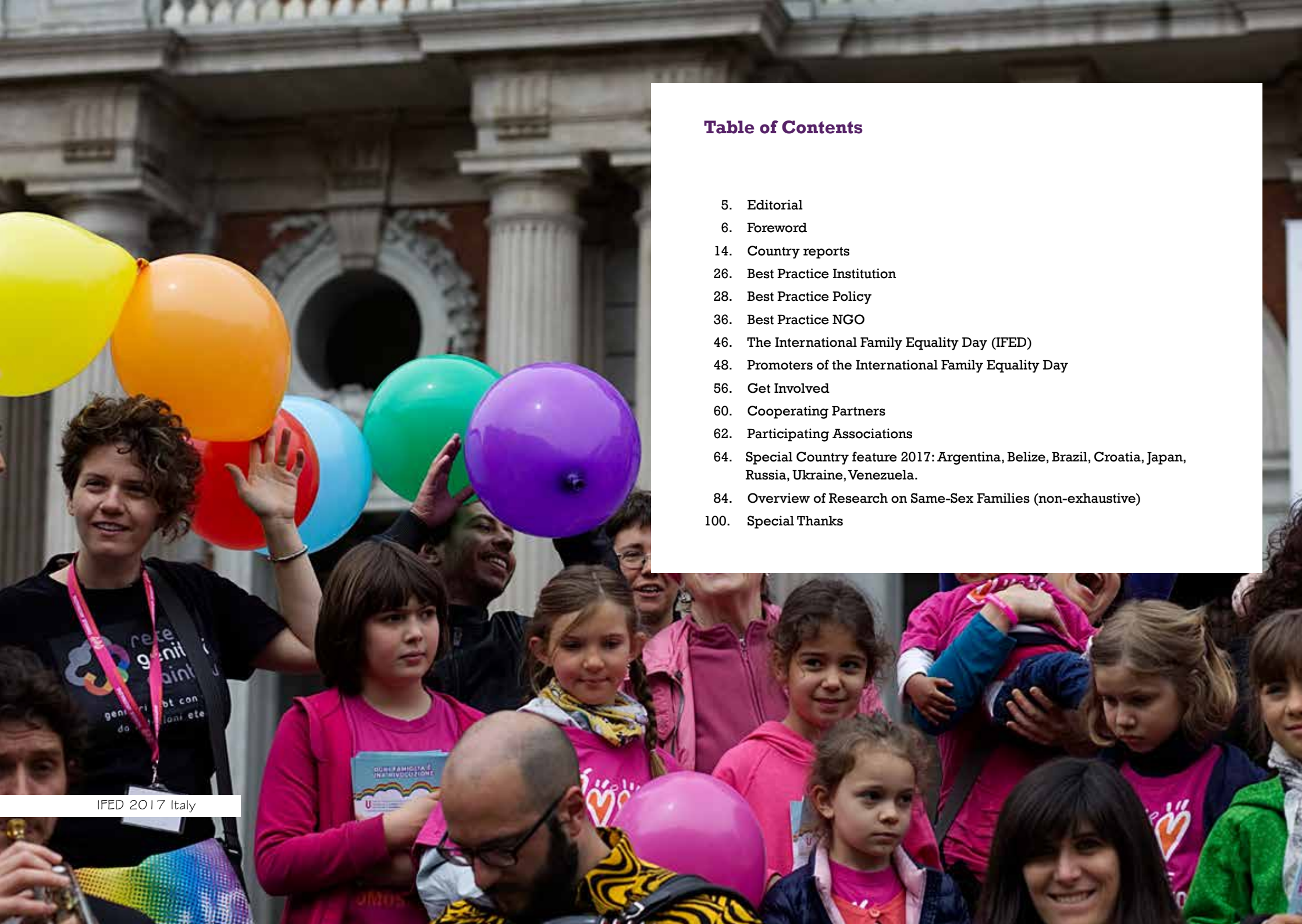
IFED 2017, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil












IFED 2017 Italy

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Giving visibility to family diversity is sometimes the first step to achieve social, political and legal acceptance. For some families, this is a huge challenge but also a form of empowerment to learn ‘we are not alone and we support each other’!

The celebrations of IFED are also a sign of solidarity and support for all families, who suffer from discrimination and whose voices are not heard.

**Maria von Känel**  
Founder of IFED and Coordinator of the IFED Network



## Editorial

Rainbow families are a tool for social change. They have the power to substantially challenge the heteronormativity and gender norms of the current social order. LGBTIQ\* families call into question the hegemonic view of what a family is.

The 6th International Family Equality Day (IFED) on May 7, 2017, was commemorated in 44 countries and over 100 towns worldwide as a sign of solidarity and pride and to promote equality for all families. Under this year's motto, “Love Makes a Family,” 8 new countries joined the IFED family: Argentina, Belize, Brazil, China, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Philippines and Thailand. Together with IDAHOT, the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) we joined forces and invited advocates for LGBTIQ\* equality, their friends and allies to take action all over the world between May 7 (IFED) and May 17 (IDAHOT) to celebrate and support family diversity.

IFED celebrations covered a broad range of initiatives: from surveys and guidelines, photo exhibitions, boat tours, picnics and children's diversity workshops to movie screenings, storytelling and panel discussions – family diversity can be celebrated in so many ways. In Europe, the Rainbow Cities Network ran its exhibition on families in 14 European cities. Moscow had a Family Equality Festival, and in Asia, the first Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Forum was held in Hong Kong. A big thank-you to the countless activists, families, human rights defenders and decisionmakers – to name a few – who tirelessly champion the visibility and equality of rainbow families around the world!

With IFED, we highlight the urgent need for recognition, protection and equal treatment of all rainbow families and LGBTIQ\* persons. Let's empower each other and strengthen family diversity worldwide on next year's IFED under the motto “Children's Rights Matter” on May 6, 2018.

## Caroline Ausserer

NELFA Board Member  
TransInterQueer e.V. (TriQ)  
IFED Liaison



## Foreword by Veronica Yates

### Child Rights International Network - CRIN

Solidarity is proving yet again that attempts to undermine progress toward securing human rights for all people, including LGBTI persons and their families, will not succeed.

As children's rights advocates, we have been monitoring for some years the development of anti-LGBTI laws and policies that hide behind the language of child protection or children's rights. Some states even used Article 17 (on the right to information) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to claim children needed to be protected from harmful information, which according to them, includes information about sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity.

In more recent years, those same groups have begun calling for international human rights standards to protect families who are, according to them, under attack. While the family as a unit does not have rights, it is the individuals within a family, regardless of what form this family takes, that have rights. Their attempts are therefore an attack on human rights, including women's and children's rights.

In my view, they are taking advantage of weaknesses within the children's rights community – which in the past has lacked the courage and at times been unwilling to speak out in defense of other groups, particularly LGBTI groups.

But this is beginning to change. And this change is often led or initiated by children and young people who are often less hung up about issues of gender and sexuality than adults. We have much to learn. This is why the work of organizations such as IFED is so crucial to get their voices heard.

So, while some countries may yet pass anti-LGBTI laws, imprison and attack human rights defenders or close down NGOs, others will rise up and take up the baton. And as a children's rights organization, we will be unapologetic in

**While the family as a unit does not have rights, it is the individuals within a family, regardless of what form this family takes, that have rights.**

**“It is the pulsating heart of the family which matters. Love and friendship provide the inherent rhythm of relationships between all persons, without discrimination and without distinction.”**

**Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn**  
UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity



calling out those who attempt to misuse the language of children's rights to justify their bigotry. Instead of building support for their anti-human-rights agenda and dividing us, they are bringing us closer together. What these groups fail to understand is that if you are a human rights activist, you will fight for human rights for all people, adults and children, of all genders. An attack on LGBTI rights is an attack on human rights.



<https://www.crin.org>



**“If my family isn’t protected, then neither are my rights.”**

**By Jana Hainsworth, Secretary General, Eurochild**

Darragh, aged 16, traveled with his two mums from Northern Ireland to Brussels, Belgium, to deliver a message: that children’s rights matter even when we don’t expect them to.

Speaking at the Eurochild conference “Children’s Rights Matter: Why Europe needs to invest in children” last year, he told his story:

*“Given that marriage affords the couple various benefits for starting and having a family, refusing it to my parents is breaching my rights as a child. The protections, responsibilities, rights, obligations and benefits that a straight couple get for their family can make a great difference to their lives; in Northern Ireland gay couples can’t have that in the same way. If my family isn’t protected, then neither are my rights.”*

As an ambassador for rainbow families and their children, Darragh spoke to a telling challenge. His story was heard by policymakers, practitioners and academics in the area of social policy and children’s rights who had traveled from across Europe to hear from children and young people directly.

Children’s perspectives must therefore be heard and given a stage, if we truly wish to live up to our promises of protecting their rights. Almost all countries in the world have signed on to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the UNCRC (the right of the child to be heard) remains far from being realized in practice. Through our conferences and our advocacy to improve children’s rights across Europe, we are engaging directly with children and young people. Children’s rights cannot be fully realized without the participation of children.

Read Darragh’s full speech here:

<http://tinyurl.com/ycb4lx3s>

Eurochild conference 2016: <http://www.eurochild.org/events/eurochild-conference-2016/>

<http://www.eurochild.org/>





States should continue to work towards eliminating discrimination against “rainbow” families. Without legal recognition, “rainbow” families face real problems, such as lack of inheritance rights, lack of entitlement to a survivor’s pension, to a living partner’s health insurance or to continue living in the home of a deceased partner, and lack of visitation rights or access to medical file. Without legal recognition, children of same-sex couples may be particularly affected.

Source Human rights Comment: <http://tinyurl.com/yb6fseod>

**Mr. Nils Muiznieks**  
Council of Europe Commissioner for  
Human Rights





## It's about the Children's Rights

This year marked a new record: only six years after its inception, the International Family Equality Day (IFED) was commemorated in 44 countries and over 100 cities worldwide. And the past year, again, has seen continual progress of the rights and protections of rainbow families.

The European Court of Human Rights awarded compensation for sexual segregation in a case of same-sex couples' relegation from the wedding halls of the registrar's offices to the regional administrative offices, normally in charge of issuing driving licenses, industrial licenses, residence permits, prostitution licenses and similar less-than-romantic business (*Hörmann et al v Austria* 2017), and it ruled that the exclusion of same-sex couples from family reunifications constitutes unlawful discrimination (*Taddeuci & McCall v Italy* 2016; *Pajic v Croatia* 2016).

At the national level, the Slovenian Constitutional Court overturned the confinement of same-sex partnership registrations to the official administrative office premises; the Italian Supreme Court recognized the co-parenthood of two mothers that was established abroad; the Czech Constitutional Court struck down a statutory ban on adoption by registered partners; and Austria saw the first couples jointly adopting children after the country's Constitutional Court had turned down the statutory ban on joint adoption by same-sex couples. It was the first high court in Europe to do so, following its ruling one year earlier that struck down the ban on medically assisted procreation for same-sex couples, the first high court in the world to do so.

Switzerland introduced second-parent adoption and the Swiss people rejected a popular initiative that would have changed the constitutional definition of marriage as "between a man and a woman." The Constitutional Courts of Colombia and of Taiwan turned down a prohibition of same-sex marriage, the latter making the Republic of China the first Asian country to bring about legal equality for same-sex couples.

The parliaments of Germany and Malta passed laws establishing marriage equality, and five Austrian children are challenging their country's marriage ban, which traps them classified as illegitimate because their parents are prohibited from marriage, arguing that Austria is the only country in the world to

grant same-sex couples absolutely equal family-founding rights (adoption, automatic co-parenthood, recognition of motherhood) but refuses to let the parents of these children marry.

The children's case is supported by the European Court of Human Rights' recent landmark judgment in *Baev v Russia* (2017), where the Court emphasized that diversity, equality and tolerance further the best interests of children and that children's rights require their being protected against homophobia.

These achievements illustrate that our hard work and our joint struggle make a difference and that we can create a world respectful of the human dignity of rainbow families and their pursuit of happiness.

Dr. Helmut GRAUPNER, Co-Coordinator,  
European Commission on Sexual Orientation Law (ECSOL)





IFED in Antwerp has become a collaboration with the LGBT center Het Roze Huis, the rainbow family organization 't Kwadraat, WIJ (for lesbian and bi-women) and the trans association GenderFlux. Lots of families with children gathered around the rainbow flag on the grounds of Park Spoor Noord on a beautiful and sunny Sunday.

After an exploratory game, we sat together for the picnic and shared the food everybody had brought. It was nice to meet other LGBT families. While the adults chatted away, the many children played and started exploring the many vintage games that were provided.



Antwerp - Belgium

The LGBT Family Coalition, Gender Creative Kids Canada and PFLAG Montreal celebrated family diversity by organizing a community picnic at Parc Lafontaine in Montreal, Quebec.



Montreal - Canada

On the first Sunday of May 2017, Finland celebrated International Family Equality Day with hundreds of people in six cities; Pori, Turku, Tampere, Helsinki, Tammela and Kymenlaakso. These joyous events included picnicking by the sea, exploring the woods in a national park, making pancakes by the dozens, enjoying a beautiful rainbow cake (pictured) and many other happenings and workshops. IFED has been growing every year in Finland, and this sixth celebration was a success and growing every year.



Helsinki - Finland



Berlin - Germany

On May 7, 2017, International Family Equality Day was celebrated in Berlin as well. It was a major event, prepared by the first European Rainbow Family Center (founded in 2013). Director Constanze Körner had invited LGBTIQ\* parents and their children to take part in a boat tour on the river Spree. But the crowd was so big that one boat was not enough. In the end, more than 300 happy people on two boats full of rainbow flags cruised through the capital city. Singer Suli Puschban thrilled young and old with her guitar and songs like "We are the family that makes the rainbow!" The tour ended near the Chancellery with a large, sun-drenched picnic. Perhaps Angela Merkel saw the happy crowd and it made her think of marriage equality? Probably not, but still: it was a wonderful party with proud rainbow families – including some NELFA delegates and IFED coordinator Maria von Känel, who participated in a project called "Adequate and equal legal protection for rainbow families," granted by the Erasmus+ program. By the way: for next year, the boat company already booked four boats for IFED! So great ;-)



Tel Aviv - Israel

For the fifth time since 2012, about 200 LGBT families from various cities throughout Israel gathered at Meir Park in Tel Aviv. The event was organized by wonderful volunteers from the rainbow families organization Keshet, the Association of Israeli Gay Fathers, the Tel Aviv Municipal LGBT Center, the Aguda and the Mamadyke forum. Our great picnic included a musician and dancing, children's activities like Gymboree and various floor games, crafts for kids, storytelling and the traditional family group photo. We all had a great time! Thank you for supporting us, and we'll see you again next year at IFED 2018!



Perugia, Italy

Famiglie Arcobaleno, the Italian association of homosexual parents, celebrated IFED (International Family Equality Day) on May 7, 2017. The event coincided with the 9th edition of its annual Festa delle Famiglie. During this important event, we celebrated all types of families – those made by a mother and a father, by two mothers, by two fathers or by a single parent, among others. This year the IFED celebration took place simultaneously in the Province of Barletta-Andria-Trani and the cities of Ferrara, Florence, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome, Terni, Turin and Verona. The main goal was to multiply celebrations all around Italy in order to share with the public the stories of our families and to listen to each others'. In this context, this year's slogan was "Every Family Is a Revolution," a revolution that starts from the bottom up, a revolution that includes all Italians, because the world of families is in continuous change and development. The main message of May 7 was that every family is special and unique in its own way, and we made clear that the most important concern is the well-being of all children – which cannot be achieved without the legal recognition of their rights and their loves.

Like every year, the IFED event was a celebration of games, tales and music and provided fun for all children and families.



Florence, Italy



Torinno, Italy

The Association for Drama in Education in Ireland (ADEI) was founded in 1998 and aims to support those who are interested in using drama in various educational settings in Ireland, through workshops, conferences and resources.

This year, to mark International Family Equality Day and International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, ADEI's Ciara Fagan organized a practical drama workshop for teachers and educators. Its aim was to use drama to explore family diversity, gender stereotypes and homophobic and transphobic bullying in an age-appropriate way.

The morning workshop focused on young children (aged 3–7), using a picture book as a stimulus to discuss family diversity through a process drama approach. The afternoon

workshop was geared toward senior classes (ages 8–14), where the emphasis was on gender stereotypes and providing children with strategies to stand up to homophobic and transphobic bullying using forum theater.

The event was very well attended by those working with children and young people in education and youth work settings. Thank you to IFED and IDAHOT for the inspiration to host this valuable workshop.



Ireland

In Italy, the association Rete Genitori Rainbow (Rainbow Parents Network) organized several events across the country. The aim this year was to celebrate both International Family Equality Day and International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia in order to raise policymakers' awareness of the rights of rainbow families and LGBT+ people.

Between May 7 and May 17, association members and friends met up in Turin, Verona, Barletta and Florence for an amazing agenda. They had the chance to join many different initiatives: documentaries, debates, games, music shows, book readings and laboratories for every kind of family.

The events concluded on May 17 in Milan, where the association took part in a meeting to tell its own stories – a very special occasion to explain the emotions, fears, difficulties and successes of LGBT people with children from previous heterosexual relationships.



Milan - Italy



We had our 6th annual Japan IFED picnic at Shinjuku Gyoen Park in Tokyo on April 30. More than 50 people got together to celebrate. The event was organized jointly by Rainbow Family Japan and Kotomap, an LGBT group whose members are interested in founding a family. We spread a huge tarp under the trees and enjoyed the meals each family had prepared. The kids had lots of fun climbing trees and running around, and the adults had a great time chatting about their family matters and sharing problems. The event was also reported on by the media.

Rainbow families have been getting more attention from LGBT activists and social media because our group has a strong message and societal impact when speaking about LGBT rights. Many LGBT activists in Japan are pushing to legalize same-sex marriage by 2020, the year of the Tokyo Olympics.



Tokyo - Japan



Oslo - Norway

On June 25, 2017, Rainbow Family Oslo and Akershus organized their second IFED. The event was scheduled on a Sunday before the official Oslo Pride as a picnic in the Vigeland Sculpture Park. The day was sunny and warm, and many parents and kids joined in the fun. The rainbow flag decorated one of the trees and made us visible to passers-by. The kids played on the sculptures and on the playground nearby. Some families were new to the rainbow family group, others had joined in activities before. Approximately 40 people participated this year, mostly parents with children between 0 and 5 years. The IFED event is now established as a yearly tradition in the Oslo rainbow family group.

This year Galesh organized its yearly "sleepover" in Alcalá del Júcar, a fantastic place in a nature preserve. We rented four houses. While our children enjoyed adventurous activities in canoe, archery and climbing, the adults had a seminar about family diversity and how to train teachers to introduce and handle family diversity in their classrooms.

In the afternoon, our children continued playing, and the parents submitted to laugh therapy – which was really funny. A great number of families attended the event, and we had a real opportunity to get to know each other better.

Galesh is a very multinational association. We have families from Italy, Germany, Austria, etc. – and now even from Ukraine. We wanted to emphasize our support for LGBTI+ families in countries where they struggle. The message in the picture reads "IT'S POSSIBLE" in Russian.



Spain

Barn av vår tid (Children of our time) is a project that aims to support and strengthen children in rainbow families and LGBTQ people who are or want to become parents.

The project is run by RFSL Stockholm, the Stockholm branch of RFSL, Sweden's largest NGO for LGBTQ rights.

On May 7, 2017, RFSL Stockholm celebrated IFED for the second time. The event gathered 25 kids and their families and was celebrated with popcorn, music and balloons. We hope even more families will join us next year!



Stockholm - Sweden



On Sunday, May 7, 100 kids, (grand)parents, extended family and friends gathered in Geneva to celebrate the International Family Equality Day, held at the Ecole des Croquettes.

Organized by the Swiss Rainbow Families Association and Association 360 – Groupe Homoparents, everyone spent a creative and fun day together to promote equality for all families. Badges were created, family photographs with funky costumes were taken, wishes for the future were hung on a wishing tree, kids and adults got their faces painted, and everyone enjoyed participating in circus activities.

The day was supported by the City of Geneva, l'Association des Familles Monoparentales de Genève, l'Ecole des Parents, Espace A, Pré en Bulle and Pro Juventute Genève.



Geneve - Switzerland



United States

This year's International Family Equality Day in the United States was the largest ever! More than 20 cities around the country held celebrations for our families! We welcomed new events in New Orleans, Seattle, Portland and Boise. From city museums to children's museums, camps and parks to community centers and everything in between, the pervasive theme of love and family was felt by all. Children, parents and grandparents alike came together for this annual tradition.



IFED 2017 Argentina





## Love Makes a Family – World Tour

“Love Makes a Family” was the 2017 IFED motto, and it is also the title we have given to our World Tour starting in August 2017.

### Who are we?

This is our family: Sara and Natacha (the moms) and Sacha, our son. We are French and we live in Paris.

We have been in love for the past 13 years. We signed a civil union contract in 2007, organized our own “non-official” wedding in 2008 and got legally married in 2013, when the same-sex marriage law passed in France (even though we got married in Seattle, WA, but that is another story ).

Sacha was conceived by IVF in Belgium, since lesbian couples were barred from access to IVF in France. He was born in 2010 in a city near Paris. Since then, we have had a great time laughing, playing, reading and traveling together.

We are proud of our happy family!

### Our project

We’ve always dreamed of traveling around the world. In 2016, we started thinking about it more seriously, and we decided to put our everyday lives on pause to go travel the world from August 2017 to July 2018.



It's a precious gift we offered ourselves: time. Time to be together, time to meet people, time to discover and time to reflect. As we were brainstorming our trip, we realized that we wanted to give meaning to this incredible adventure. And we both came up with the same idea: why don't we meet with families like ours, rainbow families?

So we decided to give a title to our trip, "Love Makes a Family," and create a blog and a Facebook page to share our experience.

In the different countries we visit, we want to meet with LGBTQ families to talk about their lives as "rainbow families" in their respective countries. What are their rights? Are they recognized in any way? How does the society view them? Why do they define themselves as a family?

We also want to meet with associations defending the rights of these families, policymakers and academic experts working toward more equality for rainbow families. Our idea is to interview (video interview, if possible) all the families we meet and share their testimonies on our blog to develop awareness about rainbow families around the world.

To make this project possible, we both had to take one year's leave of absence from our jobs. Sara is a computer engineer who works for the Department of Justice, and Natacha works as a product manager for a software company. We won't have any income during this year, but we finance this world trip with our savings.

### **Our itinerary and contacts**

To create our itinerary, we used a map that the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) publishes every year to report the sexual orientation laws all over the world.

Traveling with a child, we did not want to take any unnecessary risks by visiting countries where homosexuality is criminalized. So, we decided to avoid Africa, the Middle East and Russia. We are aware that rainbow families are fighting to exist in these countries, and if they want to share their stories, we can relay their testimonies on our blog.

We selected the following 13 countries: China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Brazil.

We have already identified families to meet with or associations that will help us get in contact with families.

In China, we contacted a rainbow family in Beijing who in 2017 created an association called Rainbow Babies; they also created the first book about rainbow families in Chinese. In Vietnam, we are in contact with the VietPride Association. In Australia, writer, trainer, educator and long-time LGBTIQ rights campaigner Jacqui Tomlins agreed to meet with us, and the Rainbow Families association welcomed our project warmly. We contacted ILGA Oceania, which gave us a contact in New Zealand. In Latin America, we have contacts in Chile; in Argentina, with the Asociación de Familias Diversas de Argentina (AFDA); and in Colombia, where we will meet with a French lesbian activist living over there who wants to start a family with her wife.

To prepare ourselves, we interviewed families in Italy (Ferdinando) and Switzerland (Jenny and Lisa).

We hope our blog can help combat homophobia and promote open-mindedness toward LGBT families.

### **Our logo**

The logo we created shows a house on a round rainbow flag to symbolize rainbow families all around the world. Each of the different icons represents a country we will visit (it's fun for the kids to guess which icon corresponds to which country).



### **Follow us**

Blog: [www.lovemakesafamily.fr](http://www.lovemakesafamily.fr)  
Facebook: [@lovmakesafamily.worldtour](https://www.facebook.com/lovmakesafamily.worldtour)  
Twitter: [@lovmakesafamily](https://twitter.com/lovmakesafamily)  
Email: [lovmakesafamily2017@gmail.com](mailto:lovmakesafamily2017@gmail.com)



## Best Practice Institution - Rainbow Cities Network

### The RCN photo exhibition “Families 2017”

The City of Vienna is a founder member of the Rainbow Cities Network (RCN), which today includes more than 30 cities. Established in 2013 on the occasion of IDAHOT, the network aims to discuss local approaches to equality and anti-discrimination work for LGBTIQ persons, to learn from each other and to develop joint strategies.

As a first joint project, Rainbow Cities realized my idea of the international photo exhibition “My Rainbow City” on the occasion of IDAHOT 2016: Eleven cities participated and provided one photo each. The photos illustrated the many different ways Rainbow Cities pursue their equality work.

In 2017, we followed up on that idea and realized our second international RCN photo exhibition: Every RCN city was invited to participate and to send in one picture and a short text. In Vienna, we organized a public photo competition on Facebook and on our homepage to find the perfect picture, as we had done in 2016. In the end, 16 RCN cities contributed to the 2017 exhibition. I curated the



pictures and the texts, wrote an additional introduction and together with Lucia Bischof developed a great design. Then we offered the complete exhibition as a file to all RCN member cities, to exhibit live and/or online.

The topic of this year's exhibition was “Families 2017,” as families have special meaning for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people: Our families of origin are a frequent source of conflict and denial, and all too often, they stand for non-acceptance, conflict and rejection, rather than for a safe haven where we find love and emotional support. For many of us, friends become our chosen families. In a family, people take care of each other – though many LGBTIQ people do not experience this feeling until they become part of the LGBTIQ community, which gives us a home as well as appreciation, love and a chance to talk about everything – not in spite of who we are, but because of who we are. It is here that we can be ourselves, get in touch with our feelings and develop our full potential as individuals. In the past years, rainbow families have increasingly come out into the open, emerging from the shadows of a society that has long failed to see them. More and more LGBTIQ people long to start a family. They demonstrate to society that queer life and parenthood are not mutually exclusive and can indeed become an asset for our society.

Our exhibition shows that families are important for each and every one of us – and that they are as different as the colors of the rainbow. But one thing holds true for everyone: family is where love is.

In Vienna, the exhibition showed for three weeks in the big gallery in the Arcade Yard of Vienna City Hall. The opening took place on May 17, 2017 (the day we celebrate IFED and IDAHOT), and was presented by Jürgen Czernohorszky, Vienna's Executive City Councilor for Education, Integration, Youth and Personnel.

#### Wolfgang Wilhelm

Head of the Antidiscrimination Unit for LGBTIQ Issues of the City of Vienna



## Best Practice Policy - Rainbow Rose

Rainbow Rose, the LGBT network of the PES (Party of European Socialists), works to promote LGBT rights, equality and diversity throughout Europe. It is an umbrella organization relaunched in 2013 that unites 30 Social Democratic structures. It works at local, national and European levels with politicians and political parties that are members of the PES.

In June 2017, the PES presidential meeting adopted an LGBTI roadmap, which means that all European Social Democratic parties now have an agenda for LGBTI issues. One of the most important topics in the roadmap is equal freedom of movement for all families. The European Union can make a difference for LGBTI families. Based on recent developments in European human rights law, it has become an obligation to amend and apply EU law consistently; this includes freedom of movement rules applicable to EU citizens, family reunification for documented third-country nationals, and other legislative areas such as parental leave and the coordination of social security systems.

Rainbow Rose collaborates closely with PES Women and Young European Socialists (YES) to maintain strong support for rainbow families in our political family. Rainbow Rose conducts regular activities with national and local members across Europe. Many of the member organizations have managed to get LGBTI roadmaps onto their national parties' agendas, and inclusion of rainbow families is at the top of all of them.

Rainbow Rose is happy to cooperate with IFED and promote this initiative among its network.

[www.rainbowrose.eu](http://www.rainbowrose.eu)



Some examples of what our members are working with:

- Open up the option of having more than two parents/caretakers
- Make adoption more equal and respect the rights of children to know their origin
- Introduce gender-neutral parental presumption
- Parental insurance is adapted to different family constellations

Even though we have seen progress in many ways, there is still a lot to do.





## Best Practice Policy - Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Forum

**Hong-Kong, May 11-12 2017**

With its serendipitous beginnings from a chance conversation with five fellow rainbow mums at ILGA World in Bangkok last year, the inaugural Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Forum came to fruition on May 11 and 12. The Forum held several events over two days to coincide with IDAHOT and IFED's global 2017 collaboration focusing on families. Personal experiences were shared from across the Asia-Pacific region to highlight the importance of family support, social acceptance and the urgent need for recognition, protection and equal treatment of existing and future rainbow families and LGBTI parents.

As part of the event, we held the Hong Kong premieres of the two documentaries *Gayby Baby* and *Inside the Chinese Closet*. Both screenings coincided with powerful panel discussions. The Forum also participated in Hornet's #WeAreOne IDAHOT campaign in support of marriage equality.



We were honored to partner with UNDP and Being LGBTI in Asia to present video addresses from the esteemed Honourable Michael Kirby, AC CMG, and Professor Emeritus Vitit Muntarbhorn, UN Independent Expert on Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Professor Muntarbhorn suggested a broad understanding of the notion of family is needed worldwide. Drawing on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, he noted four guiding principles: non-discrimination, right to life, survival and development, and best interests of the child and the child's views, and he called for more concrete action to protect rainbow families and their children against violence and discrimination.

In the words of the Honourable Michael Kirby; "Love is the foundation of family life, love sustains family life, love is sufficient, and sexuality is a mere detail if a child is brought up in a loving family." But, unfortunately, we know that that "detail" matters and is what causes over 70 countries around the world to continue to stigmatize, discriminate and persecute. LGBTI and rainbow family issues rarely feature prominently in the Asia-Pacific consciousness. To be a part of IFED's global conversation was an incredible opportunity!

Country delegates attending were from Hong Kong, Australia, China, Fiji, Japan, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore, with virtual participation from Taiwan and Vietnam and a video link with surrogacy and fertility experts from the UK and the US.

Every country reported still struggling for social and legal acceptance and recognition. The laws in almost all jurisdictions appear to be blind to rainbow families. There is much fear and anxiety regarding the very real danger of families losing their children if they are found out to be LGBTI. This leaves families with a permanent feeling of insecurity, knowing that they do not have legal protections or rights. Much discussion surrounded the issue of children feeling the burden of stigma and discrimination, and some countries shared the pressure felt by being forced to lie about one's family, and even having to ask one's children to lie.

Adoption, foster parenting and assisted reproduction were discussed in-depth, and experts concluded that, in the Asian region in particular, it's a legal minefield unlikely to be addressed in the foreseeable future. Another issue discussed was our families being at the frontline of marriage equality debates.

Alarmingly, many of the Asian or Pacific Island delegates reported being unable to travel out of their respective countries with their children, and some countries reported domestic travel to be of equal concern. Anti-human-trafficking laws and protective mechanisms were raised as being problematic for non-biological parents who attempt to travel with their children. Another key finding was that the UN's World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) 2017 Global Report on LGBT Tourism makes no mention of rainbow families.

Immediate action from the Forum included the foundation of the Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Advocacy Network as well as creating an Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Community Facebook Group, with over 200 members joining in the first week, and we have applied to speak at the ILGA Asia Conference in Cambodia this December. Much is planned moving forward, with several delegates already following up on these issues at a country level.

We know the Forum has only just begun to scratch the surface of the multitude of issues left to challenge in support of rainbow families and intended parents in the Asia-Pacific region. There is no doubt that 8 countries, 20 delegates (including 21 rainbow babies) and over 200 attendees translate into amazing impact for a first-time gathering. And recap videos and sessions uploaded to YouTube, coupled with local and international media coverage, have also ensured that the Forum and the issues it has raised will go on to become an annual event on the IFED calendar.

The Honourable Michael Kirby wanted to strike a blow for equality and justice in our world. I am certain that what these courageous, proud rainbow families and advocates are doing with their visibility, their courage, their parenting and their love is most certainly doing that!

I am beyond humbled to have been able to cofound this important movement, and as my fellow cofounder and IFED Founder and Coordinator Maria von Känel said, "We have made history and we are moving forward!"

### Bess Hepworth

CEO and Founder, Planet Ally

Cofounder Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Forum.

Quotes from the activists participating to the Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Forum in Hong Kong:

"If we are confident, out, affirming and positive - and proud of the family we have created - then our kids will be too."

Jacqui Tomlins

Rainbow Family and Australian Marriage Equality Campaigner

"For me to even talk about IVF or adopting kids in same-sex [families]...is on a different planet altogether. We are still struggling to be recognized for who we are."

Maivon Wahid Cpp (CIPD)

Snr. Analyst Digital & Strategic Transformation, Country Lead, ANZ Pnde Network Fiji

"I tried to get a photo of rainbow families, however, no one gave me any photo, which reflects that visibility of the rainbow family doesn't exist in the public sphere but we recognise we are everywhere."

Matcha Phorn-in

Director, Sangsan Anakot Yawachon Development Project, Thailand



Jacqui Tomlins



Matcha Phorn-in



Maivon Wahid







Ging Cristobal

"When you try to get legal protection...when you get sick, when you enroll your child, when your child gets sick, when you look for social benefits like health insurance...that's when reality will strike you. No, we are not yet equal."  
 Ging Cristobal  
 Project Coordinator for Asia, OutRight International, Philippines



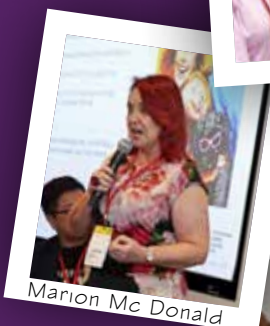
Kumiko Matsumoto

"If you lie to your kids and force them to lie to other people that is going to cause many more problems."  
 Kumiko Matsumoto  
 Nijiro-Kazoku, Rainbow Family Japan



Stephen Page

"Article 8 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child says that a child has the right to an identity, but try to tell that to a government that says that 'we don't believe these people are their parents.'"  
 Stephen Page  
 Partner, Harrington Family Lawyers; Chair, Surrogacy Australia Legal Committee



Marion McDonald

"Very sadly, while the world has woken up to say we must have proactive LGBT tourism policies in place, they're really not aware at all of rainbow families."  
 Marion McDonald  
 Global Brand Marketing Strategy Expert - Ogilvy Public Relations, Hong Kong



Aries Liu

"Since we got married, we have wanted to raise the public's awareness on these issues - on trans. We hope that people understand that people like us, whether trans or gay/lesbian still have aspirations for a happy family, a happy life."  
 Aries Liu  
 Organizer "Rainbow\*Love\*Babies", China



IFED 2017 Japan

## Best Practice NGO - Australia

On May 7, 2017, over 500 people gathered in beautiful Sydney Park to celebrate International Family Equality Day (IFED) and the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT).

Families enjoyed entertainment from the local children's bands Beats n Pieces and Larger than Lions as well as Mary Kiani. There were so many free activities for children, with jumping castles, face painting and a small-animal zoo and lots of arts and crafts activities facilitated by community partners.

At the IFED event, a number of politicians from all levels of government were on hand to celebrate with our families. Rainbow families presented a report to these politicians outlining the discrimination our members had experienced as LGBTIQ parents. This report will be released in Parliament in August, in the hope that laws will change to make parenting in Australia more inclusive of LGBTIQ parents.

We thank all the community organizations that helped make this day wonderful. Thanks to PFLAG, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Dawson Turco Lawyers, the NSW Police, the City of Sydney, who provided over 420 sausages to the crowd, ACON, Team Sydney, Australians 4 Equality, Gleebooks, the Anti-Discrimination Board and Brendan Moar, our MC for the event. We would like to thank our sponsors and principal partners Commonwealth Bank and ACON, and our official supporters Dawson Turco Lawyers, Camperdown Commons and the City of Sydney.

It was great to see other events around NSW. Illawarra Rainbow Families celebrated International Family Equality Day and IDAHOT with art workshops for children kindly funded by ACON. Newcastle held a free community BBQ funded by Rainbow Families.



## Best Practice NGO - Rainbow Families

### Resources, Representation and Resilience

If you walk into a mainstream bookshop anywhere in the world, you will undoubtedly find a comprehensive section on parenting. There are books on any topic you care to imagine, from managing your newborn's sleep to helping your teenager (and you!) survive adolescence – and everything in-between. And if you Google “parenting,” you’ll be there all day.

Much of this information is relevant to us as rainbow families; after all, our kids have the same emotional issues, the same health concerns, the same personal problems as kids in any other family. And as parents, we all worry about the same things and want our children to be healthy and happy.

But some things are different for our families, both in terms of big-picture issues and everyday concerns. So, where do we go to find answers to some of the very particular challenges we face? Where do we get advice from people in the know? And how can we learn from the parents who’ve trod this path before? A couple of years ago, I asked myself these questions and decided it was time we had some resources of our own.

Over a period of twelve months, I interviewed 40+ parents about their experiences of raising kids in a rainbow family. I wanted to gather their collective wisdom and pass it on, to bottle their ideas and pass them on to the next generation of parents. I wanted to produce a resource that drew on lived experience and gave practical solutions to everyday issues. Most of all, I wanted to provide parents with the knowledge and confidence to advocate on behalf of their families. What strategies can we use to deal with name-calling or bullying? How do we find a supportive kindergarten or day care center? How do we talk to our kids about the ways they were created? How do we tackle conversations with our own family of origin? What are the biggest challenges for a non-bio parent? How can we support kids through a parent’s transition? What can we do to make sure schools are safe places? How do we manage Mother’s Day and Father’s Day? How do we help our adolescents navigate this difficult terrain? What can we do if we live in a rural or remote area?

I asked all these questions and more and then collated the answers to produce



OUTspoken Families: A Resource Kit for Rainbow Families. The response to the kit from parents was incredible and confirmed to me that there is an urgent need for rainbow family-specific resources. The kit has also been used extensively by health and human services providers, for whom it provides a detailed and accurate picture of this emerging cohort of families.

In 2017, I collaborated with Rainbow Families New South Wales to reproduce the material from OUTspoken Families in shorter, separate formats: Early Years Support Guide and School Support Guide, with a Creating Your Family Support Guide planned for 2018. Once again, demand for these resources has been high and feedback extremely positive.

Another thing you won't find in your bookshop are novels for our kids that represent their families. The last five or ten years has seen an increase in the number of preschool picture books that represent our families, and there are some great examples of these. There are, however, almost no chapter books or novels that feature rainbow families. My three well-read kids have made it to high school without ever seeing a reference to a family with two mums, or two dads, or a trans parent in a book they've read.

In November 2017, I will be launching *The Curse of Grandma Maple!*, a fast-paced adventure mystery aimed at the upper primary age range, in which the kids just happen to have two mums. It's definitely not a story about having two mums, or about being a rainbow family, it's just that where a mum appears, there are two of them! As adults, it's hugely important for us to see ourselves represented in books, films and media, and for our kids, that's even more important. I hope mine will be the first of many such books.

Wherever in the world we are raising our families, we face additional challenges as a result of stigma and discrimination and, in many cases, political hostility and a lack of legal protections. Inevitably, this has an impact on our everyday lives, and as parents we are constantly creating new ways to protect and nurture our children and to ensure they thrive despite the environment in which they are growing up.

I believe we're doing a fantastic job and are raising a generation of proud and resilient kids. I believe resources that speak to us, that help us advocate for our families and that increase awareness more broadly are critical to this. And I believe that seeing themselves in a book helps our kids feel confident and proud and is hugely important not just for them, but for their friends in non-rainbow families too!

### Jacqui Tomlins

Rainbow Family and Australian Marriage Equality Campaigner



Jacqui Tomlins



## Best Practice NGO - Austria

Since 2012, FAmOs – Familien Andersrum Österreich – has celebrated IFED with a cozy family picnic in a Viennese park. Only once did the picnic have to be cancelled due to bad weather, and once we had to postpone it for a week. For the first time this year we were able to offer an alternative location in case of bad weather. We were able to celebrate in our own space: the new Rainbow Family Center Vienna.

The Rainbow Family Center Vienna is a cooperation with the city of Vienna and the district of Margareten, where it is located. In 2017 we opened our doors as a contact point for rainbow families. FAmOs offers counseling for rainbow families, rainbow families in the making and LGBTIs who want to have a child. Moreover, it is a space where celebrations such as IFED, group events, seminars, workshops and other events can be held. Additionally, the Rainbow Family Center serves as a link between the community and the general public. For that purpose, our new premises will also host events for multipliers, such as advanced training courses for kindergarten teachers or workshops for school classes. All this became possible through FAmOs' many years of lobbying work and through the support of dedicated politicians of the city of Vienna.

In 2014, FAmOs negotiated with the City of Vienna and the district of Margareten the establishment of such a center following the example of the Rainbow Family Center in Berlin. After visiting the center in Berlin, the responsible city council, Sandra Frauenberger, became excited about the idea. Once an agreement had been reached regarding the formal structure and an association for the project had been formed, the next challenge was to find suitable premises. The greatest challenge was to ensure full accessibility to everyone as well as to comply with public funding regulations regarding accessibility. Those who are familiar with Vienna also know that particularly in the inner districts there are many old buildings. They are beautiful but – for structural or financial reasons – oftentimes cannot be made accessible. It would take us quite some time to find and refurbish a suitable place.

This year's bad weather during IFED gave us just the opportunity to find out whether the renovation of the premises had been successful. It was a great joy to see how well the new Rainbow Family Center Vienna was received by our community. Many families joined our party despite its short-term relocation due to inclement weather, and we had a wonderful, colorful and cheerful celebration of family diversity.

<http://www.regenbogenfamilien.at>





## Best Practice NGO - Canada

The organization that my wife and I founded, the LGBT Family Coalition, started in our living room when our older son, Léo, was only six weeks old. Almost 20 years later, with the help of a number of Quebec ministries, we are able to carry out workshops across the province, train thousands of professionals about sexual and gender diversity, including family diversity. As the director of this organization, I greatly enjoy seeing that in many settings talking about families with same-sex parents has become almost old news. What was controversial and scary for many people back in the 1990s has become part of the fabric of Canadian society.

As our two sons reach adulthood, many other positive changes have occurred across Canada. Both British Columbia and Ontario now recognize families with more than two parents: a gay couple with their surrogate, or two lesbians and two gay men who decide to start a family together can now all be legally recognized as their children's parents, with all the rights and responsibilities that come with parenting. Our laws are beginning to catch up with the numerous creative ways people find to start their families. In my organization, we now have transgender parents, queer parents, multi-parent families, co-parenting, families with polyamorous parents and a variety of parenting styles (like gender-neutral parenting) that are vastly different from what we were seeing before our kids were born. We also have many families with trans and gender-creative youth. Canadians are slowly but surely moving toward a greater understanding and acceptance of the many and varied ways that families are formed.

### Mona Greenbaum

Director  
Coalition des familles LGBT  
Montréal



## Best Practice NGO - Greece

In Greece, Oikogeneies Ouranio Tokso (Rainbow Families Greece) along with other organizations (Rainbow School, LGBTQ Antarsya and Colour Youth) organized an event against sexist violence in the neighborhood of Gazi on Friday, May 12, 2017.

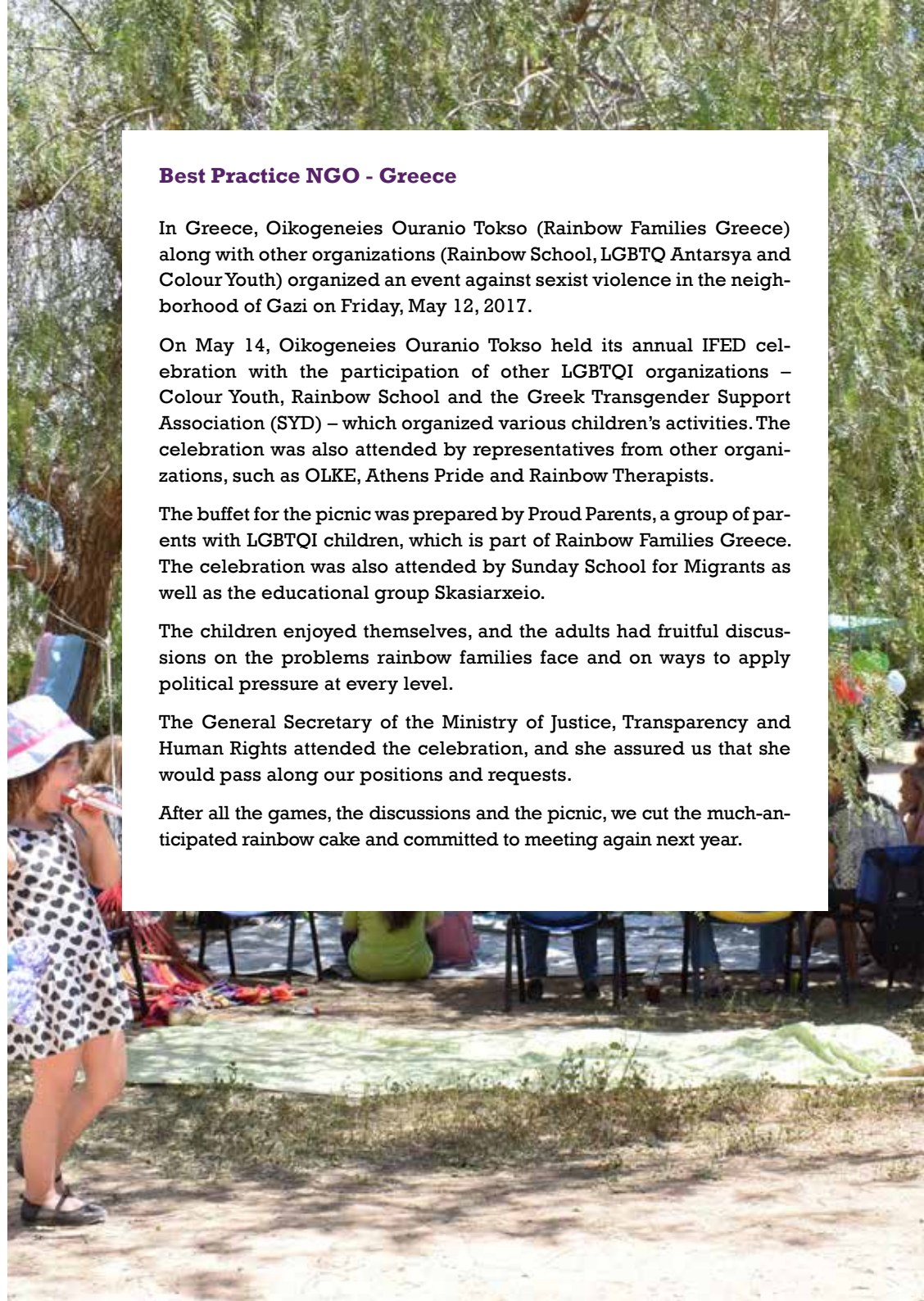
On May 14, Oikogeneies Ouranio Tokso held its annual IFED celebration with the participation of other LGBTQI organizations – Colour Youth, Rainbow School and the Greek Transgender Support Association (SYD) – which organized various children's activities. The celebration was also attended by representatives from other organizations, such as OLKE, Athens Pride and Rainbow Therapists.

The buffet for the picnic was prepared by Proud Parents, a group of parents with LGBTQI children, which is part of Rainbow Families Greece. The celebration was also attended by Sunday School for Migrants as well as the educational group Skasiarxeio.

The children enjoyed themselves, and the adults had fruitful discussions on the problems rainbow families face and on ways to apply political pressure at every level.

The General Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights attended the celebration, and she assured us that she would pass along our positions and requests.

After all the games, the discussions and the picnic, we cut the much-anticipated rainbow cake and committed to meeting again next year.



## Best Practice NGO - Ireland

### “Love Makes a Family” competition for primary schools in Ireland

The INTO LGBT Teachers' Group is a trade union group that supports and advances the cause of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender primary school teachers in Ireland. In recent years, they have also been active on the issue of family equality in school. In 2014, they developed and published a classroom resource to assist teachers in ensuring positive visibility of LGBT-headed and other family types in their schools: the Different Families, Same Love poster (available at <http://www.into.ie/lgbt/EducationalResources/>).

As part of this initiative the INTO LGBT Teachers' Group ran an exciting competition for primary schools in May 2017 to coincide with International Family Equality Day (IFED) and International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHO). The competition was based on the theme “Love Makes a Family.” Families are central to the development of children’s identity and are the primary lens through which they view their world.



Ciara Fagan is a primary school teacher and drama practitioner currently teaching in Ireland. She is involved with the INTO LGBT Teachers' Group, a trade union group that supports and advances the cause of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender primary school teachers. Ciara produces LGBT-inclusive educational resources for primary schools to promote inclusive schools, celebrate family diversity and combat homophobic and transphobic bullying.



It is vitally important for all children to see their families represented in the course of their lessons in school. It is also essential to create a positive school climate that fosters respect and acceptance of all family structures. The “Love Makes a Family” competition aimed to encourage schools to create positive school climates that foster respect and acceptance of all family structures, to celebrate the diversity of students and their families and to address homophobic and transphobic bullying in primary schools.

The competition was open to all classes from Junior Infants to 6th Class, and children aged between four and thirteen years took part. The competition saw a huge number of beautiful and creative entries, including poetry, drama, stories, artwork, writing, posters, songs and music videos. The judges were really impressed by the work that teachers and classes had put into each project and by the ways in which the children engaged with the message of family equality, the diverse and creative ways they chose to represent different family types and the way they shared their work with other classes in their school, at home with their families and with the wider community.

The standard was very high, and the winning entries were very impressive. These included two music videos, a beautiful display, scrapbooks, a drama and a collection of poems and drawings. Visit our Facebook page and our webpage to see our winning entries!

Webpage: [www.into.ie/lgbt](http://www.into.ie/lgbt)

Email: [intolgbtgroupsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:intolgbtgroupsecretary@gmail.com)

Facebook @INTOLGBTteachersGroup

Twitter @intolgbt



## The 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.



IFED 2017 Brazil

## 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, an official LGBT awareness 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.



*Celebrating the Rainbow of Families in our World!*

[www.internationalfamilyequalityday.org](http://www.internationalfamilyequalityday.org)

## Promoters of the 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 1,500 families, the LGBT Family Coalition (Coalition des familles LGBT) is the largest LGBT organization in Quebec in terms of membership. 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 gained increased legal recognition, public institutions still have much to learn about our families and our particular needs. In collaboration with government bodies and the media, the Coalition works for the legal and social recognition of our families. We work to increase our visibility and 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 centers, doctors’ offices, community organizations and social services to raise the public’s awareness of the diversity of family structures and the impact of homophobia, transphobia, heterosexism, cis-centrism and gender-based harassment. Our training sessions have reached over 18,000 professionals across Quebec.



[www.famillesLGBT.org](http://www.famillesLGBT.org)

### Family Equality Council



For over 35 years, Family Equality Council has been a leading advocate in the United States for our now more than three million parents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) and their some six million children. We do our work by fostering supportive communities, educating the public and pursuing policy change, all to advance both legal and lived equality for these LGBTQ-headed families across the US.

Family Equality Council creates lasting change for LGBTQ families by organizing our work into campaigns, which are executed at the federal, regional and state levels. We target areas where we are needed most and we maintain a focus on three pillars of work that we believe are critical to truly changing lives and laws in the US today:

1. **LGBTQ Parent Networks:** With the evolution of social media, online LGBTQ family networks have sprung up across our nation. Family Equality Council serves as the coordinating body, supporting these networks, sharing curricula and best practices, and further empowering them at the local level.
2. **Storytelling:** Family Equality Council recognizes that public opinion (and indeed the policy formation that follows) can be dramatically impacted by emotional appeals, sometimes even more deeply than by facts and statistics. Family Equality Council strives to raise the visibility of LGBTQ families within mainstream America, using the power of family narratives to combat efforts to roll back or block LGBTQ equality.
3. **Family Formation:** Family-building options in the US can, on the one hand, be expensive (assisted reproduction and surrogacy) and have, on the other, inconsistent policies and inherent biases against the LGBTQ community (adoption and foster care). Family Equality Council navigates the scientific and legal options available to today’s LGBTQ community and provides resources to help the LGBTQ community form and/or grow their families.

While we recently celebrated the two-year anniversary of marriage equality in the United States and the Supreme Court reaffirmed marriage equality in

[www.familyequality.org](http://www.familyequality.org)



a birth certificate case this past June, we still have much work to do on behalf of our families. The political landscape has shifted dramatically under the new administration. We are seeing an increase in the number of bills targeting LGBTQ individuals and families, nominations of anti-LGBTQ persons to the executive branches of government and key decision-making positions across the administration.

We know there is no “finish line” in this work – Family Equality Council represents LGBTQ families and their needs, which continue to evolve. But one thing has and will remain the same: love makes a family. Collectively, we are a community of parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, that reaches across the globe. By standing together, we continue to change attitudes and policies, and better ensure a world where all families are respected for their commitment to one another, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

### LGBTQ Parenting Network

The LGBTQ Parenting Network is a program of Sherbourne Health Centre, an innovative health care center in Toronto, Canada.



The LGBTQ Parenting Network promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer parents, prospective parents, children and their families through systems analysis, resource development, community education, professional training and advocacy.

We provide access to information and resources on our website, through workshops for parents and prospective parents, and with training opportunities for health, education and social service professionals who work in our communities.

One of the themes of our work is celebrating LGBTQ families. We have a set of resources and a workshop available to help agencies and individuals celebrate gender, sexual orientation and kinship diversity in families, which are all available on our website.

[www.lgbtqparentingnetwork.ca](http://www.lgbtqparentingnetwork.ca)



## NELFA

The Network of European LGBTIQ\* Families Associations (NELFA) was created on May 1, 2009, to unite European associations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents (LGBT) and their children under one umbrella organization. Since then, NELFA added “intersex” and “queer” parents and their children as well, to illustrate the diversity of the rainbow family movement in Europe. The asterisk reinforces NELFA’s openness to all family constellations beyond LGBTIQ.



With 24 associations representing 15 European countries (as of July 2017) and thousands of LGBTIQ\* families, NELFA promotes the exchange of information among its members and assists in creating and developing LGBTIQ\* family associations in Europe. NELFA works to ensure that children raised in LGBTIQ\* 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 LGBTIQ\* families, whether it be legally, financially, educationally or socially. NELFA also works to ensure LGBTIQ\* families’ freedom of movement 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 nonprofit association (AISBL) on March 12, 2012. Its official headquarters are located in the Rainbow House in Brussels. NELFA has also become a member of ILGA-Europe, Transgender Europe (TGEU) and - most recently - of COFACE Families Europe (2017).

In 2016, NELFA has been granted participatory status with the Council of Europe. The grant increases its ability to support family diversity in all 47 of the Council’s member states. NELFA now has the opportunity to contribute to moving civil institutions toward full equality and reinforcing participation in decision-making processes, as well as building a society based on equality, justice and human rights.

The Network of European LGBTIQ\* Families Associations works tirelessly to improve the living conditions of children with lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex or queer parents. Board members (currently 10) are volunteers. They

[www.nelfa.org](http://www.nelfa.org)

bear a large part of their costs for travel expenses, event fees, etc., on their own. NELFA’s budget derives from two sources: membership fees and donations.

Besides its support for IFED, NELFA also works on other major events and projects, i.e., the European Families Meetings (France in 2010, Spain in 2012, Germany in 2013 and Portugal in 2015), its own conferences as well as workshops and speeches for other organizations. In 2016/2017, NELFA took part in the European Union’s Erasmus+ program. The “Adequate and equal legal protection for rainbow families” project was aimed at strengthening the network especially in terms of its educational work. In 2017/2018, NELFA Board members and other active volunteers will participate in the new project “Chances and challenges for rainbow families.”

in the picture below, NELFA board members in Barcelona, June 2017





### The IFED Website: Gateway to the World

It's been more than two years since I've given the IFED website its new face. The site's redesign aimed to represent what IFED is all about: it should be colorful, encourage participation and invite visitors to linger.

First things first: Get people to participate

People from all over the world can submit their IFED activities as events to the site. All events are displayed on an interactive world map. It's very impressive how the number of events as well as the number of participating countries increases year by year. Behind each marker on the map there are people getting involved, frequently at significant personal risk. So imagine the thrill of seeing IFED events even in countries where our LGBT brothers and sisters are persecuted.

When IFED arrives, the website's "Social Media Hub" becomes a beehive of activity. This is where the IFED contributions from various social media channels are aggregated. They are a particular source of fascination, because it's where IFED's globally unifying quality becomes palpable.

Starting this year, we have included additional ways for people to get involved. We are interested in your family stories, which provide a glimpse into the wide variety of family structures. The first stories have already started to pour in, including late outings and pen pal correspondence with Obama...

I derive a lot of joy from my volunteer work on behalf of IFED. I enjoy great freedom in implementing my ideas, and I'm grateful for the chance to meet all the interesting people who are involved with IFED.

Maybe you and I will meet soon as well? We are excited about any skills that can help us raise IFED's profile even further.

**Miriam Förster**  
Web designer

[internationalfamilyequalityday.org](http://internationalfamilyequalityday.org)



# IFED GROWS!

**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: 74 cities in 36 countries**

**May 7th, 2017: 102 cities in 44 countries**



**May 6th, 2018: "Children's Rights Matter"**

**Join us and organize your own IFED local event**

Community organizations wishing to participate please contact IFED at [info@internationalfamilyequalityday.org](mailto:info@internationalfamilyequalityday.org)

# Get Involved

## THE NEW IFED NETWORK NGO

Thanks to the growing success of the IFED celebrations around the world, IFED is in the process of becoming soon an official registered NGO with the name: «The International Family Equality Day Network».

The new NGO will be established in Switzerland, Geneva, where local authorities and several organizations are already cooperating with IFED to celebrate the official the NGO-establishment in 2018.

Get involved too!

[internationalfamilyequalityday.org](http://internationalfamilyequalityday.org)

The new IFED Network's goals & mission are:

Raise awareness, provide advocacy, empower, demand social and legal acceptance for our families, and celebrate family diversity worldwide;

Ensure that IFED remains a neutral, unbranded event open to everybody;

Highlight the scope and diversity of IFED mobilization (so that this visibility impacts global public opinion and decision makers) via our global website, Facebook page and Twitter account, and the IFED Annual Report.



Kumiko Matsumoto

"My Canadian partner and I are raising our two young children in the Japanese countryside. We started being open in the local community and are trying to create a small movement from the countryside."

Kumiko Matsumoto, member of Rainbow Family Japan



Marilia Serra

"I believe that everyone is responsible for fighting the prejudice that results in violence and murder. We must fight for a more equal and secure world for our children and descendants."

Marilia Serra, Director of Institutional Relations of the Brazilian LGBT Families Association - ABRAFH, Brazil



Markus Stehle

"IFED increases the visibility of rainbow families all over the world. It is a celebration of pride that helps to empower same-sex parents and their children. Considering the inequality and discrimination faced by rainbow families and LGBTI people in general to this day, the importance of IFED in that respect cannot be overstated."

Markus Stehle, Switzerland



Andrea Rivas

"To celebrate IFED, we projected a short film about family diversity and held an LGBTIQ family meeting with our children's workshop. It gave us a chance to increase our visibility and strengthen our community ties, which empowers our families."

Andrea Rivas, President of AFDA, Argentina



Daniel Martinović

"IFED is a great opportunity to get together and celebrate our rainbow families, but it's also a great occasion to talk to the public about the issues we face every day and how all of us together as a society can improve the rights and quality of life for everybody."

Daniel Martinović, Dugine obitelji, Croatia



Ging Cristobal

"We change people's narrow and bigoted concept of family by letting them experience our LGBTI family the best way we can – with love."

Ging Cristobal, OutRight Action International, Philippines





Mona Greenbaum

"As LGBT parents, many challenges lie ahead of us in terms of the visibility and social recognition of our families. The media has become increasingly focused on alternative families, as adoption, surrogacy and assisted procreation, have become "hot" issues. But even as we have gained increased legal recognition, public institutions still remain closed to our families and ignorant 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 and transphobia in Quebec's primary and secondary schools is the major area where we need to apply our efforts, because this is where our children experience exclusion."

Mona Greenbaum, Director, Coalition des familles LGBT, Canada



Marc Brell Lopez

IFED is a celebration for our families as well as a message to families around the world that all kinds of families matter, and all should have the same rights. We celebrate love and family, and IFED is a great way for us to illustrate and celebrate how diverse love and family can be. With IFED, Spanish rainbow families take the opportunity to spread a message to the entire world: You can be yourself, love whom you want and have a family of your own. It's possible!"

Marc Brell, Galesh, Spain

"International Family Equality Day has become an annual event across the United States which our families look forward to celebrating! From children's museums to city parks, from family homes to beaches around the country, people gather to celebrate the love of family! We see all generations gathering in support of rainbow families around the world. The stories told, connections made and photographs captured illustrate the pride and love that went into creating each and every family."

Kim Simes, Director of Regional Programming, Family Equality Council



Kim Simes



Derricia Castillo-Salazar

"For a country which has just recently overturned the homophobic Section 53, which criminalized same-sex acts, Belize has been socially tolerant of same-sex families. Same-sex couples and the families they create are not legally recognized within social systems, which have been created to protect everyone. While Our Circle publicly addresses and works with same-sex couples and their families in Belize, the numbers who engage these programs geared toward addressing social inequality. However, since our engagement in IFED 2017, we have seen our numbers slowly increasing and people being more open to family programs within our organization. Being positively highlighted in local newspapers and by local organizations for our IFED initiative was very inspiring to the community."

Derricia Castillo-Salazar, President, Our Circle, Belize

"Sometimes I feel like I cannot go on. I feel so lost, so alone, so helpless. Sometimes I cannot see which way to go, because all I see is night and darkness all around. But I try to remind myself – don't despair and never lose hope. Yes, it's easy to blame everything on my country: laws, church, policy, etc. But in fact, all focus should be on

ourselves. It's time to change from the inside. IFED lifts me up high, allows me to spread my wings. I feel so alive, and my soul thrives in love. I know love is everywhere. I feel it inside me, strengthening my hope. I want to say: We'll never lose hope. We'll find our way, and tomorrow we will be free."

Yosef Kristian, Russia



Yosef Kristian



IFED 2017 Russia

## Cooperating Partners

### ILGA-Europe



ILGA-Europe, the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), is an international nongovernmental umbrella organization bringing together 490 organizations from 45 European countries. ILGA-Europe is a driving force for political, legal and social change at the European level.

[www.ilga-europe.org](http://www.ilga-europe.org)

### European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTI Rights



The LGBTI Intergroup gathers 154 elected Members of the European Parliament from 23 EU Member States and 7 political groups. They are committed to upholding the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

[www.lgbt-ep.eu](http://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](http://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 80 individual members in 42 countries.

[www.tgeu.org](http://www.tgeu.org)

In the photo on the right, ILGA-Europe staff members supporting IFED

### European Green Party



The European Green Party (EGP) is a European political party whose members include the 44 national Green parties from all across Europe, both within the EU and beyond. Human rights are the core of our beliefs and work. Through structures such as European Queer Greens, we work with all European Greens, civil society and other stakeholders to develop and enhance human rights on the national and European levels.

[www.europeangreens.eu](http://www.europeangreens.eu)

### 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 30 social-democrat structures. It works at local, national and European levels with politicians and political parties member of the PES.

[www.rainbowrose.eu](http://www.rainbowrose.eu)



**Interested in becoming a cooperating partner for IFED? Contact us!**

[info@internationalfamilyequalityday.org](mailto:info@internationalfamilyequalityday.org)



## Participating Associations



IFED 2017 Israel



## ARGENTINA - Special Country Feature

### LGBT families' problems in Argentina at a glance

#### EDUCATION

Our families suffer institutional violence. Although they have been legally recognized since the enactment of the law on equal marriage, they are invisible in education. Schools have formal and informal arrangements, rules governing the day-to-day functioning of school space that are predicated on the principles of binary students and essentially divided into “women” and “men”; likewise, the only possible family structure is the one with a father and a mother.

This assumption activates a form of institutional violence toward those who are not recognized in hegemonic representations and in children with LGBT parents.

Students with LGBT parents are usually subjected to and negatively affected by anti-LGBT bias in schools. If they decide to be open about their family structure, in many cases this may result in bullying, harassment and other negative repercussions.

For students with LGBT parents, school is not a very safe environment:

- The schools' curricula and day-to-day activities do not cover family diversity.
- Only a small minority of schools, including their teaching and non-teaching staff, are trained in issues of family diversity, especially LGBT families, and the national legal framework that protects these families, or how to address these issues in class. There is no current public policy that addresses family diversity.
- Students often feel unsafe in school due to a personal characteristic, such as their family constellation (e.g., having LGBT parents), or their actual or perceived sexual orientation.
- Most students do not report harassment or assault in school to the school administration. And when they do, LGBT parents find many obstacles to taking appropriate measures to end abuse and bullying. Again, the school administrators' and teachers' lack of preparation harms the psychophysical integrity of our children.

#### LABOR LAWS AND WORKPLACES

More than 100 years have passed since the implementation of the first maternity leave in Argentina, and 30 since the last reform to the system. The Labor Contract Regime (Law No. 20,744) provides for 90 days off for working pregnant women in the private sector, which includes at least the last 45 days before birth. During the leave period, Social Security pays the worker an allowance identical to her normal salary. This allowance is mainly financed by employers' contributions.

The same law provides all other workers (i.e., all those who are not pregnant) with only two days' leave for a birth – that includes fathers, parents who adopt and social parents in a same-sex marriage.

In Argentina hundreds of bills were presented in Parliament in recent years to extend those days to include provisions for adoptions and account for family diversity. But these projects never come to fruition, probably due to their perceived impact on labor costs. A comprehensive macroeconomic vision, which seeks quality of life and sustainable development, would, of course, view such changes as a great investment, and their realization as a matter of great urgency.





A high-angle photograph of several children sitting around a white table outdoors, engaged in a drawing activity. The table is covered with large sheets of paper, some of which have the text 'Dibujá a tu familia' (Draw your family) written on them. Various art supplies are scattered on the table, including a red cup filled with markers, a yellow plastic container, a green cup with markers, and a red bottle of 'Listo GU' glue. A small metal pot containing a dark substance is also visible. The children are focused on their work, with one child in the foreground drawing a dinosaur. The background shows a grassy area and the legs of other people, suggesting an outdoor event or community gathering.

## HEALTH

As in education, LGBT families and their children are invisible in the health sector as well. Most doctors and medical staff are untrained in how to care for children of LGBT parents, and that, again, leads to institutional violence, as doctors don't know to ask the right questions – which can lead to a bad diagnosis. Likewise, surrogacy has not yet found entry into legislation, which cuts many people, especially male partners, off from access to their reproductive rights.

## PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC POLICIES.

Public management has not yet placed LGBT families on an equal footing with heterosexual families – on the contrary, their degree of invisibility is almost complete. There are few public management programs that address the issue, and since December 2015 we have been concerned about cuts in public programs for sex education and non-discrimination. There is no public policy design to help LGBT families. Neither is there a professional survey of the problems faced by these families that would enable the design of an effective public policy.

**AFDA is an NGO and belongs to the Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans (FALGBT), with headquarters in Buenos Aires. Our association promotes equal rights for LGBT families in Argentina. We work to empower our community members so they can live their lives and families in equality**



## BELIZE - Special Country Feature

This year Our Circle, an LGBT organization working to improve the quality of life and access to opportunity for LGBT persons and their families to ensure a socially inclusive Belize, joined the IFED celebrations. Through their participation in this huge movement in 2017, over 30 LGBT families in Belize were inspired to continue fighting for their rights. With the IFED Field Trip and the IDAHOT profiling of LGBT families, Our Circle was able to publicly show that same-sex families exist in Belize and encourage other same-sex families to become visible and engage in initiatives working toward the visibility and inclusion of same-sex families.

For IFED, Our Circle brought together 20 adults and 13 children to a regular family location, the Belize Zoo. The zoo, after hearing about IFED, went above and beyond to ensure that the guided tour was not only educational for the grown-ups but also fun for the children. One of our volunteers stated, "I have visited the [Belize] Zoo before. However, being able to visit with my partner and our child, being able to hold her and enjoy the [Belize] Zoo without the tour guide or the management looking at us with disgust made me understand that with time, I will be able to have a happy, visible, included family."

After the zoo visit, the crowd was featured in one of Belize's national newspaper, the Reporter (<http://tinyurl.com/yboj5uu0>).

The most interesting part about celebrating IFED 2017 was the Prime Minister's wife and Special Envoy for Women and Children, Mrs. Kim Simplis Barrow, agreeing to include IFED and IDAHOT into the Inspiration Center's calendar for 2018. Our Circle has three years of experience in working with and supporting the LGBT community in Belize. Our Circle believes that for the LGBT community to feel secure, we need to be focusing on their true support systems, their families of affinity and/or origin, and IFED 2017 gave us that opportunity. We are hoping that next year we can have at least one additional LGBT organization celebrating IFED with us and an ally organization integrated in IFED initiatives.



Dercnia Castillo - Salazar is co-founder and president of Our Circle, a community-led initiative committed to awareness and empowerment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) community through active outreach and participation, in order to initiate affirmative change in the Belizean society.

[ourcirclebze@gmail.com](mailto:ourcirclebze@gmail.com)



## BRAZIL - Special Country Feature

In May 2017, the Brazilian Association of Same-Sex Families (ABRAFH) celebrated International Family Equality Day in 13 cities across 10 states of the Brazilian Federation.

After just four years of existence, the civil society organization ABRAFH already includes more than 1,000 families in 25 states of the Brazilian Federation. Committed to the positive visibility of LGBTIQ families, ABRAFH's actions focus on protecting its members' rights and ensuring equal and equitable treatment of the entire LGBTIQ population in Brazil, from public policies to actions and social manifestations.

With the support of the Collective Mothers for Diversity and Families of the UAI, as well as the support of some sections of the Brazilian Bar Association and the "Homo Parents" blog, several LGBTIQ as well as straight families gathered to celebrate, revealing the diversity of Brazilian family compositions.

In most cities, the event took place in open spaces and public parks, where families could enjoy nature, play, talk and socialize. In the city of Rio de Janeiro, the event was attended by more than 100 people!

The picnics featured snacks, film and photography teams, music, dance, theater and children's entertainment. Adults, young people and children – everybody was very happy: "We've never felt so welcomed and sheltered," and "We had a great time, experiencing real harmony and sharing of life without prejudice," were just some of the responses we heard.

The celebration of IFED 2017 in Brazil enabled the promotion of positive visibility for our families and featured the organizational capacity and pride that motivates LGBTIQ people to be an integral part that is worthy of respect in Brazilian society. In short, these are only the first steps, and they motivate our future actions. The experience has shown that borders can be broken down by local mobilization and that more families can be reached by our values and feel welcome in ABRAFH. Thus, in addition to the big cities, from this year on we



intend to consolidate local and regional coordinators specifically responsible for the promotion of similar activities in smaller cities toward the interior of our country.

Associação Brasileira de Famílias Homoafetivas – ABRAFH

Rogério Koscheck – President

Marília Serra – Vice-president

Saulo Amorim – Director of Institutional Relations

[www.abrafh.org.br](http://www.abrafh.org.br)

<https://pt-br.facebook.com/AbrafhOficial/>

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDdLqMw78rbZqf\\_jZ30M0Yw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDdLqMw78rbZqf_jZ30M0Yw)

[contato@abrafh.org.br](mailto:contato@abrafh.org.br)

## CROATIA - Special Country Feature

Two gay men in their mid-thirties filed a suit against the Republic of Croatia due to discriminatory action from their local Center for Social Welfare, which had denied them access to a joint adoption.

The couple met in 2013 and formalized their relationship through the Life Partnership Act (the Croatian version of same-sex civil union) in 2015. From the very beginning of their relationship the two men knew that they wanted to become parents. Adoption seemed a natural decision, both so they could fulfill their desire for parenthood and to help and provide a loving home for a child that had been abandoned or ended up in the system for another reason.

But when they approached the authorities, their request was denied immediately, with the explanation that registered partners were not entitled to file for an adoption procedure. Although they had gone through the mandatory course for persons wishing to adopt and had submitted all the documentation required by law, the chance to become adoptive parents was taken away from them even before the start of the evaluation procedures that straight couples or single persons must go through, which in Croatia are handled by the Center for Social Welfare.

The authorities explicitly stated that the decision to deny them access to a joint adoption had been taken based solely on the fact the two men were in a registered partnership. But Croatian family law does not explicitly forbid same-sex partners to apply for adoption, and the Life Partnership Act states that in all matters of family law, same-sex couples must be treated equally to married couples. In addition, as a member state of the European Union and by signing several EU conventions and adopting EU legal precedent, the Republic of Croatia committed itself to treating all its citizens without any discrimination.

To make the matter even more absurd, if the couple weren't in a registered partnership, and if one of them (or both separately) applied for adoption, they would not be denied access to the procedure.

The association Dugine obitelji (Rainbow Families Croatia) commented on the case, highlighting this fact and stating that it already has among its members LGBT\* individuals who have successfully adopted children as single persons. "The state is now sending a message saying that it's OK if you're gay and apply

to adopt if you aren't married, but if you and your partner decide to come out, celebrate your love and formalize your relationship, you'll be denied certain services," said Daniel Martinovic, a representative of Rainbow Families Croatia during a press conference held in Zagreb in early May, to mark International Family Equality Day.

"While in the last three years, since the Life Partnership Act was passed in the Croatian Parliament, we have witnessed fair treatment from government authorities in matters of family life, this case really throws us way back as a country. Two years ago, for the first time in Croatian history, a lesbian couple was assigned joint custody of a child that was born from one of the partners, and now we see a clear case of discrimination of a gay couple that simply wishes to help a child that currently has no parents at all," concluded Martinovic.





## JAPAN - Special Country Feature

Rainbow Family Japan (Niji iro-Kazoku) now consists of 50 members, most of whom live in the Tokyo area. Annual activities include the Tokyo Rainbow Parade and International Family Equality Day (IFED), along with workshops and tea parties about four times a year. We often get interviewed by the media and invited for presentations at universities and other workshops.

We celebrate IFED during the Tokyo Rainbow Parade every year, and we provide a resting area for kids and families. This year we exhibited about 100 photos of rainbow families in our booth, and more than 200 people stopped by to chat and view the pictures. The idea of same-sex couples having children is still new for the LGBT community in Japan, so some people were surprised to see these children in the parade.

One of our missions is to raise awareness within the community and in society at large about the possibility of LGBT persons having children. Another event we held was a potluck party at Shinjuku Gyoen Park in Tokyo, where more than 50 people gathered this year – the biggest crowd we've ever had.

The first Asia-Pacific Rainbow Families Forum was held in Hong Kong in May of 2017. Six members of Niji iro-Kazoku attended. It was very inspiring to talk to the LGBT parent leaders from the Asia-Pacific region. We all agreed on continuing this forum to show our presence and voice, locally and internationally.

Workshops related to gay parenting in Japan were also held in Tokyo. We invited a gay single father who lives in Tokyo as a speaker for the first workshop, and a Japanese gay couple from abroad, who had their children through surrogacy in the United States, were the speakers for the second workshop. Gay parents are next to non-existent in Japan because adoption and surrogacy are not permitted for same-sex couples. It was an eye-opening experience to learn about their stories.

Currently, there is a huge information gap between Tokyo and the rest of Japan. Therefore, one of our primary aims is to network information between the various cities around Japan to provide support and share knowledge and information about rainbow families. The history of rainbow families in Japan is very young, so we are constantly facing difficulties and challenges, but we will continue to connect, learn and help one another.



## RUSSIA - Special Country Feature

### Ekaterinburg

The Resource Center in Ekaterinburg celebrated IFED on May 14, 2017. Nine families with and without children joined in (including one heterosexual family), and the total number of guests was 26. The main aim of the celebration was to get together and talk. We introduced the Resource Center, got to know each other and had fun! There were games, a show of soap bubbles in which we all participated until everybody was inside one huge bubble. But the most interesting part was at the very end. We watched a science show and learned about nitrogen and its properties: we poured it on our hands, ate some nitrogen chips, made bubbles with nitrogen, swam in a cloud of nitrogen and did many other crazy and exciting things. Adults and children took part in these activities and had a lot of fun. There was also a drawing contest with an awards ceremony. Then there was a discussion, during which we talked about how we feel, whether we prefer to be closeted or open in society, what we would like life to be like for our children and what our future might look like. At the very end, we watched the film *What Makes a Family*, which made us a bit sad, partly because of the legislation in our country. But still, the celebration was great, we all had fun and one of our guests said, "I don't want to leave!"

### Samara

On May 7, 2017, Avers gathered LGBT+ families from Samara to relax in nature. We chose one of the most beautiful places in the Samara region for the celebration: a place situated on the slope of a hillside, overgrown with young pine forest, where a magnificent view opens up to the opposite riverside of the Volga and the Zhiguli Mountains. Wonderful weather, clean air, beautiful nature.

This year, about 40 people came to celebrate, which is much more than in the past. There were guests from other cities and countries, including children. While the table was being set and food was being prepared, people explored and photographed the surrounding environment. There was also a yoga class as part of the program. Those who were interested could join the yoga class for an unforgettable experience.

Afterwards, everyone gathered for a picnic. There was food for every taste: barbecue, vegetarian dishes, sweets and cake. During the meal, we got to know

each other better. Together, we spun a funny story about the adventures of a dog named Chewbacca and IFED.

After the picnic, we arranged a photo flash mob. Everybody wrote down their wishes for their family in order to take a picture with that statement. We were also invited to visit a private farm and feed the horses; there were songs accompanied by guitar and ball games.

The celebration was very rich, and nobody wanted to leave. It must also be noted that this year there were not only LGBT+ families but all kinds of families, including heterosexual ones – which is exactly the way it should be.





## St. Petersburg

International Family Equality Day had been celebrated in a few Russian cities in the past two years. The LGBT action group Coming Out held two meetings on May 6 and 7. The first one was entitled “Gay and trans\* parenting” and focused on the personal experiences of gay men with children. The participants also met a trans woman with children and discussed the problems experienced by gay men and trans\* people who were going to have children in the future.

The theme of the second meeting was “Adoption and custody in same-sex families.” “This day became a very important event for me personally,” one of the speakers said later. “It was a moment of overcoming my own fears. The most desired victory is the victory over yourself. And if at least one person after this meeting will get a chance to fulfill their dream of parenting, then it was worth it.”

On May 8, the Rainbow Future action group, supported by the Russian LGBT Network and Coming Out, organized the International Family Equality Day celebration in St. Petersburg. The day was held in a warm and friendly atmosphere full of joy, laughter and children’s smiles. About 20 families with children aged 0 to 10 participated. Bim Bom, a wonderful clown, entertained kids and adults. Every family had the opportunity to take part in a photoshoot under a beautiful arc made from rainbow-colored balloons. Then our little guests traveled to the land of soap bubbles. At the end of the day, a feast with fruit and cakes was held.



Guests drank tea from color-changing mugs, and everybody could take their mug home as a little memento.

IFED is not only a cause for celebration but a great international event. It makes us feel like part of a global movement. We can contribute to the fight for equality for LGBT families and draw attention to the problems faced by these families, especially discrimination and stigma. This day allows us to tell the world: We exist, we are here, and we will not give up. Many stunned families with children joined the celebration. A lot of brave and great speakers participated in two discussions. All those wonderful, loving, strong people make us believe that our dream of human rights values, justice and equality for all sexual orientations and gender identities can come true. New generations of people will be raised differently in diverse families, and our children will live in a better and more accepting Russia.

## Vladivostok

The Vladivostok branch of the Russian LGBT Network celebrated IFED on May 1, 2017. It was organized in the form of a picnic: under the clear blue sky, LGBT families with or without children and other members of the LGBT community gathered to celebrate. We started by reminding ourselves of the purpose of this day and discussed its meaning, attitudes toward LGBT families and the existing problem of recognition and equality with heterosexual families. The picnic provided an opportunity for many of our participants to show their abilities and creativity; we ate some delicious home-made food and sang songs accompanied by a guitar. And of course, there were contests and games and overall great fun! The main aim of the day: to unite LGBT people and discuss current and important issues. There were about 20 participants, all of whom were happy and full of positive impressions.

“To us the Family Equality Festival in Moscow is a safe space for different families from the LGBTQIA community to meet as well as a platform for dialogue with society, a search for understanding and common values. It is a celebration of diversity and equality, which are values that “Resource LGBTQIA Moscow” strives to promote in everything it does in Russia.”



Moscow

## UKRAINE - Special Country Feature

Ukraine is among the countries where the implementation of the concept of equality leaves a great deal to be desired. When it comes to LGBTI families, queer families or any other type of family that's different from the Soviet-era "cell of society" (where only one type of family was possible – two heterosexual parents with kids), their situation, problems and challenges are not being discussed in this country – as if they didn't exist.

And even within the public discourse of the heterosexual family, nobody is talking about the challenges modern families face. Most of the officially approved family-themed events are "family sports days" or "family food days." Ukrainian society avoids talking about domestic violence, culture of consent or the burden of housekeeping, not to mention other types of families or unions, such as rainbow families, polyamorous unions, etc., and the problems they face in Ukraine.

This state of affairs has its roots in the Soviet past, where "normality" was mandatory and every deviation was considered shameful and asocial. It also feeds off the myth of "traditional Ukrainian family and values," which have recently been reestablished by the nationalist movement.

As per 2017, the Ukrainian Constitution still proclaims that family is based on marriage, with marriage being a union of one man and one woman. That's why the visibility of different, vulnerable groups, including LGBTI families, is one of the crucial issues of acceptance and public awareness. According to the national sociological surveys conducted by the National Democratic Institute and Freedom House in Ukraine, respectively, only 5% of Ukrainians know someone who is gay or lesbian (much less an LGBTI family), and 90% are completely sure that there are no members of the LGBTI community in their immediate surrounding. Thus, the lack of visibility, good role models and public discourse are directly correlated to ignorance and hatred toward the LGBTI community and zero tolerance toward rainbow families.

KyivPride, the largest and most visible LGBTI event in Ukraine, uses its reputation, influence and resources to raise the issue of diversity and inclusion and bring silenced problems to the forefront of the discussion. This was one reason why the organizing committee of KyivPride 2017 was pleased to accept the offer of the Embassy of Switzerland to organize a "Pride Without Borders"

workshop with Ms. Maria von Känel for regional activists. The idea was to educate the activists about International Family Equality Day and to introduce them and LGBT parents to best practices for strengthening rainbow families in Ukraine. Besides the general awareness-raising and experience-sharing aspects, celebrating IFED is also important for its regional component. As is the case in many centralized countries and societies, outlying regions mostly lack knowledge, resources and empowerment, especially in issues such as equality of LGBTI communities and families.

The workshop inspired some regional LGBTI activists from Kharkiv to organize the forum "Modern Family: Traditions and Variations" in Kharkiv right after the annual KyivPride week. It was one of the biggest outcomes of the platform for regional activists organized by KyivPride and "Pride Without Borders."

The forum "Modern Family: Traditions and Variations" was held August 18–20, 2017. Through its use of several formats such as discussions, seminars, performances and forum theater, it became a great platform for raising discussion and increasing the visibility of the topic of various types of family in Ukraine and a critical reinterpretation of Ukrainian history.

2017 was marked by several other substantial projects and events for Ukrainian family equality, such as the publication of the first Ukrainian book about different families, *Maya and Her Moms* (inspired by Lesléa Newman's *Heather Has Two Mommies*), by famous Ukrainian author Larysa Denysenko, and a pilot analysis entitled "Social and Legal Status of LGBT Families with





Children in Ukraine” by the Kherson research group. All these steps forward illustrate the small but steady progress the Ukrainian LGBTI community is making toward a real celebration of International Family Equality Day on some bright day in the near future.

**Ruslana Panukhnyk**

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<https://www.facebook.com/kyivpride>



**VENEZUELA - Special Country Feature**

In Venezuela, social change and integration of same-sex families have made tremendous strides in terms of respect, dignity and visibility. Yaury Mejias Galarraga and Diórlin Toledo Romero, as well as Yoha Hernández and Jessica Polo, keep building their respective spaces in Caracas and Valencia, respectively.

Yaury and Diórlin have just had a baby boy and a baby girl, and they won a victory in the struggle for their rights in an April 5, 2016, ruling of the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of Justice: the State will provide protection without any distinction as to the way the family was created, including children and adolescents born into same-sex families – they are legal subjects enjoying all the same benefits enshrined in the Venezuelan legal system as any child born into a traditional family. And Yaury points out that while the legal system does not provide rights to both mothers as a couple in case of surrogacy, at the level of medical care and attention from health institutions, neither they nor their children have suffered any discrimination – they are considered two mothers everywhere.

Jessica and Yoha, with their almost one-year-old baby, are recognized activists in Carabobo State, where they are getting recognition as authorities in spearheading Venezuelan LGBT visibility.

Venezuela moves forward in slow steps, but every day demonstrates anew that without visibility, there are no rights and lasting change has to be hard-won.

<http://www.fundacionreflejosdevenezuela.com/las-familias-homoparentales-venezuela/>



## Overview of Research on Same-Sex Families (non-exhaustive)<sup>1</sup>

By Martine Gross

The earliest empirical studies of homosexual parents and their children go back to the 1970s and are for the most part American. Between 1972 and 2004, over 440 scientific articles on the subject were published (Vecho & Schneider, 2005). Early studies focused on the concern voiced by judges or social workers having to decide whether to give custody of a child to a homosexual parent, in particular in the context of the parents' separation, when the child had been born before the unmaking of a heterosexual relationship.

As regards homosexual adults, these studies concerned their mental health and their parenting abilities. Indeed, courts of law considered that gays and lesbians did not have a close enough relationship with their children, that lesbians were less maternal than heterosexual women or even that homosexuality was a disease. As for the children raised by homosexuals, several fears were voiced. The first was that the children would be rejected by their peers or that they would be mocked. The second was that these children would be confused as to their sexual identity or be more likely to become homosexual themselves, something that judges considered to be an especially negative consequence – it must be remembered that up until 1981, the World Health Organization considered homosexuality a disease. Judges were worried by other aspects of the personal development of these children as well: they thought the children would be more likely to display signs of mental illness and coping difficulties, and have more fragile mental health than children raised in heterosexual families. One last common fear was that these children would be more exposed than others to sexual abuse by their parents or their parents' friends. Thus, most studies focused on the sexual identity, emotional development and social relations of these children with peers and adults.



The hundreds of studies all came to show no fundamental difference between the children raised in a household with parents of different sex and those raised by same-sex parents. According to Patterson (2005), not a single child raised in a same-sex family and having been part of a study (over 300 children) showed any gender identity disorders or gender-role behavior difficulties. Several studies have shown that the children raised in same-sex families are no more likely than others to suffer psychiatric conditions nor emotional or behavioral difficulties (Bos et al., 2007; Golombok et al., 1983; Kirkpatrick et al., 1981; Lick et al., 2013; Shechner et al., 2013; Wainright et al., 2004). Finally, as regards sexual orientation, numerous studies have disproved the prejudice according to which the sexual orientation of children is dependent on that of their parents (Bailey et al., 1995; Bos et al., 2012; Golombok & Tasker, 1996; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004). The findings of these different studies show that the young adults raised by lesbian mothers are in good mental health, do not define themselves as homosexual but are more open than others to “experimenting” with a person of the same sex. However, a study published in 2010 does state that the daughters of lesbian mothers have a higher likelihood of living a homosexual experience (Gartrell et al., 2010).

Despite the rise in different family arrangements, it is often assumed that deviating from the two-parent heterosexual norm jeopardizes children's psychological well-being (Vecho & Schneider, 2015). Susan Golombok, in a recent review of the literature (2015), shows how the structure of a family is of much less importance than support from relatives, family dynamics and the quality of relations between parents and children as well as between the parents themselves.

An investigation compared Dutch same-sex parent and different-sex parent households on children's psychological well-being, parenting stress and support in child rearing. Data were based on a nationally representative survey. No significant differences were found on children's well-being, problems in the parent-child relationship, being worried about the child or the use of formal and informal support between mothers in same-sex and different-sex parent households or for fathers in same-sex and different-sex parent households. Regarding perceived confidence in child rearing, fathers in same-sex parent households and mothers in different-sex parent households felt less competent

<sup>1</sup> A large part of this text has been published in Gross, M., & Bureau, M.-F. (eds.) (2015). *Gay, lesbian, and trans families through the lens of social science: A revolution or a pluralisation of forms of parenthood?* *Enfances, Familles, Générations*, 23, <https://efg.revues.org/893#article-893>



than their counterparts. In this population-based study, the similarity in child outcomes regardless of household type confirms the results of prior investigations based on convenience samples (Bos, Kuyper & Gartrell, 2017).

As regards peer relations, adolescents that were raised by lesbian mothers are not different from those with heterosexual parents, whether in terms of the quality of their relationships, the number of male or female friends or the presence of a best friend (Wainright & Patterson, 2006). In a U.S. longitudinal study with lesbian mothers and their children (Gartrell et al., 2005), 43% of the children interviewed at the age of 10 had experienced homophobia and had been distressed by it. At the age of 17, the adolescents were asked about their day-to-day life (Gartrell et al., 2012). In general, they had good results in school, had a social network and long-time close friends. Most felt comfortable inviting their friends to their house and telling them about their mothers' sexual orientation. Nonetheless, half of them had been confronted with negative reactions in school concerning their same-sex parents (van Gelderen et al., 2012).

The specifics of adoption within same-sex families has of yet received little attention, but a review of the 18 articles published between 2003 and 2014 on the development of children adopted into same-sex families confirms the results of earlier data regarding the development of children raised in same-sex parenting contexts (Schneider & Vecho, 2015).

Research on the psychological development and the well-being of children raised by same-sex parents has almost entirely focused on lesbian households, and very little on gay ones. 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).



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One often hears that adoption by gay fathers could further complicate an already potentially difficult situation. Do the children adopted by gay fathers suffer more problems than those adopted by lesbian mothers or by heterosexual parents? A study has shown that the problems of children who were adopted by heterosexual parents, lesbian mothers or gay fathers did not depend on the sexual orientation of the parents (Averett et al., 2009). Several studies involving samples of adoptive parents without setting apart the lesbian mothers and gay fathers, using self-administered questionnaires, describe positive family functioning and children showing positive psychological adjustment (Erich et al., 2009; Erich et al., 2005; Leung et al., 2005). A study on gay and lesbian adoptive parents showed high levels of social support and appropriate parenting skills (Ryan, 2007; Ryan & Cash, 2004). A longitudinal follow-up of adoptive families has shown that adjustment among children, parents and couples as well as family functioning was no different on the basis of parental sexual orientation (lesbian, gay or heterosexual) when children were of school age (Farr, 2017).

Regarding the development of gender identity, it has been suggested that the children of gay fathers may differ from the children of lesbian mothers because of the absence of a mother. Goldberg et al. (2012) started with the hypothesis that the children of gay fathers, especially the girls, may display less gendered behavior than the children of heterosexual parents, due to the absence of a female role model, but they concluded that that is not the case.

Research consistently shows children of lesbian and gay parents function as well as, or better than, children raised by heterosexual parents (Fedewa et al., 2015) despite the prejudice they may encounter (Massey et al., 2013). A meta-analysis of studies on child psychological adjustment by parental sexual orientation of the past 10 years indicated that children of gay fathers had significantly better outcomes than did children of heterosexual parents. These results may be attributable to the potentially higher socioeconomic status of gay fathers traditionally associated with dual-earner households, better preparedness for fatherhood in the face of strong antigay stigma directed at same-sex families, and more egalitarian parenting roles (Miller et al., 2017).

Golombok et al. (2017) have presented their findings on a study of 40 gay-father families created through surrogacy and a comparison group of 55 lesbian-mother families created through donor insemination with children aged 3–9 years. Children in both family types showed high levels of adjustment, with lower levels of children's internalizing problems reported by gay fathers. Irrespective of family type, children whose parents perceived greater stigmatization and children who experienced higher levels of negative parenting showed higher levels of parent-reported externalizing problems.

Studies conducted in Europe, North America and Anglo-Saxon countries in general have paved the way for new research that is no longer focused on





disproving prejudice but, rather, on same-sex families as study objects that could shed light on contemporary transformations of the family. 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 the past few years. A recent study examined the functioning of 624 same-sex couples with children, including questions on their economic behavior (Gross & Courduriès, 2015). Another interesting issue is that of the nature of relationships between gay or lesbian parents and their extended families (Courduriès & Fine, 2014; Gross, 2009; Julien et al., 2005). Regarding insemination with a known or unknown donor, some studies examine how children 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). There have been publications on a great many topics: terms of address between children and parents (Gross, 2014), lesbian mothers and the role of known donors (Côté, 2014), gay fatherhood (Gross, 2012; L’Archevêque & Julien, 2013; Tarnowski, 2010), the importance of biological connections and heteronormative perceptions (Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sireci, 2002; Dalton & Bielby, 2000; Descoutures, 2010; Gratton, 2008; Lingiardi et al., 2016) and the sharing of domestic and educative tasks in a household where gender does not come into play to predefine the division of responsibilities (Patterson et al., 2004; Vecho et al., 2011; Fossoul et al., 2013).

With regard to the effects of homophobia and related child-protection strategies, a study (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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