Abstract
This article presents the shape of the contemporary family in Poland and Spain which is based on developments that have taken place in these countries in relation to family formation and dissolution through an analysis of indicators such as: marriage, divorce, fertility, births outside marriage during the last three decades. The shape of the contemporary family keeps changing in both these countries, but the speed of changes is different. In Poland, changes in family formation have occurred much more slowly than in Spain, where the family is not only heterosexual marriage, but also homosexual marriage.

Key words: family, marriage, divorce, birth outside marriage, fertility, cohabitation.

Introduction
Not more than 40 years ago, marriage used to mark the start of a first union for most couples in Europe, the overwhelming majority of children were born and reared in marital unions, and a spouse's death (rather than dissolution) was the far most common reason for the termination of the union (Festy, 1980, pp. 311–315, as cited in: Nazio, 2008, p. 1). Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, family living has undergone profound transformations with marriage postponement, rise in cohabitation (particularly since the beginning of the 1980s), lowering and delayed fertility, and increasing divorce rates (Kiernan, 2000, p. 1, as citied in: Nazio, 2008, p. 1), which have impacted on the prevalence and meaning