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I am here today to give voice to LGBTIQ parents and most importantly their children. The Network of European LGBTIQ Families Associations has been asking for many years for the Commission and the Parliament to address cross-border issues Rainbow Families face in the EU. We are very pleased to be working together with the PETI Committee to present petitions from Rainbow Families whose fundamental right to Free Movement is not respected. We sincerely hope that the conclusions of the study presented today are employed by Commissioner Dali and her office to prepare legislation that will lift the obstacles rainbow Families have to face today when moving across the EU.

Mrs Von Der Leyen said in September 2020: "If you are a parent in one country, then you are a parent in every country". As a mother, allow me to rephrase that statement to "If you have two parents in one country, then of course you have two parents in every country". I do not know if The Commission and the Member States fully realize how much their decisions, or lack of them, harm children's lives. Right now we have children born in the EU, their parents being EU Citizens but they are becoming stateless. There have been cases of stateless children across several countries most notably the recent case brought before the Court of Justice of the EU regarding Baby Sara. Baby Sara was born in Spain to Bulgarian and British parents but she is to this day without a nationality and papers because Bulgaria is not recognising the Spanish Birth Certificate with two same-sex parents.

Children are deprived of the most basic of rights: their right to a name, nationality and to be taken care of by their parents. Children from Rainbow Families are becoming second class citizens in the EU. If today my daughter's birth certificate is not valid in more than half of the EU, how can she become a full fledged European Citizen when she becomes an adult? Are children of LGBTIQ parents going to be stigmatised forever just because they were raised by two mums, or two dads or a trans parent? The Convention on the Rights of Children, which all EU Member States have ratified, says in article 3 that in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. But in the EU there are stateless children and children who lose one or both their parents every time their family crosses a border.

Rainbow Families with or without children, cannot reside freely wherever they choose in the EU, because the non-recognition of marriages, civil unions and birth certificates, place an obstacle to their Free Movement Right. Recently NELFA was approached for help by a family of two dads and their child. The family moved from Germany to Denmark. What should have been a smooth, albeit a little stressful move, proved to be impossible: the parents were told that under Danish law a birth certificate with two dads is not recognised and they were asked to choose who will be registered as the parent. Of course after that treatment from the Danish authorities the family is looking to go back to Germany. In Brussels, the heart of Europe, Greek women who live and work in Belgium, are being told that they cannot be recognised as the lawful parent of their wives' child, because in Greece there are no laws that recognise parental rights to same-sex couples.

It is not only the countries who have no family rights for LGBTIQ people that deny Rainbow Families their right to Free Movement. It is also countries like Sweden, France, The

Netherlands or Germany that scrutinize our families. In Sweden, a Swedish woman was told she had to adopt her own child even though she was already registered as a mother on the Spanish birth certificate of the child. The reason the birth certificate was not recognised was a difference in donor anonymity laws between Sweden and Spain. The family submitted a petition to the Committee. Another petition is the one submitted by French women who are legally recognised as mothers in Spain where they live and work. French women are asked to adopt their own children if they want to have parental rights in France. Rainbow Families have to jump through hoops even before they tie the knot or have children. The complexity of these cases is such that many times LGBTIQ couples and parents to be, have to consult with family law, immigration, EU Law specialists and national administrations to make sure they will be recognised. And even with all these obstacles people fall in love every day and children are being born into loving and caring families.

NELFA urges MEPs to read the study by Dr. Wintemute and Dr Tryfonidou and to inform their national leadership of the problems Rainbow Families face when exercising the Right to Free Movement. And we also ask Member States to respect EU Law, treat all European Citizens equally no matter their sexual orientation. Do not wait for a legislative initiative from the EU, do not wait for the CJEU's rulings. All you need to make the necessary changes is in this study.

Rainbow families exist all over Europe. We are in Poland, in Bulgaria, in Greece, in Spain, in Malta, in Belgium, in Finland. We and our children are being bullied, treated like second class citizens, we are even being terrorised. We are asking for the Commission and the Parliament to protect our Right to Free Movement and to protect our Children's rights. We are not a threat to society, we are equal EU citizens. We do not want more than the rest. We just want what everyone else has and enjoys: a family and Europe to call our home.