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THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH SOCIETY – SELECTED ISSUES

Małgorzata Such-Pyrgiel*

ABSTRACT

The Polish society is currently in the process of changes. These transformations are caused above all by socio-demographic changes that affect the overall shape of Polish society. These changes concern, among others: declines in the number of newly concluded marriages, an increase in the number of divorces, the use of alternative forms of marital-family life (single), a decline in births and the phenomenon of depopulation. Demographers, economists and sociologists have noticed that demographic changes also result from the growing educational and professional aspirations of young people, especially women. (Introductory statement) Therefore, this article presents the socio-demographic changes affecting the basic social cell that is family in contemporary Polish society, and therefore the aim is to analyze the most important indicators of socio-demographic changes in Poland, including, among others: indicators of decline in births, average age of birth of the first child by women, the phenomenon of depopulation, being of professionally active by women. (Objective) The dynamics of socio-demographic changes of the Polish society has been studied in a wide range taking into account both Polish and European statistical data. (Scope) The results show that Polish society is an aging population, struggling with the problem of the lack of generational replacement, with the delayed procreative decisions, the increase in the popularity of alternative forms of marital-family life and low birth rates. (Findings) The reasons are also to be found in the deepening of globalization processes and in European integration, as well as in a big development of new technologies like the Internet, in the cultural amalgamation resulting from the collision of different civilizations, changing lifestyles, and finally in the economic crisis of the end of the first decade of the 21st Century. All of those causes contributed to the emergence of a new shape of the Polish state and Polish society. (Conclusion).

Key words: demographic changes, socio-economic changes, family, new lifestyles, single life, modern family changes, modern society, professional activation of women, depopulation

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Introduction

The end of the 18th Century marked the beginning of the process of the transition, also known as the Industrial Revolution, which constituted the foundation of civilisation and cultural changes in Western Europe. This phenomenon has covered the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with a lag oscillating within a single century. Speaking of Poland, the 1989 marked the beginning of transformation manifested in the disintegration of the socialist society and the onset of democracy based on capitalism, which is the foundation of a market economy with a strong position of private property. Economic changes manifested themselves in the development of private market economy, and political transformation of the political system meant the development of democratic principles of government, along with the expansion of civil liberties. Socio-cultural changes included the emergence of pluralism in values, beliefs, and freedom of choice. At the top of an individual's expectation was to achieve self-fulfilment and personal happiness. These changes gave rise to the quite different state and society than before 1989, and part of this process was to redefine social roles, positions of groups, individuals, and the relationships between them, as well as the formation of a new gender contract (Fuszara, 2002, s.17-22). As a result, alternative forms of family life gained popularity, such as cohabitant relationships, single parenthood, and single - people living alone, creating single-person households.

The diversity and popularity of alternative forms of family and marital status reflected social changes. Dynamic and continuous changes are an inseparable element of postmodern society. Sociological researches allow for the diagnosis and analysis of individual and social changes including cultural, demographic and economic factors.

1 The causes of socio-demographic changes in Polish society and the phenomenon of depopulation

Already in the 1990s, the author of the theory of the second demographic transition Van de Kaa predicted a number of processes affecting the shape of change of modern societies. The decline in birth rates was primarily contributing to this development. The author of the theory described the exact causes and effects of this phenomenon. The reasons were to be found in the political transformations, in the world-view changes, as well as in the development of individual autonomy and in the rejection of traditional values in favour of liberal values - individualism and post-materialism. However, the effects of this

phenomenon for Poland and for Europe include, among others: the change in the shape of the modern family, the aging of the population and the decline in the share of Europeans in the global population. Van de Kaa gives three groups of transformations occurring in modern societies.

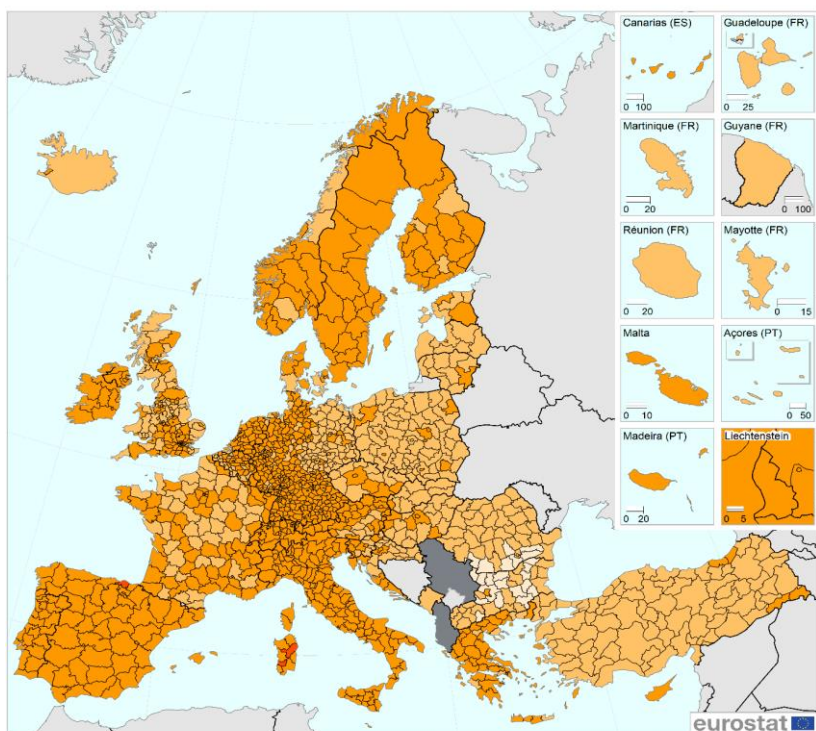
These were the processes related to the modernisation of societies. The first group consists of the structural changes, including industrialisation, urbanisation, development of the services sector, as well as changes in the structure of society and in the state organisation. The political and ideological transformations belong to the second group of changes. They led to the development of social democracy and egalitarianism, to the increased autonomy of individuals, to the secularisation, the contestation of traditional values and to the popularisation of pluralistic and liberal values. The last group is associated with technological changes such as: the development of medicine, the development of telecommunication systems, and in particular the spread of TV information." (Kotowska, 2013, p.41; compare Van de Kaa, 2004, pp.4-10).

In the literature on the subject, the different classification of the causes of changes in contemporary societies can also be found. There are the social, economic and civilisational reasons. They are related to the human aspiration to improve its material status. As it is written by G.F. Dumont (Dumont 2009, pp.10-11) this reduces the size of the family, which in the future would be translated into the decrease in procreation, disappearance of large families, 2+1 family model, decline in marriages, increased spatial mobility of individuals and the life of an individual in accordance with his or her sexual orientation. In social life, there is more anonymity, the disappearance of family ties, the disappearance of existing social norms and traditions.

The observed changes resulted in the shifts of the highest fertility rates of women from the age group of 20-24 to the group of 25-29 years, as well as a significant increase in fertility in the age group of 30-34. As a result, the median age of women giving birth to the first child increased: in 2013, it was 29.2 years, compared to 26.1 years in 2000. In 2018, in most regions in Poland, the average is 27-30 years. In Warsaw, however, the average is already above 33 years. During this period, the birth rate of the first child also increased from 23.7 to 27.2 years (in 1990 it was 23 years) (Central Statistical Office of Poland GUS, 2014, p.6). According to GUS (Statistics Poland) data, the fertility rate in Poland is only 1.3%. According to these data, Poland ranks on place 212 among 224 developed countries. The low birth rate has been constant for more than 20 years (Central Statistical Office of Poland GUS, 2017, s.289).

The situation in Europe is similar. According to EUROSTAT data, in the European Union the average age of women giving birth is 30.6 years. The earliest women give birth to children in the Bulgarian region of Sliven (25.1 years), and the latest, in the Greek region of Voreios Tomeas Athino (33.8). Interestingly, the Polish women still remain one of the youngest mothers in Europe. Only women of Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Slovakia have become mothers earlier than in Poland (Eurostat, 2017). The detailed data is presented in the map below prepared by EUROSTAT.

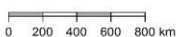
Mean age of women at childbirth by NUTS 3 region, 2016
EU = 30.6 years



Administrative Boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat
Cartography: Eurostat — IMAGE, 16-03-18

Legend:

- Less than 27 years
- From 27 years to 30 years
- From 30 years to 33 years
- 33 years or over
- Data not available



Source: Eurostat 2017; see: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20180323-1?inheritRedirect=true>

The reasons for delaying procreative decisions in Polish society are: the difficult material conditions, lack of job opportunities and job insecurity (85%), the inability to get pregnant (85%), poor housing (74%), the lack of a suitable partner (69%), the risk of genetic illness of the child (69%), the uncertainty of the future (67%), the difficulties in balancing the work and parenthood (63%), the high costs of raising a child (62%), the lack of places or too high fees in nurseries and kindergartens (61%), too low allowance on maternity or parental leave (60%)” (Kotowska, 2014, p.61).

The phenomenon of a continuous decline in the number of births in the national or world population may lead to the phenomenon of depopulation. Over the decades, the decrease of population was due to the sudden historical events such as epidemics, wars, and catastrophes. The most significant causes of depopulation in the past were World War II, which killed over 60 million people, the collectivization of agriculture in Ukraine where about 6-7 million people died because of hunger. In Africa, 10 million people died because of slavery. By contrast, in the VI century AD the plague disease killed 40% of the population living in Europe.

Today, the depopulation is caused by a negative natural increase and by the phenomenon of emigration. In the European Union, most countries face the problem of negative population growth. The decline in the population means, among other things, the aging of the population, a smaller number of people in productive age and a large share of post-working and elderly people in the population.

It is worth noting that the population decline may have serious consequences for the economy of a given country. These processes lead to a decrease in the population density of a given area, which will increase the unit operating costs of a particular country, in particular maintaining and developing all infrastructures and reducing the rates of its use. In the long term, the phenomenon of depopulation may also lead to the increase in the number of vacant spaces, the unused land, which most often undergo gradual degradation; the decrease in the value of real estate, the weakening interest in investing in new investments; the perforation of spatial structures, as well as their shrinkage; the weakening the basics of functioning of both commercial and social infrastructure as well as public facilities; the efficiency decrease of the use of existing technical and transport infrastructure and, as a consequence, a new dimension of difficulties with its maintenance.

2 Transformation of the model of Polish families and professional activation of women

The transformation has left its mark on the family and the functions of the family institution. The last decade of the 20th Century was a period during which significant changes took place in the mentality of Polish citizens, as a result of the impact of mass popular culture of the West (Sitek, 2002). "The new economic phenomena (for example unemployment) on the one hand and hedonistic patterns of life on the other created new, unfavourable conditions for the family" (Ogryzko-Wiewiórowska 2001, p.37). An essential part of the process of political changes was the transformation of the public social welfare in a democratic direction, based on the principles of liberalism, in which the social side of family life was not a mainstream of political and social activities.

Zbigniew Tyszka distinguishes three basic steps involved from the beginning of the transition, in which the transformation occurred in the structure of the family: "The first period begins in the second half of 1989 and ends in 1994. The second period closes in the years 1995-1998. The last period, which is in the stage of continuation, locates in the years 1999-2000" (Tyszka 2002, s.98). Achieving the revenue by several family members had positive impact on its financial capacity, which, as noted by Tyszka, was manifested by elevated indicator of consumption, realized through the purchase of high-value items such as cars. The last phase of transformations, dating from the years 1999-2000, continues until nowadays. The phase of adaptation has been interfering in many aspects. The unemployment rate has increased, especially the number of long-term unemployed, the cost of living has changed to the detriment of the family budget, often causing its excess, and the failure of the system of reforms rebounded its mark especially on the basic unit of society. There is a threat to the most important social institution as the declining number of people is opting for marriage, with an increase percentage of alternative forms of life in two that is, cohabitants' partnership relations, and the choice of living alone. "Even after finding an employment, due to the uncertainty of a career, it pays (...) continue to defer starting a family just to be able to concentrate on building a good position in the market" (Giza-Poleszczuk 2005, p.271). The feeling of the need to be ready for new challenges affects the modification of reproductive patterns of behaviour. In the hierarchy of many members of the public, the first place is occupied by self-realization and achievement of appropriate professional position resulting in a good financial situation, whereas the decision of entering

a formal marriage is outclassed in the lower positions. Sociologists also highlighted the increase in the number of people opting for raising children alone. In addition, the number of divorces is also growing up. In terms of the demographic changes, we are dealing with a lack of replacement of generations and the regressive model of the pyramid age, as it regularly decreases the number of births. The aging population faced the threat of existence of the phenomenon of depopulation.

The analysis of the risks of the modern family made by Wladyslaw Majkowski also finds other factors destabilizing the basic cell of society, such as anti-family ideologies that existed before, but which only now take dangerous forms (Majkowski, 1997, p.182). It lists items such as secularisation, rationalisation of human mentality and life, or homosexuality.

In contrast, Anna Giza-Poleszczuk, analysing the contemporary family in the context of the crisis, lists the different factors affecting its appearance depending on the social class to which the family belong: the family of the middle class (most common), and the lower class family. The first type is faced with dilemmas that result in the deposition of a decision to get married and have children, while in the second type we have to deal with the crisis of a different kind, where the family is based on single motherhood, early motherhood of practically still underage girls, neglecting the children or abandoning them, and the lack of stable relationships. Giza-Poleszczuk points to the analogy of the period in which modern society was shaped just because "also in that period the disorganisation of plebeian families were emphasized (mostly workers), similarly as self-restraint in the sphere of reproduction of middle-class families" (Giza-Poleszczuk, 2005, s.272-273). Many researchers increasingly draw attention to the growing popularity of the cult of childlessness, called the children by choice, or kids-free, among young people (Mikolajczyk-Lerman, 2004, p.212). This phenomenon comes from the West and effectively affects the Polish society. The "focus on yourself", on one's own needs and achievements dominates; the submission to distinctive western cultural patterns and lifestyles is in force, focusing on taking without giving balance" (Rokicka, 2006, p.6). Childlessness has ceased to be seen as a manifestation of some kind of lack of success in life, involving the fulfilment of women as mothers. The value of women ceased to be assessed on the basis of that person's children. And although in the light of recent research by CBOS "family and its contemporary meaning and understanding" almost all adult Poles expressed their wish to have children, 49% declared that they would like to have two children, but only three in one

hundred (3%) prefer childlessness. This declaration does not reflect the attitude demonstrated by people in their lives (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, 2013, s.3). The procreative decision is influenced by many factors and it depends on the age, assistance in child upbringing, material situation, education and the necessity to have a professional career combined with raising children. The report of the CBOS "Attitudes of procreative women" of 2013 analysis these factors in details. For 34% of respondents aged 18-45 years it is too late to have their children (median age of women was 42). For 21% of them a difficult financial situation stands for a main cause for not having offspring, 15% of the questioned declare the reluctance to have children is a main factor for not having children, and 13% of respondents explained not having offspring as consequence of conflict between family and professional roles (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, 2013 (2), s.7-8).

Currently, the dominant model of the basic social unit is a small, nuclear family, having their own apartment, in which husband and wife are professionally active and in partnership basis, which increases the financial capacity of the family. At the same time, it is not based on the production, but turns to consumption and use of the opportunities offered by the market, in access to goods and services. The disappearance of family ties is reflected in the reduced range of social control, and it has an impact on changes in the links between household members. Leisure time has become a manifestation of the individual interests of individual family members. "Even in the family home, each family member can find the 'employment' in his spare time at another technological device, spending time in an attractive manner without the participation of others" (Tyszka, 2002, p.40). The institutional dimension of the family went down for the further plan, freeing up space for emotional functions, where the intimacy of individuals and the expression of personality began important, not examining its members through the prism of filled roles, according to traditional norms. The more and more popular egalitarianism is seen between spouses in the reduction of a gap between children and parents, which resulted in the disappearance of a clear division of responsibilities and roles of gender and family life has been a general merge. The formal and social definition of the family has also been changed. The research of the Central Statistical Office considers that the biological family (family nuclei) is not only "two or more persons who live in the same household and are related as husband and wife, but also two people living together as partners, or parents and the child/children" (Central Statistical Office of Poland GUS, 2012, s.10).

In Public Opinion Research Center in Poland, family studies are, in addition to married couples with children and single parents, the persons in non-marital relationship (cohabiting) parents raising children from this relationship (78% of responses), as well as people living in a partnership who do not have children (33% of responses). Almost a quarter of respondents (23%) for the family considers the relationship between persons of the same sex (gay or lesbian) bringing together child (children) of one of them, and every seventh (14%) - the union of two people of the same sex (gay or lesbian) not raising children. Interestingly, a clear change in the social meaning of the family can be seen in the last few years. The percentage of people recognizing cohabitation as a family with children has clearly increased - from 71% to 78%, cohabitation without children - from 26% to 33%, the relationship between people of the same sex raising children together - from 9% to 23%, and the relationship between people of the same sex not raising children - from 6% to 14%. In view of the above, it can be seen that the largest percentage increase of indications occurred in the latter two categories, reflecting the redefinition of the family in the mentality of Poles (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, 2013, s.5-6). The way of defining a family - more conservative or more liberal, depends on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The supporters of a broad and liberal definition of the family belong to the persons aged 25 to 34 years old, divorced, living in a big city, having higher education, representatives of senior executives and senior professionals, and staff-level administrative office or the persons self-employed, and also obtaining the highest income per capita in the household, participating in religious practices and leftist political orientation (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, 2013, s.7-8). In contrast, to the supporters of the traditional and conservative understanding of the notion of a family belong people "practicing religion, pensioners, respondents with primary education, widows and widowers, skilled workers, the respondents at the age of at least 65, farmers, people with monthly income per capita from 501 zł to 750 zł, the respondents of right-wing political views, rural residents and retirees" (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, 2013, s.8). Respondents were asked not only about the definition of family, but also about their implemented family model. The level of declarations of people living in a large multigenerational families, i.e. grandparents, parents, children, has not changed (21% of respondents in 2008 and 2013), whereas the percentage of those living alone, living in marriages without children and in partner relationships has changed from 9% to 12%, from 9% to 12% and from 5% to 6%, respectively (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, 2013, p.9).

The emancipation of women is recognised as an important factor in the transformation of the family model and versatile socio type changes. This emancipation is correlated with the women activation in the labour market. In the past, a woman running the house was fully economically dependent on her husband, who was the only person providing the family income. However, the economic situation has been transformed, professional specialisation gathering momentum, and increasing demand for works that were performed mainly by women, contributed to the possibility of economic empowerment of women, who began to contribute to the protection of the financial situation of the family. According to many researchers, that situation has a negative impact on marital relationships - the emerging rivalry between two people who pursue their aspirations in professional work. In addition, traditional roles of spouses are disappearing, and women are overloaded with professional and family duties. Both positions are extreme, but the fact is that women's professional activity has contributed significantly to the transformation not only within the family but also within the society as a whole. Professional activation caused a transformation of the role of women, and the work was not releasing them with basic household duties. "The new method of production demands proficiency in carrying out specialized roles, not in the family circle, but in a big factory". In addition to her husband, a wife/ mother also works outside the home, which on the one hand is an additional burden, but at the same time it promotes her in relation to her husband, who in patriarchal family structures legally enjoyed absolute power "(Majkowski, 2008, p.279).

The current situation is largely dependent on the socio-economic conditions. Most women feel the satisfaction from their work, and they derive considerable satisfaction from professional life more often than from tasks at home. However, sex to some extent also differentiates the level of job satisfaction and the scale of professional and occupational mobility of people at work (...). Women relatively less than men express general satisfaction with the work done, and they also express significantly less satisfaction with their incomes than working men (difference of 10 points). They less likely perceive their work as interesting (a difference of 8 points), allowing them use their qualifications fully, giving a sense of importance and meaning of conducted tasks at work (difference of 7 points for each) and job security (a difference of 6 points)" (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS (3), 2013, p.1).

Egalitarian model of family life means sharing with your spouse duties and roles, as the traditional division between sexes ceased to exist. Women more

likely indicate that they aspire to success in their careers, and they wish to achieve a high social prestige (Duch-Krzysztofek, 1996, p.90). Such situation clearly affects the "deferring a decision of procreation by young women for a couple of years later, as well as reduces the number of children (...), changing the role of maternal rank in the minds of women entering into marriage, while self-realizing at their work" (Kotlarska-Michalska, 200, s.102). Women make calculations, specifying on the desire to meet the professional fulfilment and start improvement in terms of the material conditions of the future family. Both Kotlarska-Michalska and Anna Wachowiak emphasize the role of marriage and family life for young women who place it higher than values such as job or career, and moving ahead the decision of child bearing stems from a desire to improve the financial conditions (see. Wachowiak, 2001; see Kotlarska-Michalska, 2001), the more that women "are slightly less likely than men to change jobs, which probably partly stems from the fact that by far they assess their chances as worse for the job posts in the labour market" (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, (3), 2013, p.1). In addition, almost 70% of Poles believe that the average earnings of men and women performing the same job and the same position are significantly different, and the percentage of people expressing such a view strongly increased by 21 percentage points since 1995. There is also a belief that women have less career advancement opportunities (growth of 47% to 56%) (Public Opinion Research Center CBOS, (3), 2013, pp.6-7). However, the vast majority of Polish society believes that women's professional work brings to their family life more advantages than disadvantages, such opinion women declare slightly more often than men do. In 2004, this percentage was 30%, in 2013 39%, but the highest was in 2006 and amounted to 44% (ibidem, p.14). The phenomenon of female economic activity has become the one gaining the importance in Europe and the U.S. at the end of the second half of the 20th Century. The United Nations Conference in Beijing in 1995, reflected this trend, and the methods were analysed that would facilitate better options to combine the family duties with work. There were among the demands "establishing flexible working time, breaks or special leaves for family connected with performing family duties" (Zielinska, 1992, p.62), adjusting the number of hours of work to the needs of functioning family, expanding opportunities to work part-time. The researchers suggest that deferring a decision about motherhood gaining strength along with moving away the decision of entering the marriage. The increase in the proportion of women with higher education is accompanied by decrease in the percentage of

formalisation of a relationship. Women "are not looking for properly feelings of satisfaction, relationship. However, they are looking for self-assertion" (Szpakowska, 2003, p.244). The value of education is important for both men and women. A longer educational period increased by the time of study, the desire to raise their skills through training, self-realization, participation in the labour market with the awareness of the existence of competition and the transformation of social awareness contributed to the fact that the decision to start married life and getting pregnant become independent and individual choice of every woman. The natural biological clock is being deafened, which affects the rationalisation of life based on the belief that motherhood will be completed at a convenient point in their lives. This was reflected largely in the increase in the number of singles and groups, as can be seen in the statistics of Census 2011, this category contained as much as 4 million 135,100 virgins. In the age range of 25-34 accounted for 33.4% of this population, and another age range from 35-49 years old - 10.9%. Women undoubtedly later and less often marry than they did a few years earlier (Central Statistical Office of Poland – GUS, 2012, p.54). The phenomenon of single life is a sign of modern times. It is noticed in the scientific literature, media and popular culture. Many researchers claim that staying single is a kind of threat to marriage and family (DePaulo, 2009; Giddens, 1990; Slany, 2008;). According to some researchers, modern societies are the place to pursue a monogamous lifestyle (Haley, 2000; Fisher, 2004). Some researchers treat it in terms of the phenomenon of singles, where the whole group of singles is dominated by single women of high social and professional status (Adamczyk, 2016; Berg-Cross, Scholzc, Long, Grzeszczyk, Roy, 2004; Kuklińska, 2013; Such-Pyrgiel, 2014, 2015, 2016). It is worth mentioning that the cradle of the phenomenon of singles are the United States of America. Living alone was widespread mainly among American bachelors (Chudacoff, 1999). They are men of a high social and material status. In this case, we can say about single life by choice, because the conscious resignation of the family means going beyond a certain pattern - the scheme of family life. Freedom was a virtue and an autotelic value that they pursued in their lives. Nowadays, women more often decide to live alone and have almost the same characteristics as pioneer singles from America.

Conclusion

Marriages as an institution used to serve for procreation, birth control and ensuring economic existence, especially for women who did not work professionally, or, their earnings were relatively low and were not enough to ensure the maintenance of the family. The image of the traditional European family has changed with the beginning of the industrial revolution. The people moved on a large scale from the countryside to the cities. In the working-class family, it was easier and faster to become independent. The women began to work *en masse*. At the beginning of the 19th Century, women and children constituted half of the labour force in industry. However, getting married was the goal of many women and financial independence was seen only as a temporary state that ended with marriage. This means that a man who was earning more was the head of the family and ensured the existence of a woman (Such-Pyrgiel 2014, pp.198-204).

The changes in family life in the contemporary societies are described by researchers due to the multifaceted nature of this issue. It is a fact that each of the family members is involved in external environments placed outside of the family, and they provide a lot of diverse experiences. In addition, they create the individual needs and aspirations. The internal structure of the family has also changed - the roles of all its members are changing. The model of raising children, the relations in families - between parents and children, as well as between parents themselves, are changing. In addition, the intergenerational bonds are transformed. The ways of spending free time have also been changed, especially the pattern for children and youths, the patterns of consumption, and the use of new technologies. The social perception of the family is also being shifted. The study carried out in Poland showed that "in recent years there have been more and more respondents who, as a family, define a couple living in a cohabitation and raising their child / children (from 71% to 78%) or have no offspring (from 26% to 33%); the number of respondents who consider as a family the gay or lesbian couples raising a child (from 9% to 23%) and those who the informal relationship of the same sex people without children call as a family (from 6% to 14%) is also significantly increased" (CBOS, 2013, p.3). Since many years, the family and the family happiness has remained the most valued living values, and it is also believed that the family gives meaning to human life. "Fathers, mothers and children enter into separate outdoor environments which fill a significant part of their

lives; they individualize the aspirations and experiences which are a source of specific, separate experiences, different for individual family members. They differentiate and individualize their family and non-family attitudes. The shifting of social positions within the family and modification of social roles performed by its members is not indifferent to the functioning of the family. The progress of egalitarianisation within family broadens the scope of freedom for wives and children. The autonomy of individuals inside the family increases and their possibilities of deciding about themselves and their life increase as well" (Tyszka, 2002, p.44).

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