

First Nationwide Meeting of Gay and Lesbian Families in Spain

By Anna Boluda
Photos by Tati Quinones

The city of Tarragona, just one hour south of Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast, was the site of the first nationwide meeting of families with gay and lesbian parents in Spain this May. Over 350 people, about ninety families, spent four days together at a holiday resort where they could share several activities and workshops for their young kids, teenagers and the adults as well. There was also plenty of time for games, parties, dancing, a visit to the old Roman monuments in the city and a whole day in a nearby amusement park.

But the best of it, according to most children and grownups, was to have the chance for the first time to meet so many other families like theirs. The other important experience of this event, according to Elisabet Vendrell, the president of the Catalan Association of Gays and Lesbian Families, was the visibility. "If the rest of the society don't see us, it is as if we don't exist," she said. The meeting had a lot of coverage from local, regional and national media that has actually increased the visibility of these families in Spain.

Since 2005, gay couples can legally marry in Spain and since then they can also adopt nationally. Coadoption is also allowed for children born by donor insemination or for those adopted in another country (mostly Russia, Ukraine and

China) by one of the parents (who has to be single or otherwise the international adoption would be denied). There are still some legal setbacks, such as the possibility to register a newborn child with two mothers. Instead, only one mother, the biological one, is allowed to register the baby, and the other must still go through a coadoption process, even if they are married.

Nevertheless, most families are happy for all the legal achievements of recent years. But they stress that in some cases laws have been more progressive than society. Social acceptance, they said, varies a lot from place to place and families in small towns are having a more difficult time than those in liberal neighborhoods in Barcelona or Madrid – although, as everywhere else, it goes case by case. One of the main goals of the organizations of LGBT families in Spain is to get schools to include them when they talk about families. There is a lack of books and other educational



materials for children about family diversity and individual teachers choose to address the issue or not. But the Spanish Government has passed a law that makes it mandatory to address the different types of families in secondary school. It has been a polemic law though and some schools, especially Catholic ones, have said that they won't address the issue.

Gay and Lesbian Baby-Boom in Spain

Most of the families attending the meeting had babies or children under ten, although there were a few teenagers as well. There is no doubt that Spain is having a huge gay and lesbian baby-boom. There are an increasing amount of twins being born as well

continued on next page

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Spain continued from page 7 which is one of the consequences of reproductive assistance methods. Among lesbian couples, most of the children are in fact biological, while men have adopted children from another country. There are not many children for adoption in Spain and the process can be very long even though it seems that there is no discrimination among heterosexual or homosexual couples on the waiting lists. One of the current focuses of the organizations of gay and lesbian families is to be part of the adoption committees to guarantee there is no discrimination.

Network of Organizations

The families will try to have a nationwide meeting like this one every year. In 2009 it will be somewhere near Madrid. Most of the families

attending the meeting were from Catalonia as the Catalan Association of families, based in Barcelona was the organizer. Other families came from Madrid, Valencia, Andalucia, the Basc Country and other regions of Spain. During the meeting, the representatives of all the regional organizations decided to create a new nationwide network so that they can work together on their demands. ▼

Anna Boluda is a journalist from Barcelona Spain. She also produced a documentary, "Queer Spawn," about American teenagers who have gay and lesbian parents.



Elisabeth Vendrell (far right) with her partner, Dolors and their daughter Marlen (far left) and son Josep.

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