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## **Kasia Heads West: Changing Family Values in Post-Communist Poland**

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Oral Presentation O13.2

**KASIA HEADS WEST: CHANGING FAMILY VALUES IN POST-COMMUNIST POLAND**

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For this research paper I will be focusing on the East to West job migration that is occurring in the recently expanded European Union (EU). Defining the family unit, both the nuclear and extended family, will be the starting point of the analyses of changes that has occurred during EU membership. The starting point of this analysis will be through changing dynamics of Western job migration during Poland's communist times up to the present. The changing policies have created new types of migration both to the US and to Western Europe. The opening of borders both after the fall of communism and after EU membership are cause for some of the biggest changes. The typical labor migration after the fall of communism was for longer, defined periods to the West. Currently, the typical labor migration seems to be for shorter periods with frequent re-occurrences throughout the year. This in effect, has created a new situation back home for the family. Especially after the EU, an increasing amount of families are consistently left broken by one or both parents leaving to seek employment.

Poland has been a nation rooted in Roman Catholicism with strong family values with very negative views towards divorce. This new age of migration is having a drastic effect on those family values. Children find themselves being raised in a single parent situation and divorce rates have been at a constant increase. Younger couples struggling to support a new life together often find the only option is live apart in order to find work, which puts a strain on any marriage. These steady changes are largely due to the trends in migration and are changing the cultural values of the country.