

Introduction

The objective of this monograph is to tackle contemporary issues of European families from the perspective of scholar exploration from Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. All the authors of the chapters are recognised experts in their fields with considerable research as well as practical experience.

Miroslav Mitlöhner puts emphasis on the fact that from the beginning of human's existence a conventional family has always comprised of parents and children. Such family is socially and ethically accepted and legally legitimised, also in terms of alimony allowances. Nonetheless, not each couple can enjoy having offspring and, although, there are many causes of childlessness, the most prevalent concern biological capacity. Additionally, young people procrastinate the decision to become parents on account of social grounds, giving priority to improvement in the material situation. Still, lack of offspring often deprecates the parents. They can, however, decide to adopt a child, but it can be then considered as an unfamiliar child, i.e. coming from other family, and subsequently (probably) genetically determined. Social acceptance of such family is not common in all environments. The second possibility to compensate lack of offspring, and establish a functional family, is the *in vitro* procedure, that is becoming more and more accessible. It also involves the problem of social acceptance, however, in European countries, the assisted reproductive technology is legally regulated, thus allowed. The third possibility involves surrogacy, which, yet

functions in the grey area, as they are no explicit legal regulations concerning this procedure. The author analyses and weighs these issues, with reference to binding legal regulations.

Human experience in the early childhood and the family situation significantly shape patterns of behaviour of an individual in different circumstances. It also provides with some degree of certainty to assess whether such person can be aggressive.

Danuta Borecka-Biernat stresses the importance of family as the main source of conditioning aggressive behaviour. Inappropriate emotional relations within the family, lack of parental and emotional interest in the child, attitude of rejection, striking emotional conflicts between parents and children, or strong, possessive love and unconditional acceptance of a child altogether greatly favour the emergence of aggression within its behavioural pattern. The author conducts analysis of family factors conditioning aggression, proving that imitation of behavioural models they encounter in family environment are of paramount importance for the occurrence of aggressive behaviour among children. Aggressive fathers and mothers unquestionably contribute to their child's aggressiveness due to imitated model of aggressive interactions. Recognition of the symptoms and etiology of aggressive behaviours constitutes, without any doubts, the essential condition of the effectiveness of preventive and educational activities undertaken with reference to aggressive children. Such support, directed at overcoming aggression, includes its punishment procedures, aggressive catharsis and techniques of anger management among children.

Postindustrial societies seemingly present the dominant model of 2+1 families, i.e. two parents and one child. Nonetheless, **Krzysztof Zajdel** points that large families still exist in our reality, both in impoverished as well as affluent communities. The author defines a large family revealing the importance of changes occurring within contemporary realm. Recalling

improprieties, particularly in the material aspect. Although having many children (especially in the context of unfavourable demographic indicators) should be perceived as an exemplary family, in a society it is often associated with pathology. The author throws light on problems related to school education of children from large families and difficulties resulting from social work activities with them.

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned social issues and external conditions, dysfunctionality of such families is on the rise. **Małgorzata Prokosz** tackles the issue of child's functioning within such surrounding. The author explores basic improprieties typical for a contemporary family environment. She also introduces the readers to a standardised family diagnosis with emphasis on situations when a child should remain at home and when it should be placed in a caretaking institution. Moreover, the article describes contemporary institutions in charge of providing assistance for a family at risk. The diagnostic aspect is not as crucial, however, as the specific ways of providing a child and its family with support by, among others, volunteer activities in dysfunctional families, or by keeping a Book of Life. The author stresses that contemporary families struggle with many problems, still, the priority is to promote methods of rational and effective support, rather than to pinpoint abnormalities within.

The increasing necessity of labour migration affecting many families is tackled by **Małgorzata Prokosz** and **Krzysztof Zajdel** in the context of Euro-orphan families and children's solitude in such families. This chapter concerns matters of inexplicit and ambiguous definitions related to orphanhood, loneliness and solitude. The situation of longer departure of one or both parents is taken into consideration, however the authors predominantly stress emotional aspects, i.e. the feelings experienced by lonely children, for whom even the most expensive gifts from parents aboard, or the best caretaker, can-

not replace the sense of a real home. Unfortunately, the bitter conclusion of this chapter proves the problem to be practically unsolvable as the migration labour is taking place more and more recurrently, hence children will be brought up away from their own families. The only promising option is to leave the country with children, what would reduce the scale of Euro-orphan phenomenon, although the demand for family seniors caretaking services would simultaneously rise.

While analysing the family matters, parents and children are principally in the focus of attention. Nonetheless, describing multigenerational families, **Zuzana Truhlářová** undertakes the complex issue of aging society. The author concentrates on the care provided for the elderly in housing circumstances from the perspective of a standard family life. According to demographic forecasts, majority of the European countries are subject to constant increase in the number of seniors, hence more and more families will soon have to deal with the issue of providing care for their senior relatives that can no longer function without assistance. Younger family members thus become the natural caretakers, whose obligation is to provide with support for their closest ones. Notwithstanding, in the contemporary economically difficult circumstances it comes across as a challenging task. The author analyses the range of the issue, categories of support (both within family and public institutions) as well as alternative forms of caretaking services. She also explores the problems of crisis families in contemporary society and its impact on the concept of the family and its objective within seniors caretaking. The author draws a great importance to the issue of coexistence between seniors and the younger generation in the context of family care and senior caretaking services from the perspective of family carers and their activities within home caretaking services for those dependent on such support.

It is often forgotten that persons with intellectual disability

the political transformation in 1989, they had been excluded from the society, pushed into its margin and placed in closed facilities, almost on the periphery of the civilisation. Although they were provided with some activities, it was definitely insufficient. **Jana Levická** tackles the positive transformational changes, accomplished in all European countries, including rise in the scientific knowledge on the needs of the disabled, progress in medicine, accessibility of different facilities, and broad-based integration, including the disabled to the society at large. Authorities of the Slovak Republic publicly declared commitment to support the process of integration both of the children and adults with disabilities to fully integrate the entire Slovakian society. The emphasis was put on integration education at elementary schools while supporting family of a child with disability. As the author implies, after 20 years, these ideas are appropriate by any standards, however, some problems have also emerged in his regard. The aim of such integration was to eliminate barriers between the healthy and intellectually disabled citizens, nonetheless the first ones had not been prepared for the changes, clung to the conventional way of social perception. Other problems concern the fact that mental disturbances are often associated with different types of disability, hence their diagnosis is extremely difficult. The third issue refers to a specialist training for the therapists, whose tasks should – apart from direct assistance – focus on enhancement of the social atmosphere within inclusive education, improving the quality of life both for the disabled and their families.

This monograph reveals diversity of issues, still the common trait of all the chapters is reflected in the fact that the authors consider in their exploration different kinds of family problems. It can be therefore assumed that contemporary family is disturbed and leads to decline, but it is not. The presented issues, providing with variety of approaches represented by the authors, have several features in common. First of all – it is becoming

more and more prevailing to exhibit in theoretical research the human itself, i.e. a small, sick, disabled, orphaned, lost, aggressive or old creature. Noticing problems of such individuals is the first step to their solution. Second of all – number of different diagnoses are carried out, concerning the current family issues as well as change in its range, hence some phenomena previously superficially recognised, are becoming subject of profound scientific analyses. Third of all – knowledge on family is constantly subject to verification by the dynamic reality, hence the representatives of given fields of science undertake current issues, endeavoring to catch up with the ceaselessly overhasty pace of civilisational progress and its consequences, expressed (for example) in disturbances, seeking solutions for emerging questions and challenges. Moreover, the theoretical and empirical analyses of the authors involve application of the achievements of other scholars, hence the exchange of thoughts, mainly within the scientist from abroad and neighbouring countries, facilitate in-depth recognition of the precarious phenomena, what in turn, allows to establish scientific theories more rationally. Last but not least – apart from the theories, there are also new, various concepts for education and elimination of the existing problems, already verified and accomplished in practice. Thus, reference of the reflections to this, what is particularly valuable from the historical perspective and international experience both within theory and praxis, is essential.

We hope that this monograph will contribute to the broadening of knowledge on contemporary family and draw the attention of the reader to the preeminent phenomena, requiring theoretical reflection. We also hope it shall become the source of consideration and premise for further family research, not only on the Polish, Czech or Slovakian ground.

Authors