

REFERENCIA: LULEK, B.: "Polish people's thoughts on the United Europe. The European community in the perception of three successive generations: children, parents and grandparents", en *ENSAYOS, Revista de la Facultad de Educación de Albacete*, Nº 28, 2013. (Enlace web: <http://www.revista.uclm.es/index.php/ensayos> - Consultada en fecha (dd-mm-aaaa)

**POLISH PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS ON THE UNITED EUROPE. THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IN THE PERCEPTION OF THREE SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS: CHILDREN, PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS**  
**OPINIONES DE LOS POLACOS ANTE LA UNIÓN EUROPEA. LA COMUNIDAD EUROPEA EN LA PERCEPCIÓN DE TRES GENERACIONES SUCESIVAS: NIÑOS, PADRES Y ABUELOS**

**Barbara Lulek**

University of Rzeszów. Polonia

Recibido: 28/11/2013

Aceptado: 31/12/2013

**Abstract:**

This paper presents a part of broader survey devoted to identifying thinking styles presented by representatives of three generations (children, parents and grandparents) on European integration. The survey was conducted in the Polish Southeast in 2011 and 2012. The study's results enabled to extract five basic styles of thinking on European integration: European integration - the state of normality; united Europe - an opportunity for personal and professional development; Polish families in the circle of other nations' cultural community - own resources and resources adapted from the outside, the community of united nations - the economic "Eldorado" for Polish families, the European Union as a space threatening Polish families' cohesiveness.

**Keywords:** thinking styles, Polish family, European integration

**Resumen:**

Este artículo recoge una parte de una encuesta más amplia que trata de identificar estilos de pensamiento sobre la integración europea en tres generaciones diferentes (niños, padres y abuelos). La encuesta se desarrolló en el sureste de Polonia entre 2011 y 2012. Los resultados del estudio permitieron extraer cinco estilos básicos de pensamiento acerca de la integración europea: integración europea- situación de normalidad; unión europea- oportunidad para el desarrollo personal y profesional; familias polacas en comunidades culturales de otras naciones -recursos propios y otros adaptados de otros países; la comunidad de las naciones unidas-"Eldorado" para familias polacas; la Unión Europea como espacio de amenaza para la cohesión de las familias polacas.

**Palabras clave:** modo de pensar, familia polaca, integración europea

## Introduction

Since 1989, Poland has been through an intensive process of system change covering all areas of economic, political and social development. These changes required adapting the society to a market economy and rules of a democratic society, as well as preparing to join the European Union. Hence a theoretical reflection on the changes and the transformation of European integration quite frequently appears in Polish literature over the last two decades. An increasing number of theorists and researchers is trying to determine not only the course, causes and effects of changes but also seeks to know the ways of thinking and acting of individuals and groups in these changing conditions.

The changes, which have begun in 1989, gradually including other elements of the social system, revealed the turmoil within the structure, culture, and public awareness. The parallel processes of political and economic base, as well as the processes of globalization and continental integration imposing on them meant that the family community had to find its place in the changing social realities, to indicate children their course of development, to direct children's aspiration to socially desirable values.

Therefore, many sociological and also pedagogical studies concerning Polish society's condition in the times of transformation, devote much space answering the question if the society or particular social groups are prepared to participate in the processes of transformation and if they are able to define their own identity in performed functions or social roles. These studies' results show that most family members were unprepared for systemic transformation caused by external factors. Thus, a wide range of behaviours, such as active attitude assimilating the change, through seemingly adaptive responses, to passive and even hostile behaviours towards increased potential for finding one's place in a united Europe or changes in general, appeared in the behaviour of the next generation - the young, middle-aged and older people.

The initial enthusiastic public support was gradually giving way to a more critical attitude of the society to changes. Another important factor influencing the level of public dissatisfaction with the changes was the membership of a particular social group (farmers, workers, pensioners, unemployed), place of residence, level of education as well as political orientation [Sasińska-Klas, 2005, pp. 8-10]. Keeping with the circled research area, the author made an attempt to learn about opinions on European integration in terms of benefits and threats arising from joining the community of nations, expressed by the generations of students in their twenties, their parents in their forties and grandparents – sixty-year-olds.

## Polish family vs. European integration

A clear division of Europe into a Western and Eastern part has separated Polish family from the opportunities created by operating on the common international market for many years.

A relatively harsh living conditions in the country and unavailable dream of living in a better Western world, made it a desired well-being seen by Polish citizens as a chance for a better life [Kawczyńska-Butrym, 2008, p. 113]. Polish accession to the community of European countries changed essentially and definitely Poland's external status and internal situation. The common market's prospect and achievements have become more accessible to the average person. What were the perspectives for families? Certainly, the new situation created a lot of chances [Stolarczyk, 2006; Jakubowicz, 2010; Burgoński, Sowinski 2011], in the field of education, culture and economics at least. It also created an opportunity for Polish students and pupils to participate in a number of European exchange programs introducing the youth to educational perspective on a European scale. Contact with multiculturalism in Europe promotes not only dialogic attitude and tolerance among Polish citizens, but also a sense of national identity and perception of heritage. Polish families are wide open to new European trends, which makes it possible for them to get to know new, post-modern traditions and lifestyles. Some behaviours are slowly beginning to take effect in Polish culture displacing action established by the tradition. Unfortunately, units manifest an apparent tendency to verbalism, formalism, moral relativism and tolerance to negative social phenomena in their lifestyle and evaluation system [Milczyńska-Kowalska, 2008, p. 136] - trying to imitate Western society, Polish families' members reevaluate their values system. Work, ranked high in the hierarchy, serves a higher level of consumerism and greater wealth of family members rather than the family itself, submitting it to householders' work. For some families work becomes the most important element of their life and for others it is a mean to the freedom of consumption.

Moreover, many family members understand European integration as an opportunity to realize their own strategies for dealing with financial difficulties, or for the life and career aspirations on the local labour market. It is very difficult for family members to make a decision about leaving their home because it means leaving loved ones but also recovering in new, completely unknown social and cultural conditions. Family functioning is clearly disrupted when one of the spouses is absent. Family also unable to fulfil basic functions and tasks, especially reproductive, sexual, of care and education, as well as emotional. [Romaniszyn, 2003; Glombik, Moraniec, 2005; Danilewicz 2006, Chaffinch, 2008]. Therefore, despite being a certain source of family's economic strength, migration prospect created by united Europe has its limitations creating great moral doubts - leaving children in the country.

The overall conclusion is that the European community allows for strengthening political and economic relations with other nations. Remembering that all social integration is a real process expressed in actual actions performed by individuals forming nations, allows experiencing a spiritual community with other citizens of European Union. Hence the desire to explore beliefs, views and opinions on European integration of three Polish successive generations' representatives from the south-eastern part of Poland.

### **Outline of the research concept. Objectives, issues, research methods**

Based on the above premises and acknowledging that perception of European integration phenomenon by different social groups and generations is an important indicator of social change, this article attempts to look at Polish integration with the European Union in a dynamic way (in terms of three Polish successive generations). Youths covered by the study are 20-year-old people, students of the first, second and third year of BA degree respectively, in stationary mode at the University of Rzeszow standing on the threshold of their own independence. They were selected based on purposive and random sampling and created the first research group counting 150 units. In the consequence, the study included their parents – middle-ager people and their grandparents – late maturity age. The study group consisted of 150 parents and 100 grandparents. By choosing these groups, the author considered the possibility to analyse the research results in term of convergence and divergence among assessments and views presented by children, parents and grandparents. The main objective of this study was to find out what do the next generations of Poles think about the European Union, as well as to outline the dynamics of change in young people, their parents and grandparents mind-set – wherein, according to the author, the thinking style is a typical way of perceiving, remembering, thinking and problem solving. The studies took into account various aspects of family functioning in the European market; however, for this study's purpose it was limited to three levels: education, economic and community. They differentiate collected narratives concerning perceived threats to the modern family, as well as prospects encouraging development of the basic social unit consisting of parents and children. Surveys were conducted in the 2011/2012 academic year at the Faculty of Pedagogy and Arts at the University of Rzeszow in south-eastern Poland. The study involved 400 people in total. Research proceeded in two stages. The first step was to develop a concept of research including constructing appropriate research tools, sample test, conducting pilot and essential studies. In the second step, gathered research material has been analysed with both, quantitative and qualitative method.

### **European integration in the eyes of Polish people in their twenties, forties and sixty-year-olds - children, parents and grandchildren about the European Union**

Political transformation in Poland after 1989, as well as numerous and long-term efforts of Poland to integrate with other European countries have brought the expected results. Poland became a member of the European Union. From the few years perspective, it is quite clear that membership in the community of nations carries certain consequences. They are noticeable to experts in the fields of politics, economics, sociology, as well as ordinary citizens who happened to live in Poland, as part of united Europe. All three generations of family members - grandparents, parents and young people just standing at the threshold of adulthood - participate directly in the effects of these changes. Their opinions about the possibilities of development in common Europe or barriers arising from the present state seem to be very important as they result from direct immersion in the reality of community life and not from theoretical analysis. The following discussion presents the insights gathered during the

survey, which was devoted to determining thinking styles of tested groups on the functioning in common Europe. Thinking styles separated in the survey both emphasize the opportunities recognised by the individuals, as well as risks, which reveal concerns very often hidden by Poles. Questions in the questionnaires structured for the research were open. They allowed their respondents, who were willing enough to disclose their own opinions on prospects for family functioning in the united Europe, to freely express their opinions about issues mentioned above. Respondents revealed their own remarks, informed about the dilemmas, as well as pointed out the possibilities created by the new Polish situation in the international arena. Empirical data gathered in the course of studies, were categorized and grouped into five main areas in which respondents specified their own assessments of the prospects created by the Community activities in the United Europe. The author called them styles of thinking on united Europe in terms of: European integration - the state of normality, the United Europe - an opportunity for personal and professional development; Polish families in the circle of other nations' cultural community - own resources and resources adapted from the outside, the community of united nations - the economic "Eldorado" for a Polish families, the European Union as a space threatening Polish families' cohesiveness.

General information about the thinking styles on European integration of tested groups are shown in the following tabulation.

Table 1 Styles of thinking presented by three successive Polish generations (children, parents and grandparents) about united Europe

Styles of thinking about united Europe	In general N=400		Children – the generation of 20-year-olds N=150		Parents – the generation of 40-year-olds N=150		Grandparents – the generation of 60-year-olds N=100	
	No. of resp.	%	No. of resp.	%	No. of resp.	%	No. of resp.	%
European integration - the state of normality	220	55,0	120	80,0	80	53,3	20	20,0
The United Europe - an opportunity for personal and professional development	131	32,7	81	54,0	40	26,7	10	10,0
European integration – cultural community of nations	190	47,5	95	63,3	62	41,3	33	33,0

European Community – an economic „Eldorado” for Polish families	300	75,0	111	74,0	117	78,0	72	72,0
The European Union as a space threatening Polish families’ cohesiveness	187	46,7	12	8,0	82	54,7	93	93,0

Source: own study based on surveys. Percentage data do not add up to 100 because respondents' answers sometimes contain clear elements of several thinking styles about united Europe

The collected data is quite interesting. Four out of five thinking styles are positive and they are emphasizing the possibilities for Poles arising from the European integration. We can see that respondents from younger age groups more often perceive European integration in terms of prospects that come with it than older people. For 80.0 % of respondents in their twenties European integration is clearly defined. They regard themselves as citizens of a united Europe and speak about themselves as Europeans with comfort. Such situation seems obvious, because they grew up at a time when Poland aspired and then joined the community of European nations. In addition, more than half of 20-year-olds (54.0%) sees the united Europe in terms of the personal and professional development. That is not surprising at all. Usually, they are educated people who speak foreign languages, have the motivation to perfect themselves and who easily adapt to changing conditions. Surveyed seniors have the opposite view. Only a fifth of respondents share the enthusiastic look on the common market, in terms of the natural condition resulting from Poland’s geographical location. 60-year-old respondents still see Europe divided into Western Europe - full-fledged participants in the common market and Central and Eastern Europe - members of the lower category.

Slightly smaller group of respondents - 47.5% in total see the united Europe in terms of nations’ cultural diversity. On one hand, they emphasize a sense of community - common ancestry of European nations grown in the Christian religion, but also recognize the plurality and cultural diversity of each country. In the group of students nearly two thirds respondents verbalize such views, but in a group of parents there is only 41.3% of the respondents and among seniors only one third of the respondents presenting that view.

In the next category – perceiving Europe as a common labour market – researched people’s answers compose quite differently. This way of thinking shows a similar proportion of subjects in each group - total 3/4 of respondents. Whatever the age, the respondents underline that Polish integration with the European Union allowed the Poles access to a common labour market, thus the change in economic situation of many Polish families.

All the respondents' concerns were included in the final style of thinking illustrating Polish families' crisis, which is often conditioned by macroeconomic factors. A particularly large number of people over 60 years of age (93.0 % of respondents), highlight the risks deriving from the common market and mobility freedom in Europe. What is more, over half of the respondents in middle age notice the problem of marital and families' breakdown, as well as the family members' isolation of due to the emigration of one or both parents. On the contrary, the group of young people sees very little threat for family functioning arising from the European market. This situation is probably due to professional and linguistic competency of tested respondents as well as the life stage they are in. Young people simply break barriers associated with residence in another European country, often decide to go beyond Polish borders with family, or found a family already residing in the selected country. In this sense, they are not in the situation of leaving their loved ones in the home country.

Separated thinking styles are characterized in details in further reflections.

### European integration – a state of normality

It is clear that at the beginning of the twenty-first century Poland and the European Union are a community, they determine each other and the relations, as well as cooperation expand constantly and steadily strengthen. Thanks to integration effects like this one, people percept Europe more as a normality rather than through the prism of old antagonisms and differences. Europe is a continent, both in terms of geographical and political - economic – cultural sense particularly for young generation of 20-year-olds. This situation is reflected in the respondents' statements.

Table 2. Way of thinking about the united Europe, in terms of normality state and its components.

<b>European integration – a state of normality</b>	
<b>Geographical, political and economic identity</b>	<b>Cultural and religious heritage, convergence of universal values</b>
<p>„I am European, my country is part of Europe, it is normal” (questionnaire no 134, M, age 20).</p> <p>„The layout is a bit commonplace, but I'd have written like that: Poland - Europe - world. This is an opportunity for the family, I can see the perspectives” (questionnaire no 7, M, age 19).</p> <p>„Europe - a continent where I live, I am a part of it and that it” (questionnaire no 37, M, age 19).</p> <p>„I can't really understand my parents who say about the opportunities I have as a generation born after a period of change. For me, the United Europe is now” (questionnaire no 88, M, age 22).</p>	<p>„Poland joined the process of integration in Europe, and that makes sense. This resulted with a lot of economic, political and cultural benefits for the country, thus to citizens” (questionnaire no 32, F, age 22).</p> <p>„Poland as part of a united Europe is the natural state of things. Geographically, historically and mentally it was always so. Historical events, religious background and cultural heritage connect us with other countries” (questionnaire no 191, M, age 51).</p>

Source: own study based on surveys, selected statements

As all of the interviewed groups emphasize in their statements that seeing Europe as a state of normality by Poles results from geographical and cultural conditions. Respondents recognise a common development area of nations without setting any boundaries between East and West, as well as the South and the North. The interviewees emerge a picture of a fairly strong identity with people who are part of the European community. Hence the presented ideas include some indicators of Polish family's Europeanises. One may find evidence informing about respondents' sense of common cultural and religious heritage, as well as convergent values for citizens across the continent. Due to the geographical location of the continent supported by historical and cultural factors, European integration is considered as a natural state. Stating in their statements that they are Europeans and that Poland is undeniably a part of Europe, respondents present a sense of belonging to Europe. This opinion results from following shared values and similar cultural and religious premises rather than exchange of declarations and agreements.

### **The United Europe - an opportunity for personal and professional development**

The second area singled out by the author indicates that respondents recognise functioning in the united Europe as an opportunity to develop human resources in the context of developing personality traits, the knowledge, skills and professional qualifications. Respondents see it possible to function on the EU labour market on the basis of which individual countries give their citizens, as well as know about the freedom to settle within the territory of the European Union.

Table 3. Way of thinking about united Europe, in terms of opportunity for personal and professional development and its components.

<b>The United Europe - an opportunity for personal and professional development</b>	
<b>Acquiring professional and language skills on the European market</b>	<b>Developing individual's self-reliance and independence</b>
<p>: „...I've been around on the European market for five years, and I can say that it gave me a chance to become independent vocationally. I am evolving constantly, often changing sector, depending on situation, I attend the trainings and I see the effects. My wage satisfies me totally” (questionnaire no 204, M, age 48).</p> <p>„...For me, integrated Europe is simply an endless field for improving the language, but also a place to expand my own knowledge, gain skills - not necessarily related to my field of study - see a different perspective looking at life and determine where it will be my home. Now I'm going to leave after the second year and accomplish what I'm saying” (questionnaire no 94, F, age 20).</p>	<p>„Europe is freedom to move around the English-speaking countries, and a bit of creativity in thinking, developing an action plan and implementing the adopted strategies enable internal development and building professional capacity” (questionnaire no 112, M, age 22).</p> <p>„...Innovation and independence – that's what matters on European markets, but if you have such features, you will find a well-paid job everywhere. Do not wait endlessly for the job, it is there, available, and anyone can have it” (questionnaire no 147, M, age 23).</p> <p>„....The need for a rapid response to change, as well as flexible vocational training. I mean the ability to see those skills that allow an individual to succeed in particular situations, to be attractive to a potential employer” (questionnaire no 34, M, age 22).</p>

Source: own study based on surveys, selected statements

As evidenced by the above answers, the subjects perceive European integration on two levels. First, as the area of acquiring and expanding their skills - vocational and language in particular, through which respondents understand the knowledge and specific skills associated with moving flexibly on a rapidly changing labour market. Respondents also see how important is the professional experience, which, in the long run, enables greater independence, as well as undertaking more accurate economic activities in different social, cultural and national environments. Respondents emphasize this aspect particularly strong, while highlighting in their statements the possibility to develop the following personality traits on the European labour market: creativity, independence, flexibility, adaptation and openness to changes. Not only young teachers are fascinated with new challenges, opportunities of getting a well-paid job outside the country, the opportunity to improve their language and with the belief that a rapid social advancement is possible, but also their parents. It allows you to gain further qualifications, learn about new technologies and adapt to other social conditions. Respondents' statements indicate that they are aware of their own competence and are convinced that the first job is often inconsistent with their qualifications; it is sometimes a hard but well-paid work and meets with social recognition. This group is willing to take professional challenges on the international level, believe in the career myth „from rags to riches " and often make it happen. The study group emphasizes that success in the international market is possible for any man but it requires facing all-new reality. According to respondents, the common market provides significant opportunities for professional development, but it is important to be flexible and to have comprehensive vocational training, as well as to be deeply motivated for motivation directs individual's actions.

Thus, respondents perceive the international labour market as a platform for development, while trying to achieve personal and professional aspirations in this perspective. They are aware that the following characteristic is necessary to implement the strategy. And they are: a strong need for achievement, perseverance, determination, independence in acting, confidence they are able to control events, the ability to accept defeat and draw conclusions from it, life optimism and enthusiasm for work, creativity and innovation.

### **Polish families in the circle of other nations' cultural community - own resources and resources adapted from the outside**

European integration is presented in various dimensions. Undoubtedly, the economic aspect, technological and legal consolidation of European countries and their indicators are noticeable; however, it is impossible to talk about the community of nations excluding the fusion of cultural entities. Culture is one of the essential elements, which gives a sense of identity to local and national society members. The surveyed respondents also recognize the importance of socio-cultural processes by setting their own view on the community of European countries. They admit that the culture can be a catalyst or a moderator in the integration processes. Respondent's attitude toward European countries culture varies. Basically - as shown in the table below - the respondents have adopted two approaches. They point out that Polish

culture is a part of European culture at the same time clearly emphasizing their commitment to their country's national culture. Therefore, this situation indicates predominant character of the two ways of thinking about the culture, i.e. mutual and selective adaptation.

Table 4. Thinking about the united Europe in terms of nations' cultural community and its components.

<b>United Europe in the circle of other nations' cultural community - own resources and resources adopted by Poles from the outside</b>	
<b>Polish culture as a duplicate model for Europe</b>	<b>Polish culture – an element of European culture</b>
<p>„Polish family behaviours can constitute a reference for other nations, we find reflections of many traditions in their culture that are common to our neighbours. We are, after all the Slav nations. But we can also draw from the heritage of other countries. This is a real opportunity” (questionnaire no 51, F, age 23).</p> <p>„Our strength lies in the religion in which families find a strong support, we can give it to other nations” (questionnaire no 167, M, age 42).</p> <p>„Polish nation has its own culture, which is deeply rooted in our national identity. We cannot clutter it up with external and variable solutions completely strange to us because then it will become strange to us” (questionnaire no 302, M, age 69).</p> <p>„I do not want the national culture to be uniformed and adapted to what in Europe – it is unique, and it should remain so” (questionnaire no 212, F, age 51).</p>	<p>„Europe is heterogeneous in terms of languages, traditions and customs. And here I see a chance for a family that can benefit from this diversity wisely” (questionnaire no 41, M, age 19).</p> <p>„Polish family is not a poor cousin of other European countries, we have a great culture and we should share it while enjoying the heritage of other nations” (questionnaire no 121, F, age 20).</p>

Source: own study based on surveys, selected statements

Thinking about Europe as a cultural community has divided subjects into two groups - the Europhile indicating possibility to use the heritage of other cultures as well as sceptics who verbalize their concerns about the national identity destruction. The second group included 19.0% of total respondents. They were in favour of closing to new cultural patterns coming from the united Europe because in their opinions they are a significant threat to family as a community. This group of respondents sees an integration with Europe as a factor contributing to the loss of cultural identity or weakening of Polish cultural life. They are trying to distance themselves from the current trends in Europeans' culture, customs and values, driven by concern for the nation's cultural heritage.

It should be noted that the verbalized fears are not justified by implemented solutions. In practice, Member States shall operate within the community on solidarity and a voluntary basis. National and church holidays are still celebrated and Polish language has become one of many languages of the Union. The author alleged that

these unjustified fears of respondents result from stereotypes, prejudices and insufficient knowledge about the European Union functioning mechanisms. Therefore, it seems necessary to continue raising awareness of citizens on this subject.

47.5 % of respondents who declare Polish family are opened to tradition, language, customs, arts, heritage and history of other members in the European Union notice European countries' rich cultural diversity. There are many enthusiastic comments highlighting some aspects of European multiculturalism, however, the respondents locate cultural heritage of other countries against the background of their own people's achievements.

In other words, the integration allows you to protect and nurture multicultural European nations [Garlicki, 2005, pp. 267]. Opportunity to use other peoples' cultural heritage and strengthen cultural ties arising from the accession to the European Union is also possible.

To sum up, there are many statements among Polish respondents which form a trend indicating that we are open to culture of other nations which create the European Union. Both, the young generation and their parents in middle age, but also most of representatives from grandparents' generation can appreciate other nations' achievements, thereby enriching themselves, as well as creating the foundation for partnerships, dialogue relations in the European family.

### The community of united nations - the economic "Eldorado" for Polish families

In the evaluation of both politics and economists, Polish accession to the European Union helped to intensify activities constructing an efficient, innovative and competitive economy, on the other hand it gave people access to a common labour market. Thus, the European integration has set up new opportunities for Polish family members, in economic sphere in particular. These are the chances and opportunities to adjust flexibly to changing conditions, which are seen by all of the groups interviewed on The European integration. It is confirmed by the following respondents' statements.

Table 5. Thinking about the united Europe in terms of economic "Eldorado" and its components.

<b>The community of united nations - the economic "Eldorado" for Polish families</b>	
<b>Improving economic situation of Polish family</b>	<b>Consumerism growth</b>
<p>„...ability to work in the united Europe gives individuals and their families the chance to experience wealth, so that they gain social recognition, admiration and social privileges. This is the "Eldorado" for parents and children. They can have everything they want." (questionnaire no 271, M, age 45).</p> <p>„...work outside the country gives a decent wage, high enough to keep myself, my wife and a child at an average level, spend holidays abroad and have savings" (questionnaire no</p>	<p>„...better quality of my wife and my life, as well as my children who are already in college, greater use of material and cultural goods and services" (questionnaire no 267, M, age 52).</p> <p>„I know a lot of people moving around on the European labour market for a few years, who never lacked financial resources to meet their family needs, run a house or ensure adequate housing. They often have additional savings, they invest money in children or in real</p>

<p>11, M, age 22).          „...high income is the prospect of common labour market. You can have it, it's at your fingertips. If you are a hard worker you'll earn high incomes" (questionnaire no 301, M, age 68).</p>	<p>estate" (questionnaire no 363, F, age 60).          „Good income means a broad consumption, buying" (questionnaire no 343, F, age 61).          „Then you buy what you want" (questionnaire no 287, M, age 41); „More stuff stuff stuff and just stuff or the ability to reach for certain services" (questionnaire no 21, F, age 22).</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Source: own study based on surveys, selected statements

In regard to thinking about the united Europe in economic terms we can also distinguish two attitudes of respondents. They are connected to emphasizing chances or risks arising from family members' financial capacity having well-paid jobs in the European market. Chances are associated with the ability to work in the common market, thereby reducing the level of unemployment in the country, increasing the family income and maintaining socially perceived real growth in consumption of goods and services. The risks relate to being blind to the consequences perpetuating consumerist attitudes among society members.

According to all groups the common market allows Polish families members to ensure decent the material conditions, to produce new goods, open up to new opportunities in economy, go beyond the status quo. Respondents from all age groups noticed that prospect of a better material existence is a consequence of the international labour market. All groups - students, their parents and grandparents locate a family community in level of effective actions, being proactive, especially in the area of gaining income as a basis for improving material situation.

Although respondents' opinions outline a bright perspective, there is a thought raising in the background. Undoubtedly, living in abundance ensures family members access to new houses and flats equipped comfortably – very often beyond their means, use the services of qualified staff to run home, financing their children various extra-curricular activities offered by numerous institutions. On the other hand, living in abundance cause isolation of family members from each other, who often experience loneliness and loosening family ties. The author comes back to these issues in further reflections.

It also appears that a significant part of respondents noticed consumption growth resulting from improved financial situation of families enjoying earning opportunities in the common market. Consumption has become a strong and significant mechanism when creating modern individual's identity. Nowadays, consumption, buying, investing, managing, producing specific goods or using various services have become the basis for self-determination of individuals, an implementation tool in the social universe of their own identity [Radziewicz-Winnicki, 2004, p. 83]. Indicating consumer behaviour, the respondents inform about two determinants of increased consumption - the hierarchy of values functioning in individuals' minds and men's economic possibilities. However, the growing consumerism in life weakens the spiritual dimension of human existence and frequently weakens emotional ties between family members who are striving to meet their overgrowing, selfish financial needs and bowing hedonistic values they prefer a convenient life, operational efficiency and

career instead of direct, personal and close family relationships. There is no need for further demonstration to understand that often these factors, with pedagogical and psychological significance, threaten marriage and family integration, as well as they are connected to the area of family's economic functioning.

### The European Union as a space threatening Polish families' cohesiveness

Obviously, along with the opportunities, the European integration brings the dangers, which are located by the respondents on the ground of Polish family functioning, emphasizing the adverse effects in the family's inner life. There are many people in this group manifesting social pessimism and forming a number of concerns related to family members entering the international market. Their perception of Polish integration with the European Union is full of anxiety.

Table 6. Thinking about the united Europe in terms of threats Polish families' cohesiveness and its components.

<b>The European Union as a space threatening Polish families' cohesiveness</b>	
<b>Disintegration of marriages and families as a result of labour migration</b>	<b>Families' members loneliness</b>
<p>„European integration has led to disintegration of many families. One of the parents' leaves and the spouse and children are left to themselves. Yes he or she sends money, but the parent is absent in many important moments of a child's or family's life. It's functioning together but separately at the same time” (questionnaire no 350, F, age 67).</p> <p>„Common Europe led to marriages at a distance, I sometimes call them plane or computer marriages” (questionnaire no 172, F, age 46);</p>	<p>„..Children left on their own, in theory, under the care of grandparents or other relatives, hungry for love. They often do not want the money and toys, but intimacy with parents, regular and direct contact, a mother who hugs them and not calls” (questionnaire no 354, F, age 62).</p> <p>„Family affected by emigration, in my opinion, is overly focused on tangible things. My friend throughout high school was getting great gifts from her father from abroad. All her friends were jealous. It was a new generation of phones, clothes and perfumes. And she was not at all happy. She said she only wanted to have a father at home” (questionnaire no 63, F, age 21).</p>

Source: own study based on surveys, selected statements

As expected, the particularly large number of people in their late maturity - 93.0 % of respondents - draw a picture of a Polish family threatened by European integration. However, not only elderly people are pessimistic but also people in middle age - 54.7 % of respondents, and a few - 8.0 % - of young students. Respondents in this group particularly strongly emphasize that the Polish accession to the community of nations has brought a desirable change but not in all directions. Making profit and loss balance the respondents state that the social costs of continental integration especially reflecting in the family are much higher than the benefits of the present state. Although, their narratives clearly emphasize that family members have gained mobility freedom, the opportunity to acquire well-paid jobs, possibility to improve in speaking foreign languages, personal development and learning about cultures, they also say

that it was gained at the expense of a strong, internally integrated family where children are in close contact with both parents.

The intensity of one or both parents labour migration which is a major threat to family's proper functioning on the ground of emotions, care and education, is indicated by the respondents as a consequence of European integration. The subjects see that such complex situations make it impossible for emigrating father or mother to perform their role, which creates actions' incoherence in this area. They also inform of intrafamiliar conflicts and undermining stability of family as a community. According to the respondents, parents returning from the exile have to re-enter their role of husband and father or wife and mother. This picture provides the basis for a number of stressful situations. Many parents returning from foreign countries believe that it is enough to bestow their close ones with material goods such as toys, clothes, jewellery and it will compensate the lack of a parent or spouse at home. Unfortunately, the joy caused by material goods decreases with time. They do not compensate for the absence of a parent and intensify the feeling of separation.

According to the subjects, further consequences of emigration mentioned in the context of their answers are: a sense of insecurity, sadness, longing, overall negative emotions, inner emptiness, and impaired relationships with peers and lack of intimacy with a parent who left.

Therefore, you should be aware that migrating parents, especially women who do not take their children with them, are excluded from accomplishing their parenting. Thus, they are deprived of opportunity to observe and experience the joy of their children growing, as well as direct contact and the impact on their education and development. During this period, their children grow up without their mother or father's care or even both parents, without their sensitivity and immediate concern, which after all is the basis of proper emotional and social development. No material goods, so painstakingly collected by parents, can ever equalize these spiritual potential deficiencies [Kawczyńska-Butrym, 2008, pp.258].

## Conclusions

The collected research material helped to make some kind of categorization and gave the five ways of perceiving European integration presented by three generations of Poles. The positive part is that the majority of respondents acknowledge the united Europe space to be an area conducive to the development of Polish family members, enabling social advancement, learning about new cultures and drawing from their resources. Supporters of the European integration, characterise the benefits quite generally, often pointing to the results that will be achieved in the future. Nevertheless, there are opposite opinions in respondents statements, reflecting the common international market as a danger to Polish modern family life. The European integration critics point to already visible threat. They are not calling to break with the united Europe's achievements, rather verbalizing concerns arising from the theoretical analysis, the observations and their own thoughts. To overcome these fears, Poles

should search for common signs of identity allowing to call themselves Europeans [Sepkowski, 2006, pp. 32].

### **Bibliography:**

Burgoński P., Sowiński S. (2011), *From accession to Presidency*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń.

Danilewicz W. (2006), *The situation of children living in migration families*, Trans Humana Publishing, Białystok.

Glombik K., Moraniec P. (2005), *Labour migration – an opportunity or a threat. Social and moral perspective*, Opole University Publishing, Opole.

Garlicki J., (2005), *Democracy and European integration. Study of personal and political orientation of two Polish generations*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń.

Jakubowicz K., (2010), *The European Union and media. Between culture and economy*, Academic and Professional Publishing, Warsaw.

Kawczyńska-Butrym Z., (2008), *Migration: opportunity or threat to family*, in: edit W. Muszyński, E. Sikora, *Marriage and family in post-modernity*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń.

Kawczyńska-Butrym Z. (2008), *Asking social services to support affected parenthood with disease and labour migration*, in: edit A. Kwak, *Parenting: between home, law and social services*, Academy of Special Education Publishing, Warsaw.

Milczyńska-Kowalska M., (2008), *Consumer nature of family in post-modern society*, in: edit W. Muszyński, E. Sikora, *Marriage and family in post-modernity*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń.

Romaniszyn K. (2003), *The cultural implications of international migration*, Publishing of Institute for the Study of Polish Community and Its Ministry, Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin.

Radziewicz-Winnicki A. (2004), *Society during the change. Reflections from the scope of social pedagogy and sociology of transformation*, Psychological Publishing of Gdańsk, Gdańsk.

Radziewicz-Winnicki A. (1999), *Modernization of imperceptible areas in native education*, Impuls Publishing, Kraków.

Sepkowski A. (2006), *Visions and projects of Europe unification in the first decades of the twenty-first century*, in: edit M. Stolarczyk, *The European Union and Poland facing integration dilemmas at the beginning of the twenty-first century*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń.

Stasińska-Klas T. (2005), *Awareness of Polish society during 1989-2005. What were the Poles expecting and what happened?*, in: edit K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, W. Furman, *Reportage and social change after 1989*, Rzeszów School of Business, Kraków, Rzeszów.

Stolarczyk M. (2006), *The European Union and Poland facing integration dilemmas at the beginning of the twenty-first century*, Adam Marszałek Publishing, Toruń.

Wierzchowski S. (1997), *Family in demographic and socio-economic transition*, in: edit P. Kryczka, *Family in a changing society*, Znak Publishing, Lublin.

Zięba M.S. (2008), *Migration: challenge of the twenty-first century*, Lublin Business School Ltd. Development Foundation of Catholic University of Lublin, Lublin.