



**International  
Family  
Equality  
Day**

*Celebrating the Rainbow of Families in our world!*

## The International Family Equality Day (IFED) Network **Annual Report 2014**

IFED 2014 Vilnius, Lithuania







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## Editorial

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

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

This annual report introduces the organizations involved in IFED as well as the work done by the IFED Committee, and highlights the activities that were held in the different countries to celebrate this day. The annual report aims to serve as an inspiration for the Fourth International Family Equality Day, which will take place on **May 3rd 2015**.

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

Happy reading. Yours cordially,

The International Family Equality Day (IFED) Network



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## Adequate and equal legal protection for all families

Falling in love, choosing a life partner, building a family are issues which cannot be controlled by law. They are beyond law. Same-sex partnerships and rainbow families will not cease to exist just because the law does not regulate or protect them.

However, legal recognition of rights and obligations would address and solve many daily situations which same-sex couples and rainbow families – just like all other couples and families – encounter. Legislation and positive measures can also increase visibility, reduce stigma and counter harmful stereotypes. On that point, the Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muiznieks stated: “The family unit, in whatever form it takes, should enjoy adequate and equal legal protection.”

The European Court of Human Rights in its judgments has extended the principle of non-discrimination in matters relating to rights and obligations of same-sex couples and parent-child relationships in rainbow families, and held that the notion of “family life” includes the relationship between two same-sex partners and the child of one of them living together in the same household, whatever the circumstances of the child’s birth.

The Court’s judgments are reflected in the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2010)5 to member states on combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, the first international instrument to specifically address human rights of LGBT people. It identifies specific measures to be adopted and effectively endorsed by member states to combat discrimination, ensure respect for LGBT persons, promote tolerance towards them and ensure that victims have access to legal measures. The Recommendation, based on European and international human rights law, also provides guidance on specific human rights concerns, such as the right to respect for private and family life. The adoption of this Recommendation by the 47 member states encouraged change. It helped countries identify laws and policies to be revised to improve the lives of LGBT citizens.



Eleni Tsetsekou

Indeed, many European countries already ensure protection for same-sex couples, LGBT parents and children born in rainbow families. At present, nearly half of the Council of Europe member states recognise same-sex partnerships either through marriage or registered partnerships.

- In **11** European countries, same-sex couples have access to **joint adoption.**
- In **14** European countries, same-sex couples have access to **second parent adoption.**
- In **23** European countries, single women have access to **medically assisted insemination** without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

As Europe’s leading human rights Organisation, the Council of Europe will continue to support member states to address the discrimination and challenges faced by LGBT people in Europe. Our Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (SOGI Unit) works in close co-operation and co-ordination with our member states, and regional and international partners to ensure that we implement the standards set by the Recommendation and our monitoring bodies (European Court for Human Rights, Commissioner for Human Rights, European Committee against Racism and Intolerance). Last but not least, the SOGI Unit builds upon the tremendous work achieved by civil society organisations, ensures that their voices are heard and ensures synergies at national level with all actors dedicated to make the dream reality.

**Eleni Tsetsekou** (Head of Unit)  
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues  
Directorate of Human Dignity and Equality  
Council of Europe

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## 2014 – the International Year for all families

2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the UN-designated International Year of the Family. It provides the opportunity for a joint international reflection on the main issues that impact the lives of families across the globe. Three main topics are receiving particular attention: family poverty, extended families and work/family life balance.

This anniversary is undeniably imbued with the common understanding that families have changed since the first celebration 20 years ago. On the occasion of the International Day of Families on 15 May, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon noted that “Support for families is crucial to realizing their full potential. That means factoring their needs into development policies, considering their circumstances in addressing conflicts, and advocating for the equal treatment of all families, regardless of their structure.”

Starting a family is possibly one of the biggest projects anyone could undertake. New parents fret over their children’s safety, well-being and happiness and are seeking out what is best for them, regardless of whether there is only one parent, two mothers or two fathers. And if there are also legal and societal obstacles to forming a family, the path becomes even harder. However, more and more LGBTQ individuals choose to go ahead regardless, and thus contribute to fighting these barriers and prejudices while raising happy and healthy children and families.

The surge of media coverage and the many shared personal stories of rainbow families in recent years greatly contribute to changing mentalities and allaying unfounded fears. I’m hoping for more such positive examples also in those countries where family equality is not the norm.

The International Family Equality Day is a great initiative to give visibility and offer mutual support to LGBTQ families. I congratulate the organisers for putting in so much time and energy to coordinate events across countries and continents, and wish you many more such events in even more countries in future, with ever more happy families and couples attending!

**Agnes Uherezky** (Director)

COFACE – the Confederation of Family Organisations in the EU



“Support for families is crucial to realizing their full potential. That means factoring their needs into development policies, considering their circumstances in addressing conflicts, and advocating for the equal treatment of all families, regardless of their structure.”

**General Ban Ki-moon**, UN Secretary

## There is nothing like a point of no return

“On 19 February 2013 the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment in the landmark case of *X et al vs Austria* (19010/07). The Court has held that same-gender couples must be granted the same adoption rights as unmarried opposite-gender couples. The Court followed almost any of the arguments we have made and it stressed equal rights of rainbow families with strong clarifications:

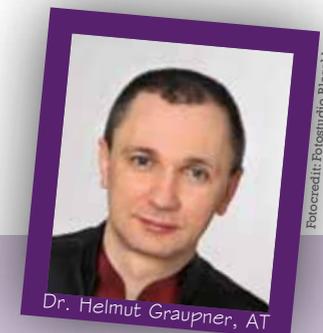
- a. Same-gender couples (with and without children) enjoy “family life” under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights.
- b. The Court rejected the comparison between a same-sex couple and two blood relatives who are not a couple. Austria compared the proposed adoption with the adoption of a boy by his aunt. The Court observed that “the relationship between two sisters living together (or an aunt and her nephew) is qualitatively of a different nature to the relationship of a couple, including a same-sex couple”.
- c. All three (mother, step-mother and the child) were directly affected by the difference in treatment and could claim to be victims of discrimination. All three (mother, step-mother and the child) were affected as a family and therefore the Court found it appropriate to make a joint award in respect of non-pecuniary damage.
- d. Differences in treatment on the basis of sexual orientation have to be necessary - out of particularly serious, convincing and weighty reasons – for the achievement of a legitimate aim.
- e. The protection of the family in the traditional sense has to be balanced against the Convention rights of sexual minorities, with the margin of appreciation for states being narrow.
- f. The burden of proof for the necessity of a distinction based on sexual orientation is on the government.
- g. There is not just one way or one choice when it comes to leading one’s family or private life.
- h. There is no evidence before the Court that it would be detrimental to the child to be brought up by a same-sex couple or to have two legal mothers and two legal fathers.

Also the dissenting minority confirmed that the three applicants (two women and the child) enjoy the protection of family life and that the child received a proper upbringing from his mother and her partner.

Children in rainbow-families deserve the same legal and social protection as children in traditional families. I am glad that I had the honor of representing the applicants in this historic case. A case which also highlights the benefits of international cooperation of LGBT- and other human rights NGO’s. The Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l’Homme (FIDH), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), the Network of European LGBT Families Associations (NELFA), and the European Commission on Sexual Orientation Law (ECSOL) in a joint third party intervention supported the applicants, and so did Amnesty International with a separate intervention. The Attorney General of Northern Ireland, the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) and the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), which intervened in support of the Austrian government, were not successful. We however have to be watchful as our rights so hard fought for may be taken away from us again, as we so painfully must witness these days in Europe’s biggest country, in Russia. There is nothing in history like a point of no return. Thus our organizations will continue to closely work together as promoters in the advancement of our fundamental rights and as watchdogs of the successes we have achieved.”



**Dr. Helmut Graupner** (Co-Coordinator)  
European Commission on  
Sexual Orientation Law (ECSOL)



## 1. International Family Equality Day (IFED)

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

## 2. Chronicle of the International Family Equality Day

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

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

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

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

May 6th, 2012: 15 cities in 9 countries

May 5th, 2013: 44 cities in 17 countries

May 4th, 2014: 48 cities in 22 countries

May 3rd, 2015: "Family Diversity – an Engine of Social Change"

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



Australia

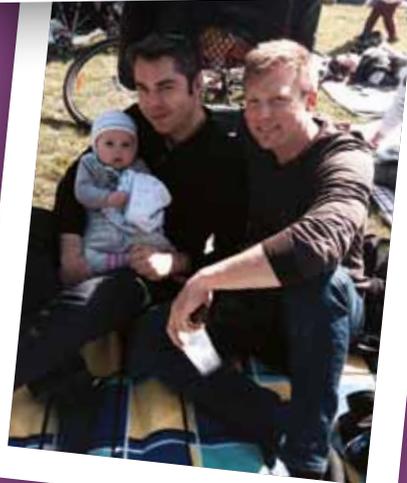
On a sunny Sunday afternoon a large group of families met at the Quarnies Park in Clifton Hill, Melbourne, Australia to celebrate International Family Equality Day. With about 60 people in attendance from babies to teenagers and their parents and carers, people enjoyed catching up with old friends as well as meeting new. Committee members of the Rainbow Families Council gave a short speech which recognised that IFED is celebrated across the globe, and also acknowledged the International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) which occurs on 16 May. After shared picnics and lots of conversation, we broke for the traditional kids versus parents soccer match. The kids were triumphant! We look forward to another event and re-match next year.



Austria

On the 4th of May, Austrian LGBT families & friends gathered together at the beautiful Augartenpark in the middle of Vienna to celebrate the IFED, this special day of diversity with a picnic.

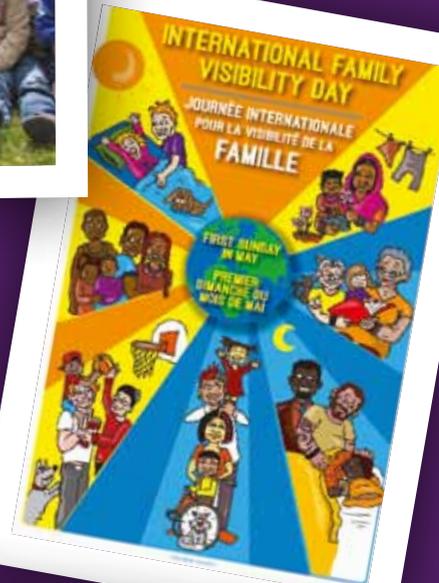
It was a wonderful day with lots of joy and laughter. One of the highlight was the family olympics games. It was a pleasure to see that the Austrian rainbow-families-community is growing. We're looking forward to IFED 2015!



Canada

This year, approximately 150 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and allied parents and their children joined us for our third annual International Family Visibility Day Picnic hosted at Christie Pits Park in Toronto. This spring was quite chilly, but we bundled up and came out to celebrate the day with bubbles, stories, and games.

We launched an updated version of our International Family Visibility Day poster, featuring both the French and English text on the same image, and our updated logo. View, download, and order the poster online: [lgbtqpn.ca/IFVD](http://lgbtqpn.ca/IFVD)



Croatia

Around 30 people - adults and children - gathered for the first ever IFED celebration in Zagreb on the weekend 3rd/4th May. People came mostly from Croatia, but we also had visitors from neighboring Slovenia. The local organization Dugine obitelji (Rainbow families) organized two events. We first discussed family planning based on experiences of two couples with children on Saturday, followed by a brunch on Sunday. Some people also took part in a photo shoot for the local campaign "Vrijeme je ..." (It's time) where local LGBT organisations are calling on the government to speed up the adoption of the already announced registered-partnership law for same-sex couples.



Belgium - Croatia



Netherlands - UK

European IFED during 3rd NELFA Conference in Germany hosted by LSVD (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Politics and Society Forum

A unique European IFED was celebrated in Cologne as part of the third NELFA European Rainbow Family Conference, May 1-4, 2014. 280 participants from 18 countries enjoyed a Night at the Odysseum – An Adventure Museum for Families. Klaus Jetz, director of the LSVD (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany) and Dr. Hildegard Kaluza from

the German Ministry of Family of the state of Nordrhein-Westfalia, welcomed our families. Klaus Jetz spoke of the situation of Russian rainbow families and Luis de Amorim, NELFA Board Member, reported on the history of IFED. Musical accompaniment by Suli Puscban and her band brought old and young to their feet singing along joyfully before embarking on a tour of the interactive museum. After a delicious grill buffet, a disco rounded out the evening.

For more information about NELFA's 3rd European Rainbow Family Conference in Cologne "Different Families, Same Schools" check out: [www.nelfa.lsvd.de/conference-2014](http://www.nelfa.lsvd.de/conference-2014) and the LSVD blog [www.lsvd-blog.de/?p=7770](http://www.lsvd-blog.de/?p=7770).



Germany - Denmark



Finland - Spain



Germany

GALE (The Global Alliance for LGBT education) presented two valuable tools for LGBT parents at the NELFA conference. One tool can be used to better select an LGBT friendly primary school for their children. The other tool to advocate for more inclusive policies in the school they have already selected.

Brochure for parents

<http://www.lgbt-education.info/doc/Europe/netherlands/GALE-2014-Rainbow-families-and-school-choice.pdf>

Brochure for primary schools

<http://www.lgbt-education.info/doc/Europe/netherlands/GALE-2014-Visible-but-not-in-the-spotlight.pdf>



Peter Dankmeijer, NL

"A recent small scale research in the Netherlands indicated that maybe half of the LGBT parents is probably not willing to encourage the school of their child to be more inclusive on LGBT issues. They may be scared "to rock the boat". But at the IFED, I did not notice this at all. This encouraged us to launch a national campaign to stimulate LGBT parents to ask some friendly but critical questions to their school. Thanks IFED!"

Peter Dankmeijer, creator of GALE



France

APGL – association des parents et futurs parents gays et lesbiens – the most important French LGBT families NGO, has decided to celebrate the IFED during its annual gathering in May 2014.

With more than 150 participants, comprising 110 adults and 40

children from 0 to 14 years, APGL has held its annual meeting from April 30th to May 4th 2014, in the center of France – the Auvergne region, with May 2 dedicated to the IFED. Almost one year after FRANCE succeeded in making effective the same sex marriage and adoption bill – May 2013, members of APGL shared a day to commemorate what is highly considered as a VICTORY over homophobia, and yet a painful remembering of the violence and hatred expressed by opponents and anti LGBT organizations.



Italy

Rete Genitori Rainbow (Rainbow Parents Network of LGBT people who have parents in a heterosexual relationship) has launched multiple events in Italy: Turin, Rome, Florence and Bergamo have been chosen to host conferences about Rainbow Families subjects as well as social meetings and a "free hugs" flash mob. The focus has been on plurality of families and their relationships which are the real strength which tightens families and relationships through them. The concept of "Plural families" is the one closest to the concept of "Network", where different people are bond together and know that they can rely on each other, collectively building real emotional galaxies which constitute the base of contemporary society.



Greece

On Sunday, May 4th we gathered again for a second time at the Park of Plato's Academy in Athens to celebrate the International Family Equality Day 2014. The weather was sunny, despite the forecasts, and it looked like the sun came to join us in this celebration. We prepared the site for the meeting, opened a big blanket that we had made a day before from fabrics we bought, had the balloons ready and set the tents for our young ones.



### 3. Network of International Family Equality Day

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

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

#### LGBT Family Coalition

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

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

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



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

#### Family Equality Council



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

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

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

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

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

## **LGBTQ Parenting Network**

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



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

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

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

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

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

## **NELFA**

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



With 23 associations representing 15 European countries and thousands of LGBT families, NELFA promotes the exchange of information among its members and assists in creating and developing LGBT families associations in Europe. NELFA works to ensure that children raised in LGBT families in Europe are granted the same rights as children from other families. NELFA encourages European governments to adopt legal systems and equal opportunity policies that do not discriminate against LGBT families, whether it be legally, financially, educationally or socially. NELFA also works to ensure the freedom of movement of LGBT families within the European Union without their family life being compromised by entering or settling in another Member State.

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

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



#### 4. Committee of the International Family Equality Day

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

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

#### Goals & Future Projects

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

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



Maria von Känel, CH

"With visibility we will be able to break down prejudices." Maria von Känel - wife of Martina, mother of 2 children and General Manager of the Swiss Rainbow Families Association and president of NELFA.



Catalina Pallas, ES

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



Juha Jämsä, FI

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



Brent Wright, US

Director of Programs, Family Equality Council



Ono-Haru, JP

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

# Hello We are the IFFED Committee



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Rachel Epstein, CA

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



Mona Greenbaum, CA

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

"IFED is about celebrating family diversity. This year it struck me that, despite all the differences in culture or language or family structure, we all have a common goal: equality and the best for our families!"  
Dr. Lisa Green - NELFA Vice-President and LSVD member.



Lisa Herrmann-Green, D

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

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



Andy Inkster, CA

Mother, grandmother and a Family Therapist specializing in gay, blended and alternative families and currently leading the "Keshetfamilies" (Israeli Rainbow families Organization).



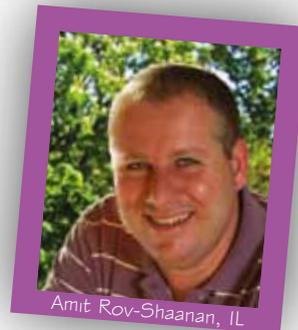
Josephine Skriver, DK

"To me, the word "family" means unconditional love. Your family members are the people who will always be there to walk you through your best times, as well as your worst times. In the end, family is not about gender differences - it is about authentic ways to care for one another!"



Angelo Berbotto, UK

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



Amit Rov-Shaanan, IL

"I feel so inspired and empowered organizing and participating IFED picnics in Israel, because every year I see more and more new families. I believe that it is also important for the kids." Amit Rov-Shaanan, in charge of the social activity of The Association of Israeli Gay Fathers. Has 2.5 years old twins with his husband.



Vicky Schul, IL



Vilma Gabrieliute, LT

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



Claire Wood, UK

# Get Involved

Hold a local event as part of the International Family Equality Day! Community organizations who wish to participate please contact the IFED Network by email.

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



Nadine Riedrich, CH



Maria von Känel, CH

Maria von Känel (coordination) and Nadine Riedrich (graphic design) invite all families across the globe to enjoy this wonderful day and feel the empowerment of this global event. See you in 2015!

[nadine@dfine.ch](mailto:nadine@dfine.ch)





Italy

Famiglie arcobaleno, the Italian association of homosexual parents, made IFED coincide with the 6th edition of its main annual event, the Festa delle Famiglie, a nationwide celebration of families of all kinds, a moment of assemblage of people that believe in and recognise themselves in an inclusive and sharing society.

This year the event had a special meaning. Differently from the previous years, it took place only in one city, in Florence on Sunday the 4th of May 2014. The National Festa delle Famiglie gathered around 1000 people. It was an extraordinary meeting point between citizens and associations brought together to make an important statement for equality and inclusion in society. The IFED event in Florence was a day-long jamboree of games, tales, and music with aim of celebrating all families and providing fun for their children.



Japan

We had our 3rd annual Japan IFED picnic at Tokyo Yoyogi Park on April 29. There were 46 people, including 10 LGBT families from all over Japan, future parents, and 5 volunteer university students who helped with the event and to take care of the kids. We laid our tarps down in the park amongst the flowers and many other visitors, and enjoyed our potluck lunch. We shared our stories, and gave

advice to people interested in starting a family. It was also a great opportunity for the children to interact and have fun with other diverse families like themselves. We want to send our special thanks to the university students from "ReBit(NPO)" who volunteered to help us with the picnic.

Tokyo Pride was held 2 days prior to this event. Our group had a booth set up as a resting area for families to mingle, relax and nurse their babies. It was the first time ever to have an official "LGBT family" themed booth at Japan Pride. Many people were intrigued with our booth and stopped by to ask questions. We were very pleased with the outcome, and helped raise more awareness about LGBT families in Japan. We are looking forward to seeing our community grow in the future.

For the third time since 2012, LGBT families from lots of cities throughout Israel gathered together at Ganey Yehoshua Park, Tel-Aviv. About 300 people came to the event which took place on 3 May 2014 to celebrate IFED. This event was organized by The Rainbow Families organization, Gay Fathers organization, 'Mamadyke' forum and volunteers from the LGBT community. It included some group games, to help people meet each other, children's activities like Gymboree, story telling and a family group photo.

We hope to see more families next year on Saturday, 2 MAY 2015!



Israel



Lithuania

The official opening took place on May 8th at the Swedish Embassy in Vilnius, followed by a press conference on the situation of LGBT families in Lithuania and the seminar "Rights on the move - rainbow families in Europe". The visual campaign "Families are diverse" followed on May 9th, the idea was to capture persons on the street, supporting the diversity of families.

On 10 May, LGBT families and their friends gathered for a picnic and outdoor games. Children books' characters were leading the colorful excursion across the Old town. There were balloons, team games, stories, and a violin concert. At some point, the rain started and participants gathered under the terrace of the Presidential palace to hide. There, Neringa Dangvyde read her book of tales "Amber heart", which had been removed from the market for depicting the love of two princesses earlier in 2014.



Spain

FLG, Lesbian & Gay Families Association in Catalonia has organized a great meeting at Vila-seca 2014 (Tarragona). LGBT families from all over the country gathered to celebrate how powerful we are when we join forces. About 250 families have enjoyed time together, activities, talks and family games to reinforce bonds and to keep developing the Spanish communication net among associations. We have also celebrated with joy the International Family Equality Day in a communion with our European partners.



Switzerland

We celebrated the 3rd IFED at the Parco di Villa dei Cedri in Bellinzona under a clear blue sky. Parents painted and danced, chatted, laughed and ate - everybody had a great time! Together with the local LGBT Association from Ticino Imbarco Immediato we spent a wonderful day. We can't wait for next year, when we'll be celebrating IFED in Bern. We look forward to many families and an unforgettable IFED 2015.



UK

Roundhay Park in Leeds was a beautiful setting for the UK event. With games on the grass, fun in the playground and lots of chatting amongst all the lovely LGBT families it was a great day by all. Lots of fun and growing every year. Looking forward to next year!



USA

Dover, New Hampshire – Indoor Family Fun & Games Day  
Area families joined us for full day at Twice the Fun, the ultimate play zone for kids ages 12 years and under. This fabulous indoor play space is our longest-running IFED celebration partner and much-beloved by our families.



USA

Orlando, Florida – Orlando Gay Parents Celebrate International Family Day  
Orlando Gay Parents group joined Family Equality Council's new Southern Regional Manager, Tatiana Quiroga, and her family for a day of fun in the sun on the beach! We stuck out a fabulous spot for our group to set up together, celebrated our families, and enjoyed the beautiful Florida weather. What a spectacular day at the beach!

## Agenda – LGBT Family Events Worldwide

Date: Sunday May 3rd 2015

### Worldwide, International Family Equality Day

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland and USA are already planning their IFED 2015 Events.

Make sure to join us next year by organizing your own event!



Date: October 2015

### Italy, 4th European meeting of LGBT families

We look forward to welcoming you at the 4th European meeting of LGBT families in Italy in 2015. Hosted by Famiglie Arcobaleno.

[www.famigliearcobaleno.org](http://www.famigliearcobaleno.org), [www.festadellefamiglie.it](http://www.festadellefamiglie.it) and [www.nelfa.org](http://www.nelfa.org)

## Cooperating Partners

### ILGA-Europe

ILGA-Europe, the European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, works for equality and human rights for LGBTI people at the European level. It is an international umbrella organisation bringing together 407 organisations from 45 of the 49 countries in Europe.

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



### European Parliament Intergroup on LGBT Rights

The LGBT Intergroup gathers 140 elected Members of the European Parliament from 22 European countries and 6 political groups. They are committed to upholding the fundamental rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender 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 70 member organizations and over 120 individual members in 35 countries.

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



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

by Martine Gross

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

More recent studies on children raised since birth by lesbian mothers who were either single or living with a partner found no difference between these children and those of heterosexual parents in terms of gender development, relations with peers and psychological well-being (see, e.g., Bos, 2004; MacCallum & Golombok, 2004; Maria Gonzales, 2003). An extensive longitudinal study conducted in particular by Henny Bos and Nanette Gartrell from 1995 to 2012 in the United States on children raised from the time of birth to legal age by lesbian mothers confirms these results and explores other topics, such as the effect of stigmatization and remedial strategies (Bos & Gartrell, 2010). This longitudinal study indicates that girls are more likely to have a bisexual experience (Gartrell, Bos & Goldberg, 2010). This result is good news: it means that bisexuality and lesbian sexuality are increasingly considered acceptable.



A study conducted on adolescents reared in lesbian-mother families compared their psychological well-being with that of matched comparison group of adolescents with heterosexual parents. This study found no differences. (Vangelder et al, 2012). An Australian study whose aim is to describe the physical, mental and social well-being of children with same-sex attracted parents, and the impact that stigma has on them, was conducted among 390 parents who self-identified as same-sex attracted. The conclusion are that these children score higher than population samples on a number parent-reported measures of child health and well-being. Perceived stigma is negatively associated with mental health (Crouch et al., 2014).

Setting aside sexual orientation, a recent meta-analysis by Biblarz and Stacey (2010) demonstrates that the parents' gender has no "measurable effect" on the psychological adjustment of children and their social success.

Significantly fewer studies have been performed on children of gay fathers, who are outnumbered by lesbian mothers. However, a few studies suggest that children of gay fathers do as well as others. Recent research demonstrates that young children adopted by gay fathers are no different, in terms of psychological adjustment from 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, with the painful experience of their parents' separation, or adopted children who suffer from abandonment-related trauma. There are 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 compared to heterosexual parent families. Child externalizing problems were greater among children in heterosexual families. Parenting stress rather than family type were found to be predictive of child externalizing problems (Golombok et al., 2014).

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

A large number of studies have sought to demonstrate the innocuousness of homosexual parenting in the face of homophobic prejudice and heteronormative biases. In so doing, research has neglected for too long many issues that can only be studied among these families, like a sort of social laboratory (Stacey & Biblarz, 2001). Many questions merit the attention of researchers but have not been the subject of a great number of studies: the impact of invisibility on spousal and parental relations, the effects of homophobia and related child-protection strategies, the sharing of household and parental tasks, family functioning and dynamics, intergenerational relations, how to deal with donor anonymity, the passing on of values and religious identity. Today, the research is leaning somewhat less towards the future of children brought up by same-sex parents and more towards the functioning of families. In particular, the distribution of household and parental tasks – as gender no longer in and of itself assigns household and parental tasks to women and bread-winning to men – has been the subject of an increasing number of publications over recent years. Regarding insemination with known and unknown donor, some studies examine how the children who were raised by lesbian parents construct their relationships with known donors (Golberd & Allen, 2013) and their discourse about fathers and ‘daddies’ (Malmquist et al., 2014).

With regard to the effects of homophobia and related child-protection strategies, one of my recent studies (Gross, 2011) on lesbian mothers indicates that the most effective strategies seem to be openness with early childcare personnel and teachers; parental involvement in school life, in particular the involvement of the social mother; and finally, welcoming the child’s friends into the child’s home. The visibility of same-sex parents, at least in early school years, is very effective in eliminating homophobic comments.

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



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## LITHUANIA – Special Country Feature

**NGO “House of Diversity and Education” is an organization established in Lithuania to promote diversity, human rights and to provide information and educational activities. We have launched the project Diverse families in September 2012, aiming at uniting families of various forms, including single parent families, same-sex families, multi-ethnic families or couples, families with grandparents or siblings running the household, etc. The project has attracted significantly more attention to LGBT families and for the first time in Lithuania, the society learnt that same-sex families exist in Lithuania, and the debate on their rights and daily situations has been promoted in the media opening the floor for further discussions.**

In 2014 the International Family Equality Day was celebrated for the second time in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. On 8 May, the official opening took place at the Swedish Embassy in Vilnius, followed by a press release on the situation of LGBT families in Lithuania. “I am very pleased to see such a great support for diverse families. I am also very proud of LGBT families in Lithuania, who are gradually opening the door to their homes and are stepping out of the shade into the light”, said Vilma Gabrieliutė, the head of the House of Diversity and Education, who has been raising a child with her partner for four years now. On that same day Artumė, author of “the lesbian blog”, and her partner celebrated three month anniversary of the birth of their baby, who was conceived through donor insemination.

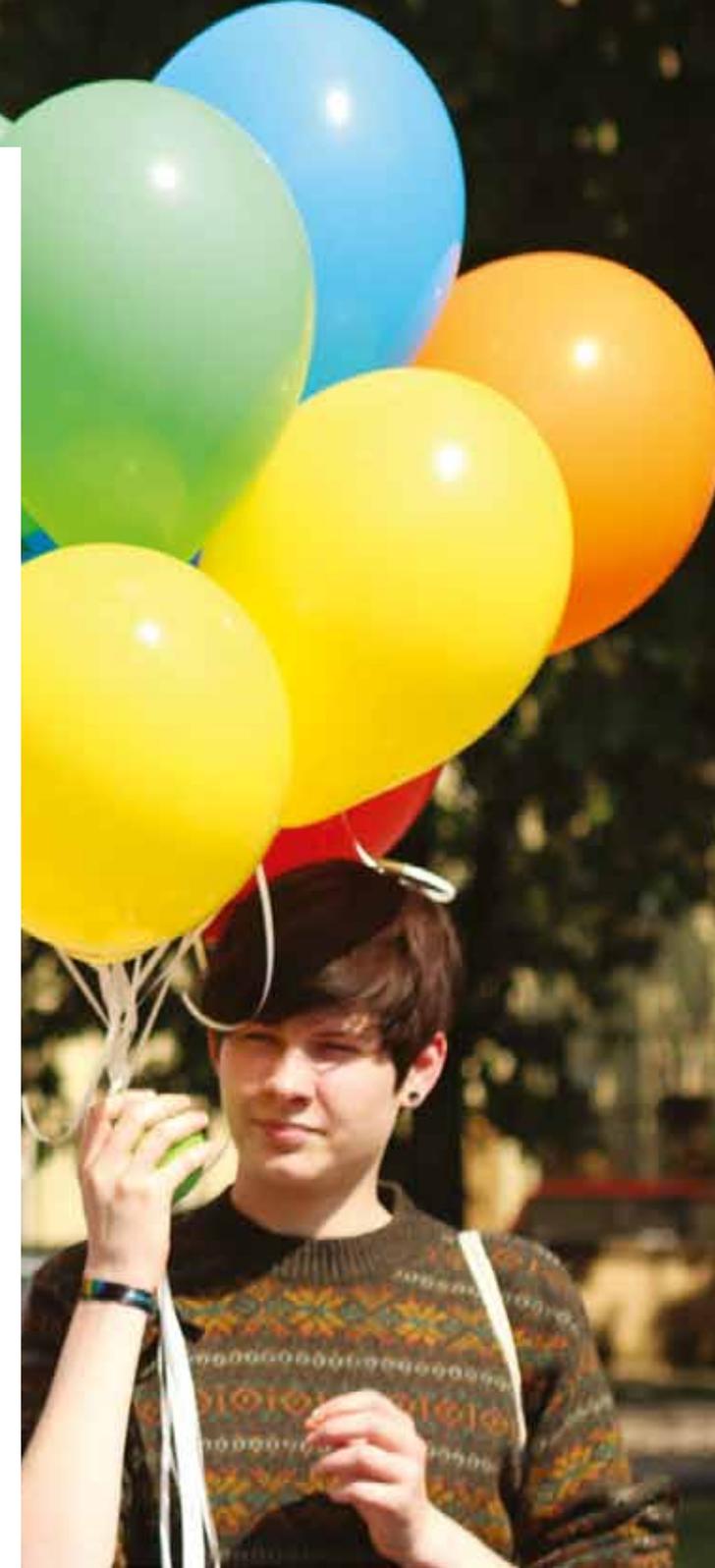
After press conference, advocates, legal experts and leaders of human rights organizations participated in a 3 hour long seminar “Rights on the move – rainbow families in Europe.” The seminar was led by Laima Vaige, representative of a rainbow family, as well as a lecturer at Mykolas Romeris University and a co-founder of the House and Diversity Education. The seminar served as a very useful platform for an exchange of up-to-date information and the material.

On 9 May, a visual campaign “Families are diverse” took place in the center of Vilnius. The idea was to capture persons on the street,

supporting the diversity of families. The visual campaign was short but fruitful – people on the streets gladly posed with the sign “Families are diverse” expressing their support.

On 10 May, LGBT families and their friends gathered for a picnic and outdoor games. Children books’ characters were leading the colorful excursion across the Old town. There were balloons, team games, stories, and a violin concert. At some point, the rain started and participants gathered under the terrace of the Presidential palace to hide. There, Neringa Dangvyde read her book of tales “Amber heart”, which had been removed from the market for depicting the love of two princesses earlier in 2014.

[www.ivairiseima.lt](http://www.ivairiseima.lt)



## GREECE – Special Country Feature

**On Sunday May 4th we gathered again for a second time at the Park of Plato's Academy in Athens to celebrate the International Family Equality Day 2014. The weather was sunny, despite the forecasts, and it looked like the sun came to join us in this celebration. We prepared the site for the meeting, opened a big blanket that we had made a day before from fabrics we bought, had the balloons ready and set the tents for our young ones.**

Parents and children started coming and the children started playing and running up and down the park, while the parents and some kids stitched on the blanket smaller pieces of fabric with their names on them. Every family put its own color on this blanket that was gradually starting to transform in a "Huge Rainbow Family" blanket.

After a while, the kids were ready for organized activities, so it was time for the hunt of the hidden treasure in the Rainbow Pirate Island.

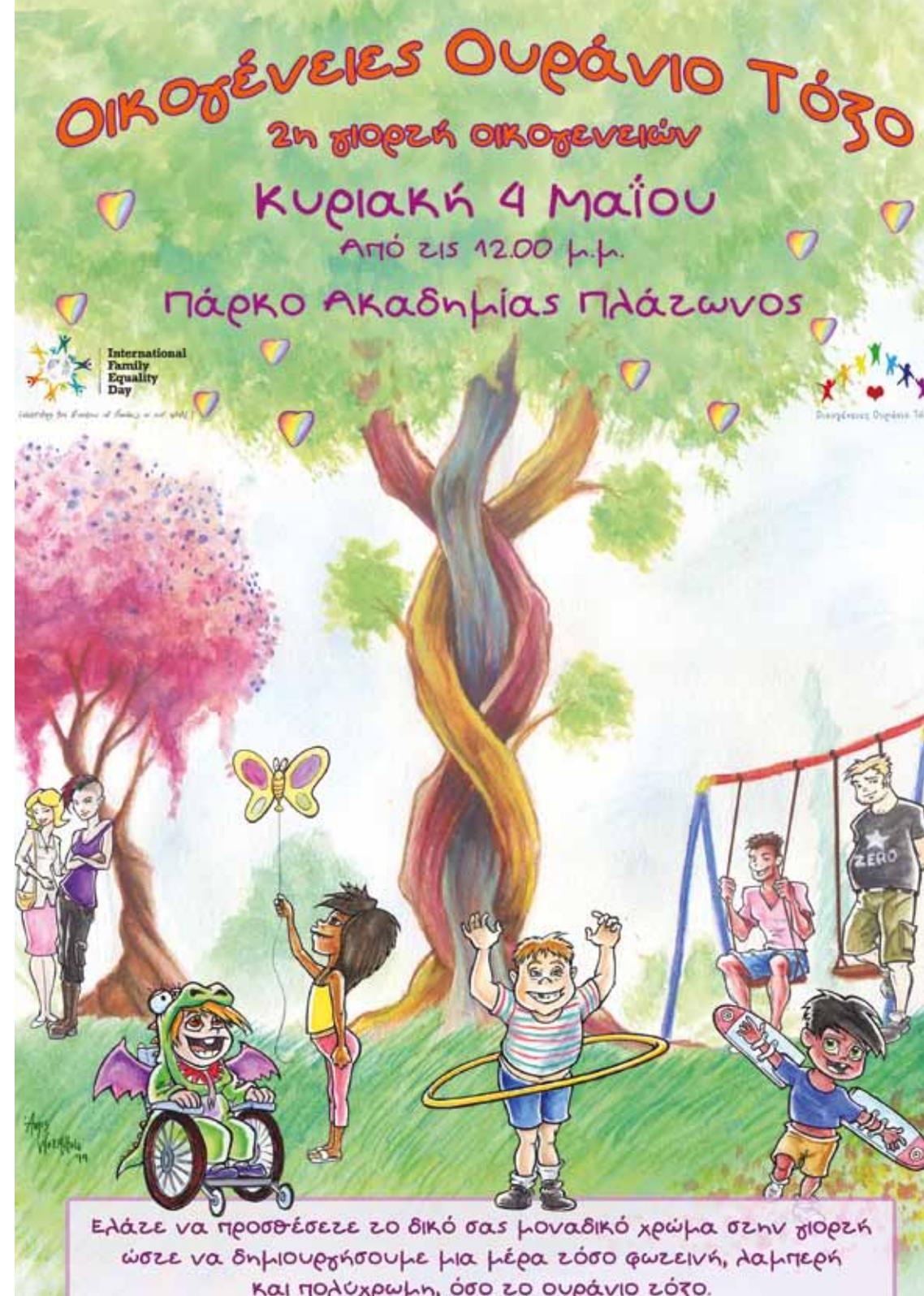
At the same time, the older ones started singing and improvising with familiar children's songs, only they changed the lyrics in order to cover every kind of family.

While the children were playing organized games with volunteer teachers and kindergarten teachers, the parents and their friends, with the members of LGBT Families Greece came closer and started debating and talking about many things. Football was much more interesting for some of us too.

The day went by very well and casually in a joyful celebration. But you cannot have a celebration without dessert and dancing. It does not sound colorful enough, so we had our "rainbow" cake ready and some music for the dancers of our company.

The night was starting to fall and we could hardly see each other, so it was time for us to pack up everything and go home. We've made a promise though, to meet again in 2015 with the hope to have a bigger celebration than this year and have an equally great or even better time together.

[www.ouraniotoksofamilies.blogspot.ch](http://www.ouraniotoksofamilies.blogspot.ch)





### Special Thanks

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

Thank you especially to all those families, who exemplify rainbow families as part of the existing diversity through being visible.

