

Personal statement Maryse Arendt

Europe

When WABA was born in 1991, I was breastfeeding my third child and was already a breastfeeding advocate in Luxemburg.

My engagement began in 1986 when a group of parents, meeting at the LLL mother support group, founded an NGO to work towards physiological birth, person-oriented care, and to support, promote and protect breastfeeding. We started by collecting national data on birth and breastfeeding and published a booklet with breastfeeding information. It still exists, regularly updated, available in three languages, and distributed for free to every mother in Luxemburg.

I first became involved internationally in 1986, phoning to members of the European Parliament, lobbying for Code implementation in the European Union (EU).

The 1990 Innocenti Declaration set the agenda for my NGO's national and international work. When in 1991 WABA announced the first World Breastfeeding Week, we started the first event in Luxemburg and continue doing so every year.

In 1992, I went with my 2,5 years old breastfeeding daughter to Geneva to be present at the World Health Assembly at the BFHI launch. This was a decisive moment for me. I made contact with Luxemburg's UNICEF Natcom and with IBFAN and this led to my two long term and still ongoing commitments.

Shortly afterwards, I was appointed National BFHI coordinator, a position in which I gained ample experience in guiding hospitals towards baby-friendliness, training staff, assessing practices, boosting motivation and monitoring drawbacks.

In order to have the necessary knowledge and credentials, I took the IBCLC exam in 1992. Our group had meanwhile grown from a volunteer-run association into a professional center, which offers information, counseling and courses to parents, and advocates for changes in policies and practices.

In 1996, National breastfeeding committee was formed due to our advocacy, and ever since I represent there UNICEF Natcom.

What can I offer to the WABA's Steering Committee? In a nutshell:

- More than 20-year experience as IBCLC.
- More than 20 years of national and international advocacy experience in key policy fora:
 - 🇪🇺 *EU Parliament and Commission*: advocacy on maternity protection, Code and environment-related policies coupled with experience gained in two EU- funded breastfeeding projects (Blueprint for action for Europe) coordinated by Adriano Cattaneo.
 - 🇪🇺 *Codex Alimentarius*: I have been representing ILCA and ENCA and my work helped secure Codex standards important for protection of the most vulnerable 'consumers', babies, against profit-driven interests.
 - 🇪🇺 *WHO governing bodies (Executive Board and World Health Assembly)*: I gained a considerable hands on experience as ILCA's liaison to WHO (2004-2011) and as a member of Consumers International and IBFAN delegations. I helped secure key WHA resolutions, including the resolution adopting the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding.

My language (English, French, German) and networking skills and my connections to professional and activist groups are additional qualifications that I bring to WABA.

In 2016, the start of this position's term, I will be near retirement and able to offer not only my skills and knowledge but also considerable amount of time.