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## FAMILY COUNSELING FOR THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN FRANCE: IS IT NEEDED AND IS IT POSSIBLE? A REPORT FROM RESEARCH ON POLISH CATHOLICS IN FRANCE

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**Abstract.** The article presents the results of theoretical and empirical (qualitative) research concerning the Polish community in France gathered around the Polish Catholic Mission (PCM) in France. The research follows the diagnostic survey method and uses several techniques: questionnaire-based interview, free interview, in-depth interview and focus group interview. Most of the research was carried out in Paris, with some surveys completed online. The information received and presented in the article made it possible to: create a “map of family problems” as experienced and/or observed by the respondents, determine the needs of the respondents for assistance in family counselling and determine the possibilities and difficulties in organizing family counselling within the structures of the PCM in France.

**Keywords:** family counselling, help for the Polish community, aid to minorities, Polish Catholic Mission, problems of Polish families in France.

**Streszczenie. Poradnictwo rodzinne dla Polonii francuskiej – czy potrzebne i czy możliwe? Raport z badań nad polskimi katolikami we Francji.** Życie Polaków na emigracji, choć wydaje się łatwiejsze na poziomie ekonomicznym, to nie wyklucza przeżywania trudnych sytuacji rodzinnych. Emigracja nie zawsze sprzyja rozwiązaniu takich problemów, czasem przeciwnie: zaostrza „stare” problemy lub generuje nowe. W polskich rodzinach polonijnych mogą zderzać się różne postawy wobec wartości i stylów

życia na obczyźnie. W specyficznym położeniu znajdują się ponadto ci, którzy weszli w tzw. związki mieszane (pod względem kulturowym czy wyznaniowym). W literaturze i badaniach naukowych nad Polonią można znaleźć niewiele informacji o życiu rodzinnym emigrantów, w tym Polonii francuskiej, której dotyczy ten tekst. Prezentowany tekst oparto na przeprowadzonych w latach 2019–2020 badaniach, których celem było określenie potrzeb i możliwości rozwoju poradnictwa rodzinnego dla Polonii w strukturach Polskiej Misji Katolickiej we Francji. Problemy badawcze wyrażono w pytaniach: Jakie są problemy rodzinne Polonii francuskiej w opinii badanych osób? Na jaką pomoc w zakresie poradnictwa rodzinnego mogą liczyć rodziny polonijne we Francji? Jaką ofertą z zakresu poradnictwa rodzinnego zainteresowane są osoby badane? Czy osoby badane są gotowe ponosić koszty za uzyskiwaną pomoc w zakresie poradnictwa rodzinnego? Jakie są możliwości i utrudnienia w organizowaniu poradnictwa rodzinnego dla Polonii we Francji? Chcąc rozwiązać powyższe problemy, posłużono się metodą sondażu diagnostycznego z zastosowaniem technik: ankiety, wywiadu swobodnego, wywiadu pogłębionego i zogniskowanego wywiadu grupowego. W rezultacie badań stworzono „mapę problemów rodzinnych” doświadczanych i/lub obserwowanych przez badanych, określono ich zapotrzebowanie na poradnictwo rodzinne oraz określono możliwości i utrudnienia w organizowaniu poradnictwa rodzinnego w strukturach PMK we Francji. Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań są reprezentatywne dla tej części francuskiej Polonii, która deklaruje wyznanie katolickie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** poradnictwo rodzinne, pomoc dla Polonii, pomoc dla mniejszości, Polska Misja Katolicka, problemy rodzin polonijnych we Francji.

## INTRODUCTION

The Polish diaspora in France (currently comprising 800,000 people) is among the oldest and largest in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Throughout history, Polish people have emigrated to France for various reasons, such as: due to a difficult political situation or in search of artistic inspiration, but above all, in search of better social conditions to start the so-called “new life”. However, although this life might seem easier in economic terms, it does not exclude experiencing difficult family situations. Moreover, living in emigration does not always solve them. Sometimes, on the contrary: it

<sup>1</sup> *Polonia w Europie*, ed. Barbara Szydłowska-Ceglowa (Poznań: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1992); MSZ, “Rządowy program współpracy z Polonią i Polakami za granicą w latach 2015–2020”, last modified June 12, 2021, <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/rzadowy-program-wspolprac-z-polonia-i-polakami-za-granica-w-latach-2015-2020>; “Polonika 2020”, accessed May 12, 2021, <http://polonika.eu/polacy-we-francji>.

exacerbates the “old” problems or generates new ones. Different attitudes to values and to living in a foreign country may clash in Polish diaspora families. In addition, those who have entered into the so-called mixed relationships (in terms of culture or religion) are in a very specific position.

Literature and research on the Polish diaspora abroad includes little information on the family life of emigrants, including the Polish community in France, to which this text relates. Some attention is paid to the families living in the so-called migration separation, to children and spouses left behind in Poland, while the family life of entire Polish families settled in France has not been studied so far.<sup>2</sup> There are no reliable studies on the problems experienced, the needs and the support possibilities for these

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<sup>2</sup> In publications on the Polish community, issues are mainly related to: the history of emigration of Poles to various countries, the transmission and fostering of Polish culture and Polish language, the role of the Catholic Church in fostering Polish identity, the integration of Polish people with the countries of settlement, the participation of the Polish community in the scientific and cultural life, industries and services of particular countries, as well as the assistance of the Polish government to Poles living abroad (Dorota Prasałowicz, Magdalena Łuźniak-Piecha, Joanna Kulpińska, *Młoda polska emigracja w UE jako przedmiot badań psychologicznych, socjologicznych i kulturowych. Publikacja pokonferencyjna* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności, 2013), accessed May 12, 2021, <http://www.euroemigranci.pl/dokumentacja.html>.

The issue of the family life of the Polish emigrants is only mentioned in a few publications, among which there are no reports strictly on the family life of Polish people in France: Grażyna Koszałka, *Model małżeństwa i rodziny w środowisku polonijnym północnych Niemiec* (Pelplin: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Pelplińskiej „Bernardinum”, 2004); Dorota Gizicka, Julia Gorbaniuk, Małgorzata Szyszka, *Rodzina w sytuacji rozłąki migracyjnej* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010); Wioletta Danilewicz, “Kontrowersje wokół wizerunku rodziny migracyjnej”, *Pedagogika Społeczna* 39, no. 1 (2011): 33–50; Anne White, *Polish families and migration since EU accession* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2011), accessed May 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qgmsz>; Izabela Szczygielska, *Migracje zarobkowe i ich wpływ na funkcjonowanie rodzin* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2013), doi: <https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.9788323519997>; Ireneusz Kwecki, Sławomir Trusz, Anna Kwatera, Bożena Majerek, *Dzieci migrantów zarobkowych. Obywatele Europy czy eurosieroty* (Kraków: Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej, 2015); Danuta Marzec, Elena Karpuszenko, Beata Zajęcka, *Migracje rodziców: problem społeczno-wychowawczy w Unii Europejskiej* (Warszawa: Ośrodek Wydawniczo-Poligraficzny SIM, 2015); Agnieszka Chwieduk, “Specyficzny Polak w normalnej Francji – o polskiej imigracji w tekstach francuskich badaczy”, *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny*, no. 2 (2016): 23–50; Tomasz Biernat, Piotr Krakowiak, Tomasz Leszniewski, “Emigracja zarobkowa jako sytuacja trudna (w świetle aktualnych badań nad polskimi migrantami w Wielkiej Brytanii)”, *Pedagogika Społeczna* 71, no. 1 (2019): 181–199.

families. Some observations and remarks on this subject are presented in the few publications dedicated to family counselling for the Polish diaspora, however not limited to France.<sup>3</sup> It is assumed that family life of emigrants is not free from typical and, to some extent, natural problems related to experiencing marital crises, educational difficulties, value conflicts and more serious social problems (addictions, domestic violence). Therefore, it is logical to assume that in a situation of distancing from families of origin and in the absence or loosening of ties with the Polish community in the given country of residence, Polish people may experience the need for support (psychological and spiritual). Spiritual support has been provided for centuries by the numerous Polish Catholic ministries dispersed throughout the world.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Poles can seek psychological support in institutions that operate in emigration (as part of the health-care system, social assistance), in non-governmental organisations, from private specialists and on the Internet.<sup>5</sup> The availability of such assistance often depends on the place of residence, legal situation, language skills and financial resources. For Polish Catholics, religious issues are also important when seeking and receiving psychological assistance, and hence the reference to the Polish Catholic Mission's structures (in this article).

The Polish Catholic Mission (PCM) in France is run by the Rector and six Deans of the respective deaneries, as well as parish priests under their authority. In total, it includes more than a hundred priests. More than seventy Polish ministry centres operate in the territory of the PCM in France. The PCM in France also owns four recreation and retreat centres, the Library and the Archives, as well as the Polish Seminary. The PCM in France publishes a magazine called "The Catholic Voice" (pol. "Głos Katolicki"); moreover, it runs an information and social network

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<sup>3</sup> Władysław Szewczyk, „Poradnictwo rodzinne. Program szkoleniowy dla Ośrodków Polonijnych”, *Studia Polonijne* 35, 2011; Paweł Landwójtowicz, „Budowanie więzi małżeńskiej a emigracja w perspektywie poradnictwa rodzinnego”, in *Budowanie więzi w małżeństwie i rodzinie a emigracja. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. Grażyna Koszałka, Józef Młyński (Warszawa: Instytut Papieża Jana Pawła II, 2018), 73–96.

<sup>4</sup> GUS 2019, “Baza organizacji i instytucji polskich i polonijnych za granicą”, last modified June 12, 2021, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/polonia-i-polacyw-swiecie/baza-organizacji-i-instytucji-polskich-i-polonijnych-za-granica,2,3.html>.

<sup>5</sup> “Legal and Social Information Centre for the Polish Diaspora 2020”, accessed May 12, 2021, <http://pio.paris>.

portal – PolskiFR (polskifr.fr) and a profile on Twitter and Facebook – @misjafrancja.<sup>6</sup> Since its establishment, PCM in France has enabled Polish emigrants to participate in liturgical life, interact with their compatriots and foster their Polish identity. Nowadays, PCM also focuses on promoting pro-family associations and organisations.<sup>7</sup> In Paris in 2019, the School for Polonia Leaders (SPL) was launched in collaboration with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and The Pure Hearts Foundation (pol. *Fundacja Czyste Serca*) in Bydgoszcz, of which Family Study: the family counselling course is a part. The course programme is called: “By helping myself – I help others” and was customised to be implemented in emigration. It is attended by people interested in the knowledge and skills necessary to solve their family problems, as well as by those interested in working in family counselling centres.

Family counselling, as one of the areas of guidance in a broader sense,<sup>8</sup> is aimed at supporting the functioning of an individual in his or her family relationships. It can be provided by specialists such as: psychologists, pedagogues, mediators, as well as by people employed by non-governmental organisations, after appropriate preparation specific to each organisation.<sup>9</sup> Family counselling may be classified, i.a., by the type of addressees (for fiancés, for married couples, for parents, for the youth) and by the type of reported problems (educational, marital). It may be provided in the form of individual contact (face-to-face, by telephone, Internet) and in the form of group work (educational, support or therapeutic

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Czarnowski, “Duszpasterstwo rodzin polskich we Francji w kontekście historyczno-pastoralnym”, in *Budowanie więzi w małżeństwie i rodzinie a emigracja. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. Grażyna Koszałka, Józef Młyński, (Warszawa: Instytut Papieża Jana Pawła II, 2018), 25–36; “PCM 2020”, accessed May 12, 2021, <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/pmk>.

<sup>7</sup> Czarnowski, “Duszpasterstwo rodzin polskich we Francji w kontekście historyczno-pastoralnym”, 34; Józef Młyński, “Poradnictwo rodzinne w Polskich Misjach Katolickich w Europie Zachodniej”, in *Budowanie więzi w małżeństwie i rodzinie a emigracja. Teoria i praktyka*, 161–168.

<sup>8</sup> Alicja Kargulowa, *O teorii i praktyce poradnictwa. Podręcznik akademicki* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006), 37, 56.

<sup>9</sup> Małgorzata Słowik, “Podstawy planowania działalności poradni rodzinnych dla Polonii przez podmioty wyznaniowe”, in *Poradnictwo rodzinne na emigracji. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. Józef Młyński, Władysław Szewczyk (Warszawa: Instytut Jana Pawła II, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW, 2021), 319–338.

group). The importance of the so-called psycho-education (carried out in group work) is particularly noteworthy with regard to organising family counselling for the Polish community. It consists of the knowledge transfer, combined with dialogue, sharing experiences on how to apply this knowledge in everyday life. In family counselling centres, this knowledge usually relates to communication basics in a relationship, principles and methods of raising children, fostering marital and parental relationships.

Family counselling centres are set up by religious entities such as PCM and support a lifestyle which is in line with the faith. This is because some values are closely related to the faith, especially in understanding marriage, family, divorce, and sexuality (in the case of Polish immigrants associated at PCM, it is mainly about Catholic ethics). People who are working at PCM's family counselling centres must not, of course, impose their beliefs on those seeking assistance, but neither they should ignore the potential of professed beliefs and faith if they are expressed. The use of values in the help process is encouraged, i.e., by the supporters of the popular solution-focused brief therapy approach, which promotes "utilisation".<sup>10</sup>

## 1. METHODOLOGY OF OWN RESEARCH

The research subject in this paper includes the needs and possibilities of developing family counselling for the Polish diaspora within the structure of the Polish Catholic Mission (PCM) in France. The main objectives of the research were to identify these needs and possibilities. The main research problem is as follows: what are the needs and possibilities of developing family counselling for Polish Catholics within the structures of the PCM in France. The specific problems were expressed in the following questions: What, in the respondents' opinion, are the family problems of Polish immigrants in France according to the respondents? What kind of help in family counselling can Polish families in France

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<sup>10</sup> Gary Collins, *Poradnictwo chrześcijańskie* (Warszawa: Chrześcijański Instytut Biblijny, 2005), 28-29; Insoo Kim Berg, Scott Miller, *Terapia krótkoterminowa skoncentrowana na rozwiązaniu. Pomaganie osobom z problemem alkoholowym* (Łódź: Galaktyka, 2000), 29-31.

count on? What kind of family counselling services are the respondents interested in? Are the respondents ready to pay for family counselling services? What are the possibilities and obstacles in organising family counselling for Polish immigrants in France? In relation to the main problem posed, the following main hypothesis was formulated: There are various possibilities for the development of family counseling for Polish Catholics within the structures of the PCM in France.

To solve the above-mentioned research problems, qualitative research was conducted in 2019–2020. A part of the research took place in Paris (pilot study: April 2019, main study: April 2019, November 2019), whereas another part was done online: through the use of “Google Forms” (November 2019 – March 2020) (Google Forms 2020).

The research sample selection involved a meeting with the organiser and coordinator of the School for Polonia Leaders (SPL), who is also the secretary of the PCM in France. He provided contacts for SPL graduates and students. Ultimately, the study included 60 Poles living in and around Paris: graduates and students of the SPL and the SPL coordinator. In the research, the diagnostic survey method was adopted and several techniques were used: questionnaire, in-depth interview, focus group interview and free interview.<sup>11</sup> Table 1 presents the method, the techniques used, the respondents and the research duration.

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Merton, “The Focused Interview and Focus Groups. Continuities and Discontinuities”, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, no. 4 (1987): 550–566; David Morgan, “Focus Groups”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 1 (1996): 129–152; Richard Krueger, Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups. A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2000); Mieczysław Łobocki, *Metody i techniki badań pedagogicznych* (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, 2005), 243–272; Dominika Maison, *Zogniskowane wywiady grupowe* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2004); Paweł Daniłowicz, Jolanta Lisek-Michalska, “Fokus – zogniskowany wywiad grupowy. Zarys metody”, in *Zogniskowany wywiad grupowy. Studia nad metodą*, ed. Paweł Daniłowicz, Jolanta Lisek-Michalska (Łódź, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2007), 11–32; Earl Babbie, *Podstawy badań społecznych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2013), 274–318.

**Table 1. Respondents, research methods and techniques used as well as research duration**

Research method and technique	School for Polonia Leaders participants	School for Polonia Leaders organiser and coordinator	Total number of persons	Research duration
Diagnostic survey with a questionnaire	33		33	April 2019, November 2019–March 2020
Diagnostic survey with a focus group interview	2 groups of 13 respondents		26	April 2019, November 2019
Diagnostic survey with a free interview	10 respondents (of the above groups)		–	ditto
Diagnostic survey with in-depth guided interview		1	1	November 2019
			60	

Source: own study.

## 2. RESEARCH RESULTS

### 2.1. QUESTIONNAIRES AMONG GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOL FOR POLONIA LEADERS

In their own family life, the respondents (r.) declared the following difficulties: lack of time for their family (21 r.), educational problems (18 r.), marital problems (16 r.), financial and housing problems (9 r.), experiencing addictions (8 r.), loneliness (6 r.) and illnesses of family members (3 r.).

When considering the family issues of the Polish community in France known to the respondents, they mentioned: lack of time for their family (28 r.), divorce and infidelity (19 r.), financial problems (16 r.),

problems with finding a job (10 r.), problems with French language skills (8 r.), addictions (21 r.), “making money” (1 r.), “rat race” (1 r.), as well as “idealising Poland” (1 r.). Moreover, the difference between the life of the Polish diaspora in marriages between Poles and mixed relationships (Polish-French) has been identified: “they are two different worlds” (2 r.). Many respondents (16 r.) also believed that the loosening of ties between parents and children who “are brought up by the French school with completely different, non-Catholic values” has become a family problem for Polish Catholics in France.

About half of the respondents were interested in taking advantage of possible family counseling services. Most respondents are in need of: workshops on communication in relationships (18 r.), premarital preparation for fiancés (the so-called Pre-Cana) (16 r.), “school for parents” workshops (14 r.), help for married couples in crisis (12 r.), training in natural family planning methods (12 r.). Some respondents also declared the need for consultations with a family counsellor (4 r.) and a psychologist (3 r.).

31 respondents expressed their willingness to pay for the assistance provided. The costs they would be ready to bear were estimated at: 10–15 euros (2 r.), 20–30 euros (14 r.), 40 euros (11 r.), 50 euros (4 r.). The willingness to provide family counselling was expressed by 26 r. (of whom 15 could provide it pro bono, 7 – occasionally pro bono). In addition to the completed course in family counselling, 4 of the respondents have higher qualifications entitling them to provide such services: a diploma from a two-year Family Theology Study (3 r.), a degree in psychology (1 r.).

## 2.2. FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH STUDENTS OF THE SCHOOL FOR POLONIA LEADERS

No significant differences were observed in the data obtained from the two groups. Therefore, the results of the interviews conducted in these groups will be presented jointly. During the interviews, the focus was on the answers given without specifying their frequency (hence the number of respondents is not indicated along with the results presented below).

The respondents of both groups specified which difficulties, in their opinion, are faced by Polish families in France: loneliness, lack of integration among Poles in their Polish community, shortage of time for the family due to the French organisation of the children's school life and the parents' professional life (at this point the respondents explained what exactly this organisation entailed), the loosening of emotional bonds between spouses, the prevalence of infidelity, extra-marital relationships, experiencing alcohol and Internet addiction, a careless and hedonistic lifestyle, the intergenerational conflicts related to differences in values which the parents and the youth find most important), the lack of agreement with French teachers on priorities in upbringing Polish children, the children and youth leaving the Church, the problems with fostering Polish identity (especially in culturally mixed families), "promoting" early sexual initiation among the youth at schools. Some of them also mentioned that they plan to return to Poland "in their old age" (when they retire).

Among the ways of coping with these difficulties, the respondents mentioned: gathering at the Catholic Church (PCM), meetings after Sunday mass, participating in retreats, in various movements and religious communities of the Catholic Church, sending children to Polish schools (at parishes), speaking Polish at home, looking for psychological assistance online, attending an SPL PCM family counselling course in Paris.

In their answers, the respondents indicated that they are afraid to use the assistance provided by French specialists due to their different Western European world-view (for example, the acceptance of divorce, moving on with other partners, or acceptance of sexual intercourse of young people before marriage). Only a few respondents knew where obtaining free-of-charge psychological assistance for Polish people was possible. The vast majority of respondents have never used such assistance. A few benefited from family counselling in French schools; however, due to a perceived lack of understanding and cultural differences on the part of the individuals providing such assistance, they were not satisfied with the experience.

Almost all respondents expressed an interest in family counselling that could be developed at the PCM in France, especially in parenting skills workshops, communication workshops and support for married couples in crisis. Three respondents declared their willingness to provide

family counselling after obtaining additional necessary qualifications (in addition to completing the family counselling course).

### 2.3. FREE INTERVIEWS

During these interviews, we confirmed the information obtained from the focus groups and obtained data on the support for families offered by PCM and on the respondents' experience in organising family counselling in parishes. It was noted that integration events for Polish families offered by PCM and retreats conducted by guests invited from Poland constitute a valuable opportunity to meet and strengthen faith. However, they do not satisfy the need for assistance in solving serious family issues (such as addictions, infidelity, educational problems). Some respondents' own experiences (in organising family counselling in parishes) suggested that the support of parish priests is essential for the success of such projects. Those persons also expressed their willingness to continue these assistance activities.

### 2.4. IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

From among the reported difficulties and problems faced by Polonia families in France (corresponding to those identified in the diagnostic questionnaire, group and individual interviews), the respondent particularly highlighted poverty and poor housing conditions. The respondent mentioned the shame that some people experiences:

They don't want to invite anyone to their place because they are ashamed to be living in such poor conditions.

The respondent also emphasised the feeling of isolation and loneliness that accompanies those whose children have grown up, left the Church and live in a secular way.

According to the respondent, the family counselling course offered as part of the PCM's activities may be of therapeutic value. He explained:

Some of them have come here because they have difficult situations at home, such as alcoholism, educational problems. They need help.

Hence the name of the course: “By helping myself – I help others”. The course also gives the participants the minimum qualifications to provide family counselling at the Catholic Church. The respondent sees the need to develop family counselling at the PCM in France, but he does not have enough time to do that: “but not just yet”. The respondent indicated people who could help with this task but specified that they also had many other responsibilities.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The conducted research helped discover previously unexplored areas – family life of Polish Catholics (gathered in the structures of PCM), as well as the needs and possibilities, declared by the respondents, for the development of family counselling in the PCM.

#### 3.1. “FAMILY PROBLEMS MAP” OF THE POLISH DIASPORA IN FRANCE

In the first period of emigration, the members of Polish families experience adaptation problems associated with the lack of French language skills, difficulties in finding a job or appropriate accommodation. Regardless of how long their emigration is, they also struggle with common social problems such as: alcohol and Internet addictions, marital problems, educational problems, infidelity, divorce. Many of the respondents drew attention to the loneliness that accompanies the lives of Polish people in France. It is associated to some extent with insufficient mutual integration of Polish people in the Polish diaspora. However, the loosening of ties between relatives in Polonia families, associated with the lack of time to foster and strengthen them, may constitute the main reason for their loneliness. This is probably related to the French organisation of time spent by children at school and by parents at work. In France, children meet their parents at home at 5 pm at the earliest (they have Wednesdays off and

2-week holidays every 1.5 months, but if their parents work professionally, the children spend this time without them). As the children grow up, behaviour issues arise as a result of the natural intergenerational conflict of values, which is exacerbated by Polonia teenagers' susceptibility to the influence of Western European lifestyles. In the opinion of the respondents, this conflict is exacerbated by French education, which promotes secular values and ridicules Catholicism. When adult children of Polish emigrants leave their family homes and start an independent life (usually distant from the values promoted in the family home), loneliness of their parents becomes even greater. At the same time, when the children become independent, the parents lose their rights to social benefits, which significantly reduces their income.

A respondent of the in-depth interview drew particular attention to the difficult financial (precisely: housing) situation of Polish diaspora families in France. He dedicated a large part of his account to this issue. The problem raised by the respondent would require further research to verify how many members of the Polish community living in France are affected by it (or whether it concerns the so called "storks" and "hamsters" – economic emigrants who plan to return to Poland, so they do not invest in having a good accommodation).<sup>12</sup>

To sum up the issue of family problems of the Polish diaspora in France: it may be concluded that these problems seem to be so important and intensified by the specificity of life as an immigrant that it is necessary to undertake measures aimed at organising assistance to solve them (for example in the form of family counselling).

### 3.2. THE NEED FOR FAMILY COUNSELLING FOR THE POLISH DIASPORA IN FRANCE

Assistance in the field of family counselling known to and available to Polish community families in France is scarce and usually unsatisfactory (counselling based on a world view which is distant from the Catholic perspective). The ways of coping with difficult life situations include

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<sup>12</sup> John Eade, Stephen Drinkwater, Michael Garapich, *Class and Ethnicity – Polish Migrants in London* (Cronem: University of Surrey, 2001), 33–34, accessed May 12, 2021, <http://doc.ukdataservice.ac.uk/doc/6056/mrdoc/pdf/6056uguide.pdf>.

congregating at the Catholic Church (meetings after Sunday masses, participation in retreats, in various movements and religious communities), sending children to Polish schools operating at parishes, seeking psychological assistance online. The participation in the SPL PCM family counselling course in Paris also becomes helpful for the respondents. It makes them realise how important it is to seek external assistance in certain situations in life and thus intensifies the perceived lack of such assistance.

The respondents declare a keen interest in the offer of family counselling. They are particularly interested in: assistance for married couples in crisis, relationship communication workshops, workshops for the development of parental skills, preparation of fiancés for marriage, training in natural family planning methods. The listed course offer is of psycho-educational nature and can therefore be provided by people with basic, not necessarily specialist, training as this is not strictly therapeutic work.

Numerous declarations of willingness to pay for possible assistance (on average 20–30 euros per meeting) are confirmed by the above-presented data on the need for the development of family counselling for the Polish community. They also provide a strong argument in favour of making a decision on this project within the PCM structures (potentially employed counsellors could be paid for their work).

To sum up: The need to develop family counselling for the Polish diaspora within the PCM structures in France is significant. It is possible that a reference to this conclusion could increase the chances of receiving public funding for the development of family counselling centres for the Polish community within the PCM structures.

### 3.3. POSSIBILITIES AND DIFFICULTIES IN ORGANISING FAMILY COUNSELLING FOR THE POLISH COMMUNITY IN FRANCE

The data obtained in the research demonstrate that the willingness to provide family counselling within the PCM structures is declared by laypeople, some of whom have higher qualifications and experience in this field. Furthermore, as a result of the family counselling course run by PCM, the number of potential family counsellors is increasing. They may play the role of first contact persons in the counselling centres and conduct

group psycho-education (for example on communication in marriage, on the upbringing of children and young people, on prenuptial preparation). Some of these people declared their willingness to work pro bono and some of them declared that they “sometimes may work pro bono”. However, considering the willingness of all the respondents to pay for the assistance they receive (usually in the amount of 20–50 euros per meeting), it is possible to conclude that, from the staffing and material point of view, establishing family counselling centres at the PCM in France is possible. The expanded premises that the Mission manages also facilitates the process. In theory, therefore, organising and developing family counselling is possible. The lack of support and involvement on the part of the parish priests in the parishes where the family counselling centres operate may constitute an obstacle in this project. Postponing the decision may also hinder the project – it may demotivate those who are potentially interested in providing family counselling.

## SUMMARY

The conducted analyses indicate that Polish diaspora families in France experience various types of problems associated with the situation of adaptation to immigration conditions (learning the language, finding a job), with the separation from relatives who were left behind in Poland, with the lack of time to foster family ties and at the same time with insufficient integration with the Polish community in France (loneliness), situations of risk (regarding the stability of marriages and family, experiencing addictions), conflict situations (insufficient agreement on the upbringing of Polish children in French schools, difficulties with the intergenerational transmission of the identity of Pole and Catholic). The family problems of the Polish diaspora in France identified in the course of the research indicate the need for developing family counselling for this group. At the same time, the research results collected and discussed above confirm the main hypothesis: There are many possibilities for the development of family counselling for the Polish diaspora within the structures of PCM in France (in view of the declared needs for assistance in solving specific family issues).

We may conclude that the results of the conducted research are representative for the part of the Polish community in France that declares itself to be Catholic. It is, of course, difficult to make any statements about their representativeness for the entire Polish diaspora in France. Conducting comparative research on the areas mentioned in the Catholic and non-Catholic Polonia groups may be considered an interesting plan for the future. The conducted studies inspire other scientific research, concerning i.a. family counselling provided in French schools, b. the benefits of living as an immigrant in the opinion of Polish families affiliated and not affiliated with PCM (including benefits that influence family life), c. the needs and possibilities of developing family counselling in other countries where PCM or other (Catholic) religious associations operate.

At the end of this article, the author would like to share a personal reflection based on own experience of running a foundation-based Christian family counselling centre in Poland. The creation and support of family counselling centres for the Polish community abroad require deep awareness and strong motivation on the part of those who are responsible for assisting families (in the case of PCM, this involves mission rectors, parish priests and other superiors). If they do not see the need and point of organising counselling centres for the faithful, they will find reasons not to do so. But if they do find such assistance meaningful and necessary, they will look for ways to provide it. The existence and development of family counselling centres and psychosocial and spiritual condition of Polish diaspora families associated with it depends mainly on their awareness and bold decisions (and not on their financial standing).

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