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## ISLAM IN THE GERMAN SOCIO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE

### INTRODUCTION

Approximately 4 million Muslims live now in the Federal Republic of Germany, which is equivalent to 5 per cent of the population of this country. With the increase in the number of immigrants, the political and socio-cultural landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany changes, which leads to many lively discussions on this topic. In the contemporary German social-political discourse on Islam a positive message about the role of this religion and its followers dominates. At the same time the fear of Islamic radicalism grows in German society, which is conditioned by both internal and external factors. The aim of the author is the answer to the question about the place and role of Islam and its followers in the contemporary discourse which takes place in Germany.

The subject of the discourse is Islam and its followers in the Federal Republic of Germany. For the purposes of this analysis, the following are regarded as the main actors of this discourse: politicians (including the president, members of the federal government and the land governments, other representatives of political parties); Muslim organisations in Germany (including the Central Council of Muslims in Germany and the Islamic Council of Germany); other religious organisations (Catholic, Evangelical, Jewish); society, including recently created social movements (including anti-Islam Pegida); scholars and experts; the media (in particular German public television and radio stations, newspapers, opinion weeklies, magazines); courts (including the Federal Constitutional Court decisions).

The vast majority of Muslims live today in western federal states. The majority of people professing this religion reside in North Rhine-Westphalia. In the east of Germany the only major concentration of the representatives of this religious group is located in Berlin.

**Table 1**  
**Muslims in German federal states**

Federal state	Amount in thousand	Amount in percent
Baden-Wuerttemberg	673	6,3
Bavaria	535	4,3
Berlin	280	8,2
Brandenburg	4	0,2
Bremen	64	9,8
Hamburg	142	8,0
Hesse	418	6,9
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	4	0,2
Lower Saxony	251	3,2
North Rhine-Westphalia	1343	7,5
Rhineland-Palatinate	162	4,0
Saarland	32	3,1
Saxony	28	0,7
Saxony-Anhalt	16	0,7
Schleswig-Holstein	85	3,0
Thuringia	8	0,4

Source: Dürfen wir vorstellen: Deutschlands Muslime. *Zeit-Online* [Online] 29 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2015-01/islam-muslime-in-deutschland> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

Nearly three-quarters of Muslims living in Germany are Sunni (74 percent). Other religious groups include Alevis (12.7 percent), Shiites (7.1 percent) Ahmadis (1.7 percent) Ibadis (0.3 percent), others (4 percent)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Dürfen wir vorstellen: Deutschlands Muslime. *Zeit-Online* [Online] 29 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2015-01/islam-muslime-in-deutschland> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

Germans have managed to achieve certain successes in the policy of multiculturalism (Multikulti), which is exemplified by the fact that also German Muslims increasingly successfully play the role of social and political leaders in this country. However, the German model of multiculturalism implemented for many years, in many ways still does not seem to stand the test in that country, which is one of the most serious challenges which politicians of the country are facing today. The policy of multiculturalism, conducted consistently and for many years in the spirit of full tolerance, leads both to measurable benefits for the German state, and to the condition in which critical opinions on selected activities of the followers of this religion appear, often interpreted as extreme at an early stage of the discussions. A serious problem of certain environments, which moderately emphasise their smaller or larger detachment from certain elements of the policy of multiculturalism, is the fact that they are often joined by people with extreme views, which results in pushing these groups to political and social margins, making it impossible to conduct a substantive discussion in mainstream politics. The result is a discrepancy between the official line of political correctness and the opinion belonging to a minor part of the population indicating also the presence of some negative phenomena related to Multikulti policy. Moreover, in recent years a growing fear of Islamic terrorism has been sensed in German society. Thwarted assassination attempts prepared in recent years by Muslim fundamentalists and the activity of a relatively small, but very active group of extreme Salafists have not overshadowed the overall picture of Muslims living on the western side the Oder.

## THE DAY OF THE OPEN MOSQUE

One of the central symbols of the German policy of multiculturalism is the so-called Day of the Open Mosque organised once a year (*Tag der offenen Moschee*, TOM). Islamic religious communities in Germany were the initiator of this project, taking place in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1997. It is no accident that TOM is organised annually on 3 October, that is on the Day of German Unity national holiday, commemorating the reunification of the German states made in 1990. More than 1,000 mosques take part in TOM, that is more than a third of Muslim shrines in Germany. Among other events, mosque sightseeing, lectures, exhibitions and discussions about Islam are organised on this day. TOM enjoys considerable popularity in Germany and every year attracts more than 100,000 people, mostly not professing

Islam. Since 2007 TOM has been carried out under the direction of the Coordination Council of Muslims in Germany (*Koordinationsrat der Muslime in Deutschland*, KRM). Since that time TOM has been organised each year under one common motto for all participating mosques. For example, in 2007 the slogan was: ‘Mosques – bridges for the common future’ (*Moscheen – Brücken für eine gemeinsame Zukunft*)<sup>2</sup>. The KRM itself was established during the German Conference on Islam organised in 2007 (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*, DIK), initiated by Wolfgang Schäuble<sup>3</sup>. Four influential German Islamic organisations are part of the KRM existing since 2007: the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (*Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion*, DITIB), the Islamic Council of the Federal Republic of Germany (*der Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, IRD), the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (*der Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland*, ZMD) and the Association of Islamic Cultural Centres (*der Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren*, VIKZ)<sup>4</sup>.

## MEDIA ABOUT ISLAM

An important role in the promotion of ‘multicultural values’ is also played by the German media. For example, in April 2007 a German regional public broadcaster *Südwestrundfunk* (SWR) began to emit an approximately 6-minute program entitled ‘The Islamic word’ (*Islamisches Wort*), which since then has been broadcast on the online edition of this radio every first Friday of the month. Three months later, ZDF started broadcasting a program devoted to Islam on its website. A broadcast entitled ‘Forum on Friday’ (*Forum am Freitag*) is also broadcast on ZDF news channel at 8 p.m.<sup>5</sup>. And in March 2015 a German public radio station *Deutschlandfunk* started broadcasting

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<sup>2</sup> <http://tagderoffenenmoschee.de/index.php> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>3</sup> Paluszek, A. 2012. Niemiecka Konferencja ds. Islamu w kontekście podmiotowości politycznej muzułmanów. [German Conference on Islam in the context of political subjectivity of Muslims.] In: Widy-Behiesse, M. ed. *Islam w Europie. Bogactwo różnorodności czy źródło konfliktów? [Islam in Europe. The richness of diversity or a source of conflict?]* Warszawa, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.koordinationsrat.de/> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>5</sup> Read about German radio and television programs on Islam in Topçu, C. 2009. *Sendungen von Muslimen in Deutschland*, 12 January 2009. Available at: <http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/Magazin/MedienPolitik/MuslimischeSendungen/muslimische-sendungen-node.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

a series of programmes aimed to familiarise listeners with the Koran. In the weekly Friday program entitled ‘The Koran explains’ (*Koran erklärt*), individual passages of the Koran are presented<sup>6</sup>.

## MUSLIMS IN GERMAN POLITICS

Muslims living in Germany are also visible in the world of politics. Cem Özdemir is one of the most recognisable German politicians professing Islam. In 1994 he was the first Turk and a Muslim, who was elected to the Bundestag. And in 2008 he became chairman of Alliance 90/the Greens. This fact was interpreted as an example of successful integration and a symbol of the success of the German policy of multiculturalism<sup>7</sup>. C. Özdemir also described himself as a ‘secular Muslim’<sup>8</sup>. In 1994 Leyla Onur, who has Turkish roots, became a member of the Bundestag (Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD). Between 1989–1994 she was a member of the European Parliament<sup>9</sup>. In turn, Aygül Özkan (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) was the minister for social affairs, women, family, health and integration in Lower Saxony in 2010–2013<sup>10</sup>. Another example is Aydan Özoguz (SPD), who in December 2013 became the plenipotentiary of the Federal Government for immigration, refugees and integration (*Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration*)<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Sendereihe „Koran erklärt“ „Das ist kein religionswissenschaftliches Seminar“. [Online] 6 March 2015. Available at: [http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/sendereihe-koran-erklaert-das-ist-kein.886.de.html?dram:article\\_id=313445](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/sendereihe-koran-erklaert-das-ist-kein.886.de.html?dram:article_id=313445) [Accessed: 20 March 2015]. See also Die Sure der Woche. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* [Online] 13 March 2015. Available at: <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/im-deutschlandfunk-wird-woechentlich-eine-koran-sure-erklaert-13479533.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>7</sup> See *Portrait Cem Özdemir*. Available at: <http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de/DIK/DE/Magazin/MedienPolitik/Oezdemir/oezdemir-node.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>8</sup> See *Eben nicht Gustav oder Eberhardt. Cem Özdemir – Schwabe türkischer Abstammung – über antimuslimische Stereotype, Thilo Sarrazin als Gesprächspartner und das Aufrappelein nach dem Sturz*. Available at: [http://www.oezdemir.de/files/Bilder/Artikel/Pressearchiv/2010\\_03\\_interview\\_strassenfeger\\_ausgabe\\_maerz.pdf](http://www.oezdemir.de/files/Bilder/Artikel/Pressearchiv/2010_03_interview_strassenfeger_ausgabe_maerz.pdf) [Accessed: 20 March 2015]

<sup>9</sup> [http://webarchiv.bundestag.de/archive/2007/0206/mdb/mdb14/bio/O/onur\\_le0.html](http://webarchiv.bundestag.de/archive/2007/0206/mdb/mdb14/bio/O/onur_le0.html) [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.aygueloezkan.de/person/lebenslauf/> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/abgeordnete18/biografien/O/oezoguz\\_aydan/258824](http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/abgeordnete18/biografien/O/oezoguz_aydan/258824) [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

## IS ISLAM PART OF GERMANY?

The emotional political and social debate on Islam and the German policy of multiculturalism really flared up in August 2010 after the publication of a book by Thilo Sarrazin entitled *Germany is doing away with itself: How we are exposing our country to risk*<sup>12</sup>. The controversial publication containing very uncomplimentary opinions about Muslims has become one of the biggest bestsellers on the German book market. By May 2012 it was bought about 1.5 million people. Several weeks after the release of T. Sarrazin's book, the words uttered by the then President of Germany Christian Wulff started another discussion in Germany. The Christian Democrat politician, delivering a speech on 3 October 2010, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the reunification of Germany, assured, among other things, that 'Islam is part of Germany'. This statement became an impetus for an intensive debate on the contemporary role and place of Islam in Germany. In January 2015 Angela Merkel acted similarly after the meeting in Berlin with Prime Minister of Turkey Ahmet Davutoglu. German Chancellor assured at the time of her full support for the integration of immigrants in the Federal Republic of Germany. She also drew attention to the need for more intensive dialogue between followers of different religions<sup>13</sup>. However, the words uttered by Ch. Wulff or A. Merkel clearly divided German society. It is evidenced, for instance, by the survey conducted by the German public television ZDF in January 2015.

This survey, which was conducted a week after the attacks of Islamic terrorists on the French editors of the weekly *Charlie Hebdo*, also shows that the largest number of people who do not share the opinion that Islam is part of Germany are found among supporters of the Eurosceptic Alternative for Germany (AfD), a similar opinion is shared by the majority of potential voters of the leftist *Die Linke* group. At the other extreme are supporters of Alliance 90/the Greens which is co-chaired by Muslim C. Özdemir. The voters of the Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union (CDU / CSU) are most divided on the matter. Nearly 40 percent of supporters of the SPD and the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) do not share Merkel's opinion.

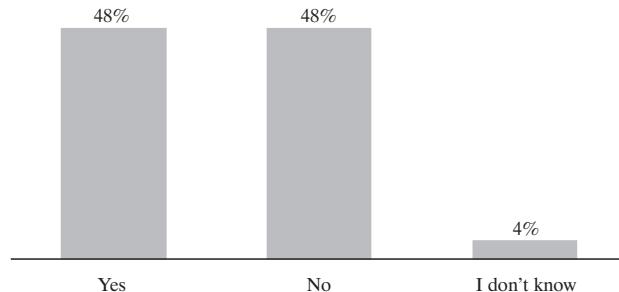
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<sup>12</sup> Sarrazin, T. 2010. *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*. München.

<sup>13</sup> Michalak, A. 2015. Merkel: Islam należy do Niemiec. [Merkel: Islam belongs to Germany.] *Rzeczpospolita* [Online] 12 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/28,1170760-Merkel--Islam-nalezy-do-Niemiec.html?referer=redpol> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

Chart 1

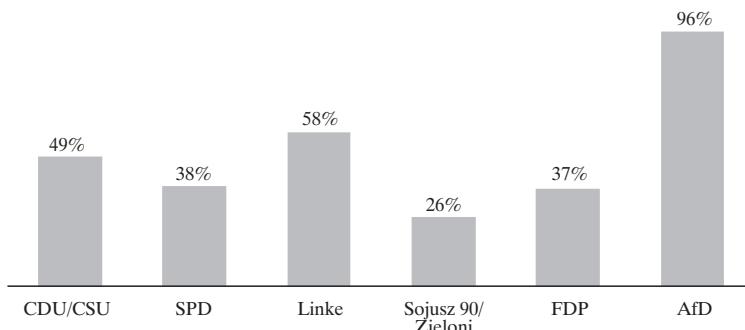
**Do you share Merkel's statement that 'Islam is part of Germany'?**



Source: ZDF Politbarometer 16 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2322902/Islam-hier-Deutschland-gespalten-> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

Chart 2

**Do you agree with Merkel's opinion that 'Islam is part of Germany'?**  
– Answers of supporters of various political parties



Source: ZDF Politbarometer 16 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2322902/Islam-hier-Deutschland-gespalten-> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

## ISLAMIC HEADSCARVES DIVIDE GERMANY

The German debate about Islam also applies to the issue of headscarves worn by Muslim women living in the country. In March 2015 the Federal Constitutional Court (FTK) examined a complaint by a Muslim teacher and a school pedagogue for a ban on wearing headscarves in public schools in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The FTK concluded that it is incompatible with the German Basic Law. The Court also questioned a record on

favourable treatment of Christian and Western cultural and education values (*christliche und abendländische Bildungs – und Kulturwerte*) contained in the provincial educational law (*Schulgesetz*). According to the FTK, such a statement is discriminatory for the followers of other religions. The above decision, which referred directly to the laws in force in North Rhine-Westphalia, obliges other federal states to adapt their legislative solutions to this decision<sup>14</sup>. This decision was welcome, among others, by leaders of Germany's leading Islamic organisations – Nurhan Soykan, Secretary General of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany<sup>15</sup> or Ali Kizilkaya, Chairman of the Islamic Council in Germany<sup>16</sup>.

It should be noted that in 2003, the FTK stipulated that the decision on a ban on wearing headscarves by Muslims in schools could be made at the land level by the parliaments of individual German federal states. After this ruling in 2004–2005 the ban on the wearing headscarves by teachers in schools was introduced in eight German states, located mainly in the western part of Germany. This law began to be binding in Baden-Württemberg (in 2004), Bavaria (2004), Berlin (2005), Bremen (2005), Hesse (2004), Lower Saxony (2004), North Rhine-Westphalia (2004) and in Saarland (2004). Activists of the CDU in Rhineland-Palatinate and Schleswig-Holstein and the German People's Union (DVU) in Brandenburg also opted for the introduction of similar bans, however the parliaments of these federal states did not give their consent<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, the consent to wearing headscarves by Muslim teachers in schools was in force primarily in the eastern lands (Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia). The ban was

<sup>14</sup> Sm, PAP, Dotkliwa ingerencja w wolność wyznania. Zakaz noszenia chust w niemieckich szkołach jest niekonstytucyjny. [Severe interference in freedom of religion. The ban on headscarves in German schools is unconstitutional.] *Tok FM* [Online] 13 March 2015. Available at: [http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,102433,17564920,Federalny\\_trybunal\\_konstytucyjny\\_Zakaz\\_noszenia\\_chust.html](http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,102433,17564920,Federalny_trybunal_konstytucyjny_Zakaz_noszenia_chust.html) [Accessed: 20 March 2015]; *GekipptesKopftuchverbot: WelcheBundesländerjetztihreGesetzeprüfenmüssen*. *Spiegel Online* [Online] 13 March 2015. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/schulspiegel/wissen/kopftuch-verbot-diese-bundeslaender-muessen-ihre-gesetze-pruefen-a-1023333.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>15</sup> *ZMD begrüßt die Aufhebung des Kopftuchverbotes für Lehrerinnen*. 13 March 2015. Available at: <http://zentralrat.de/26212.php> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>16</sup> *Islamrat begrüßt die Entscheidung des Bundesverfassungsgerichtes zum Kopftuchverbot*. 13 March 2015. Available at: <http://islamrat.de/islamrat-begruesst-die-entscheidung-des-bundesverfassungsgerichtes-zum-kopftuchverbot/> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

maintained, in turn, in the majority of western lands (with the exception of Hamburg and North Rhine-Westphalia and Schleswig-Holstein as mentioned earlier)<sup>18</sup>.

## MUSLIMS AND CHANGES IN GERMAN LAW

For many years Muslim organisations operating in Germany have demanded granting them more rights in social and cultural life of Germany. At the end of December 2014 Prime Minister of Lower Saxony, Stephan Weil (SPD), announced signing of an agreement with Islamic organisations operating in this federal state granting them more rights than ever before. The Social Democratic politician decided, among others, to introduce in this state a day off work in a period of one of Islamic religious holidays. Hamburg was the first federal state which entered into a separate agreement with representatives of the Muslim community in Germany. In November 2012 the land authorities granted Muslims a lot of new privileges guaranteeing, among others, the promotion of Islam in public schools. The authorities also agreed to build more mosques in the land and bury the dead without coffins. Under this agreement, Muslims themselves were able to choose three days which were to be legislated as free from work, they themselves were also to decide curriculum related to Islam in college, and also received the possibility to choose teachers of Islam in the city's schools. In turn, Muslims living in Hamburg were to commit themselves, among others, to abide by German law, to recognise the principle of gender equality and tolerance. Bremen authorities also entered into a separate agreement with Muslim organisations<sup>19</sup>.

In turn, in June 2013 Hesse became the first German land which granted the Muslim community the status of a public-law corporation. It was granted to *Ahmadija* which has approximately 35 thousand members, which thus gained rights similar to Christian and Jewish organisations<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>19</sup> Coellen, B. 2014. Ustawowe święto religijne muzułmanów w Dolnej Saksonii? [Statutory religious holidays of Muslims in Lower Saxony?] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 28 December 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/ustawowe-%C5%9Bwi%C4%99to-religijne-muzu%C5%82man%C3%B3w-w-dolnej-saksonii/a-18154146> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>20</sup> See Jendroszczyk P. 2013. Islam zdobywa Niemcy [Islam wins Germany.] *Rzeczpospolita* [Online] 14 June 2013. Available at: <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/28,1019496-Islam-zdobywa-Niemcy.html?referer=redpol> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

## ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AS A CHALLENGE FOR THE GERMAN STATE

The German state promoting for many years the open and tolerant policy of multiculturalism at the same time carries out intensive activities to neutralise radical Islamic groups operating in the Federal Republic of Germany. Only after the American events of 2001, did Germany really realise what kind of threats Islamic fundamentalism brings also to their country. Before the attacks on 11 September 2001 it was Germany where numerous cells of Islamic terrorists were located, and in Hamburg Mohammed Atta with his associates made plans for the attack on the WTC and the Pentagon<sup>21</sup>. As Józef M. Fiszer noted: ‘Terrorism, which has been getting stronger since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, takes on very dangerous forms for the contemporary world and raises a growing concern among political elites, people of science, culture and journalists. Dominated by extremist Islamic fundamentalism, it leads downright to the clash of civilisations and cultures, and thus to deep divisions and conflicts among states and nations’<sup>22</sup>.

Over the last several years, the German services have already thwarted at least several serious assassination attempts by Islamic terrorists. According to the German Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*, BKA) from 2000 to mid 2015 there were twelve unsuccessful assassination attempts by Islamic terrorists in the country<sup>23</sup>. Such a situation occurred, among others, in Bremen. The anti-terrorism alert was announced in the city on 28 February 2015 when the police armed with machine guns appeared in the city centre<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, on 10 December 2012 at the railway station in Bonn in one of the backpacks a powerful explosive device was found, which had not been

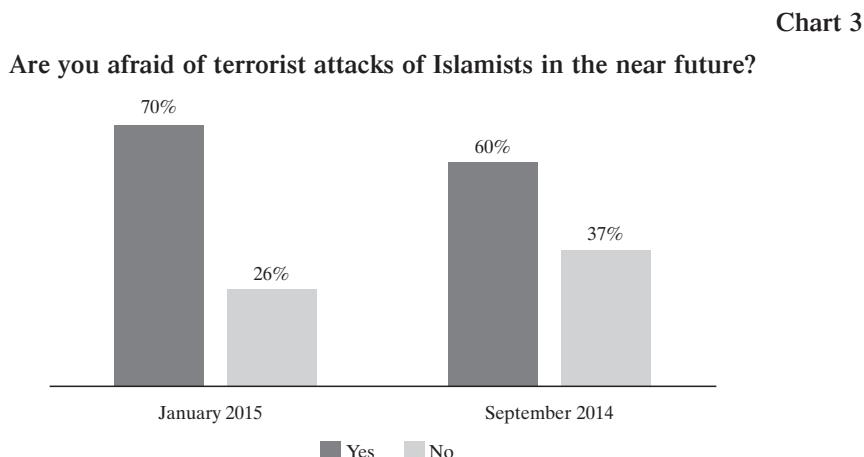
<sup>21</sup> See Hreczuk, A. 2011. Nieliczni, ale groźni. [Few, but dangerous.] *Polityka* [Online] 12 October 2011. Available at: <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1519770,1,niemcy-na-ceلونiku-fundamentalistow-islamskich.read> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>22</sup> Fiszer, J.M. 2012. Terroryzm jako zagrożenie dla współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych. [Terrorism as a threat to contemporary international relations.] *Mysł Ekonomiczna i Polityczna*, no. 3/2012, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup> Kev/AFP/dpa/Reuters, Sicherheitsbehörden: Deutschland entging zwölf islamistischen Anschlägen. *Spiegel-Online* [Online] 7 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bka-deutschland-entging-zwoelf-islamistischen-anschlaegen-a-1042514.html> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

<sup>24</sup> Diehl, J., Siemens, A. 2015. Terrorangst in Bremen: „Alle Register gezogen“. *Spiegel-Online* [Online] 1 March 2015. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/bremen-entwarnung-nach-angst-vor-islamistischem-anschlag-a-1021196.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

detonated. The trial of the Islamic extremists, suspects in this case, who were also accused of attempted assassination of Marcus Beisichtaw, right-wing Pro-NRW politician, in March 2013, began in Düsseldorf in September 2014<sup>25</sup>. The situation in Bonn was similar to that of 2006 when due to a design flaw of bombs planted in regional trains in Rhineland it was possible to avoid the explosion of these charges. According to Piotr Madajczyk: 'German authorities have not worked out effective methods of combating radical Islamic movements and their propaganda impact on some young Muslims, also with German citizenship. Some of them set off to take part in jihad. Opposition to this is even more difficult because in Germany, where insufficient attention has been given to integration for years, a structural system "producing" terrorists has been created'<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, the surveys conducted by ZDF in 2014 and in 2015 show that the majority of German society also expresses fear of attacks of Islamic radicals.



Source: ZDF Politbarometer 16 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2322902/Islam-hier-Deutschland-gespalten-> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>25</sup> Jarecka, A. 2014. Düsseldorf. Proces przeciwko domniemanym islamskim zamachowcom. [Düsseldorf. The trial of alleged Islamic terrorists.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 8 September 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/d%C3%BCsseldorf-proces-przeciwko-domniemanym-islamskim-zamachowcom/a-17908692> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>26</sup> Madajczyk, P. 2015. *Miedzy fundamentalizmem a asymilacją. Muzułmanie w Niemczech.* [Between fundamentalism and assimilation. Muslims in Germany.] Warszawa, p. 237.

In September 2014 Germany, as the first country in Europe, issued a formal ban on activities in favour of the so-called Islamic State (IS). The decision on this matter was issued by Thomas de Maizière, Federal Minister of Internal Affairs. Referring to the threat to public safety it was forbidden, among others, to use of any symbols referring to this organisation, including the black flag of the IS radicals<sup>27</sup>.

A big problem for the German services responsible for national security is the activity of Salafists, suspected of carrying out, starting from 2014, the recruitment of German citizens for the IS<sup>28</sup>. The Salafists come from an orthodox faction of Islam. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*) in October 2014 in Germany there were approximately 6,300 representatives of this trend, mainly in North Rhine-Westphalia, where there is also the largest Muslim community in Germany. Their number, however, dramatically increases and it has tripled in the last few years<sup>29</sup>. At the beginning of 2015 in Germany a trial of 25-year-old Polish woman living in Bonn began. The Muslim convert professing Salafism was accused of supporting terrorists under the banner of the Islamic State<sup>30</sup>. Six months later she was found guilty<sup>31</sup>. In Rhineland loud discussions were caused by the appearance of the so-called 'Islamic

<sup>27</sup> Coellen, B. 2014. Niemcy wprowadzają zakaz działalności IS. [Germany prohibits the activities of the IS.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 12 September 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/niemcy-wprowadzaj%C4%85-zakaz-dzia%C5%82alno%C5%9Bci-is/a-17917765> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>28</sup> See more on this topic in Jarecka, A. 2014. Krótka droga do dżihadu. Salafici w Niemczech rekrutują nowych bojowników. [A short path to jihad. Salafists in Germany recruit new fighters.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 12 September 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/kr%C3%B3tka-droga-do-d%C5%BCihadu-salafici-w-niemczech-rekrutuj%C4%85-nowych-bojownik%C3%B3w/a-17915683> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>29</sup> Hans-Georg Maaßen, President of the Office estimated then that at the end of 2014 there will be about 7,000 Salafists in Germany. See stv/dpa/AFP. Extremisten in Deutschland: Verfassungsschutz rechnet mit 7000 Salafisten. *Spiegel Online* [Online] 25 October 2014. Available at: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/verfassungsschutz-rechnet-mit-7000-salafisten-in-deutschland-a-999212.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>30</sup> Wielński, B. T. 2015. Dżihad Karoliny. Polka oskarżona o wspieranie terrorystów staje przed niemieckim sądem. [Karolina's jihad. A Polish woman accused of supporting terrorists stands before a German court.] *Wyborcza.pl* [Online] 21 January 2015. Available at: [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,17286238,Dzihad\\_Karoliny\\_Polka\\_oskarzona\\_o\\_wspieranie\\_terrorystow.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,17286238,Dzihad_Karoliny_Polka_oskarzona_o_wspieranie_terrorystow.html) [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>31</sup> See mil, PAP, Niemcy. 26-letnia Karolina R. skazana za wspieranie Państwa Islamskiego. Prawie 4 lata więzienia. [Germany. 26-year-old Karolina R. convicted of supporting the Islamic State. Almost 4 years in prison.] *Gazeta.pl* [Online] 24 June 2015.

moral police', urging residents to behave in accordance with the principles of Sharia, in the summer of 2014 on the streets of Wuppertal<sup>32</sup>. Aiman Mazyek, chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany distanced himself from those events. 'This group of hooligans does not speak on our behalf (...). These people abuse our faith for their own purposes. Their conspicuous and pointless action is detrimental to all Muslims in Germany' – he argued in an interview for *Tagesspiegel am Sonntag*<sup>33</sup>.

In January 2015 after the assassination of Paris editors of the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* by Islamic extremists, in which 12 people were killed, another emotional debate on Muslims took place in Germany<sup>34</sup>. On 13 January 2015 on the initiative of the Central Council of Muslims a manifestation entailed 'To stand together – to show your face' (*Zusammenstehen – Gesichtzeigen*) was organised in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate, which was attended by representatives of many churches, representing, among others, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Prominent political activists, including Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Joachim Gauck, were also present.

## IS ISLAMISATION A DANGER FOR GERMANY AND EUROPE?

Another discourse on the role of Islam in Germany also flared up after the creation of a movement called 'Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West' (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, Pegida) in that country in autumn 2014. Pegida was founded in Dresden, eastern Germany. Starting from 20 October 2014 its supporters

Available at: [http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114871,18221816,Niemcy\\_26\\_letnia\\_Karolina\\_R\\_skazana\\_za\\_wspieranie.html](http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114871,18221816,Niemcy_26_letnia_Karolina_R_skazana_za_wspieranie.html) [Accessed 30 June 2015].

<sup>32</sup> Stasik, E. 2014. Niemcy: Szariat w Wuppertalu. Samozwańcza muzułmańska policja patroluje miasto. [Germany: Sharia in Wuppertal. The self-proclaimed Muslim police patrol the city.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 05 September 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/niemcy-szariat-w-wuppertalu-samozwa%C5%84cza-muzu%C5%82ma%C5%84ska-policja-patroluje-miasto/a-17904984> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

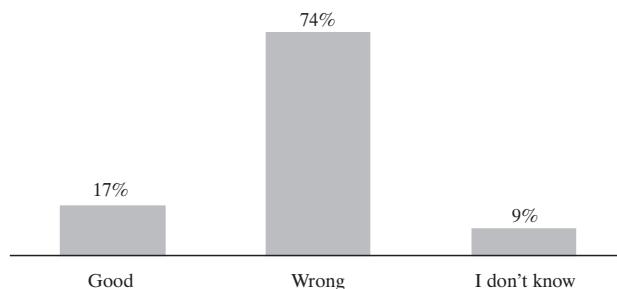
<sup>33</sup> Cited in Pawlak, A. 2014. „Nie” dla islamskiej policji obyczajowej. [‘No’ to the Islamic moral police.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 7 September 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.de/nie-dla-islamskiej-policji-obyczajowej/a-17906666> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>34</sup> The attack on the editor of *Charlie Hebdo* took place on 7 January 2015. Among other persons, known cartoonists of the editor were killed then. Previously, the weekly had published, among others, Muhammad's caricatures. Journalists of *Charlie Hebdo* also presented representatives of other religions, including Catholics and Jews, in a satirical manner. They also did not spare leading politicians.

decided to organise weekly marches in the city, held on every subsequent Monday. In December 2014 Pegida was officially registered and since then it has operated as an association (*Verein*). It has also published its 19-point program, demanding, among others, changes in German policy towards Muslim immigrants. In time, similar marches were also organised in other German cities, including Leipzig, Berlin, Cologne and Munich. On the other hand, the opponents of this movement prepared counter-demonstrations, which mostly had many more participants than those organised by Pegida. In Cologne, in response to the demonstrations of supporters Pegida, among others, the lighting of the famous cathedral in the city was switched off, while in Berlin to protest against this movement the illumination of the Brandenburg Gate was turned off<sup>35</sup>. The vast majority of German society did not express the approval for the activity of this movement.

Chart 4

#### How Germans assess the activity of Pegida



Source: ZDF Politbarometer 16 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2322902/Islam-hier-Deutschland-gespalten-> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

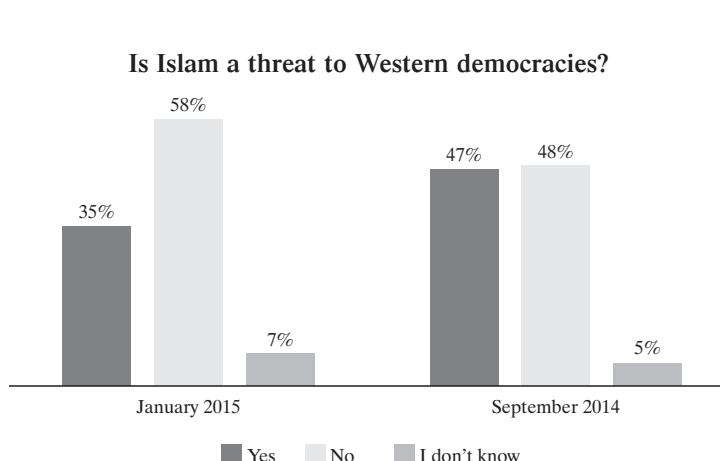
The largest demonstration of supporters of Pegida took place on 12 January 2015, that is a few days after the attack of Islamic terrorists on the editorial office of the French weekly *Charlie Hebdo*. According to the organisers around 40,000 people gathered then in Dresden<sup>36</sup>. Previously the weekly demonstrations had attracted from a few to several thousand

<sup>35</sup> See bart, Rekordowo liczna manifestacja antyislamska w Dreźnie. Maszerowało 20 tys.. [Record-breaking number of participants of the anti-Islamic manifestation in Dresden. 20 thousand marched.] *Wyborcza.pl* [Online] 12 January 2015. Available at: [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,17246469,Rekordowo\\_liczna\\_manifestacja\\_antyislamska\\_w\\_Dreznie\\_.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,17246469,Rekordowo_liczna_manifestacja_antyislamska_w_Dreznie_.html) [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>36</sup> According to local journalists, the number of demonstrating supporters of Pegida was nearly two times lower. See *ibidem*.

people. Fearing attacks, however, Pegida cancelled the next demonstration planned for 19 January<sup>37</sup>. At the beginning the organisation was lead by Lutz Bachmann. However, in late January 2015, after the newspaper *Bild* published a photo on which the leader of Pegida was posing as Adolf Hitler, L. Bachmann stepped down<sup>38</sup>. However, a month later in a secret vote he was re-elected to the board of Pegida<sup>39</sup>.

The activities of the anti-Islamic movement have been widely criticised by the vast majority of German politicians, representatives of the leading media and many social organisations. Germany, however, is clearly divided as to whether Islam threatens democratic systems of Western Europe. According to the ZDF opinion polls, which were carried out in September 2012 and in January 2015 the majority of the citizens of this country did not see such a threat. Moreover, the number of people who assess Islam negatively was at that time clearly reduced (from 47 percent in 2012 to 35 percent in 2015).



Source: ZDF Politbarometer 16 January 2015. Available at: [http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2322902/Islam-hier-Deutschland-gespalten-\[Accessed: 20 March 2015\].](http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/2322902/Islam-hier-Deutschland-gespalten-[Accessed: 20 March 2015].)

<sup>37</sup> Pegida sagt Kundgebung wegen Morddrohung ab. *Die Zeit* [Online] 18 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2015-01/dresden-pegida-demonstration-montag-abgesagt> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>38</sup> kospa, Szef niemieckiego ruchu antyislamskiego zrezygnował. Przez zdjęcie „na Hitlera“. [The head of the German anti-Islamic movement resigned. Because of a photo ‘as Hitler’.] *Wyborcza.pl* [Online] 21 January 2015. Available at: <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,17291829.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

<sup>39</sup> Zeit Online, dpa, sk, Lutz Bachmann wieder im Vorstand von Pegida. *Die Zeit* [Online] 23 February 2015. Available at: <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2015-02/pegida-lutz-bachmann-zurueck-im-vorstand> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

However, the survey conducted in a similar period (2012 and 2014) by the Bertelsmann Foundation gave different results. Most respondents negatively assessed the role of Islam in Germany, and the number of people who see a threat in this religion increased during this time (from 53 percent in 2012 to 57 percent in 2014). In addition, an increasing number of Germans saw the contradiction between Islam and Western values.

The results of the two polls, considered representative, show how Germans' moods can vary due to functioning in a multicultural society among media reports on Islamic fanaticism, right-wing extremism and politically correct mainstream.

The anti-Islamic sentiments and the activity of Pegida meant that leaders of the greatest German political parties unequivocally distanced themselves from this movement. In turn, Alternative for Germany (AfD), an Eurosceptic party founded in the spring of 2013, can be included to the supporters of Pegida. According to the polls the vast majority of the electorate of this party shares the slogans of Pegida. A positive opinion on the activities of this organisation was also expressed by representatives of the extreme right, but they are on the margins of the German political life. In March 2015 Pegida boasted of having nearly 160,000 'online' followers on its profile on the social network site Facebook<sup>40</sup>. In turn, on 13 April 2015, among other persons, Geert Wilders took part in Pegida's Dresden demonstration<sup>41</sup>.

Supporters of Pegida also negatively assessed Germany's acceptance of new immigrants from Arab countries, at the same time opposing the opening of new centres for refugees. The last several years in Germany have also witnessed a significant increase in the number of attacks on buildings in which centres of type were to be located. These incidents occurred both in the east and in the west of the country, including in Bavaria<sup>42</sup>, Saxony-Anhalt<sup>43</sup> and

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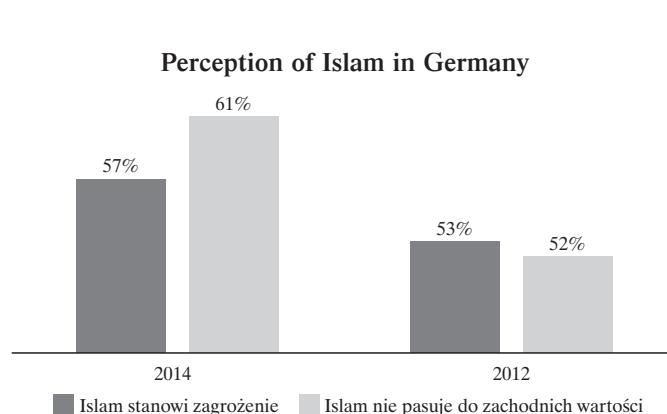
<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> Pawlak, A. 2014. Niemcy: w Bawarii spłonęły trzy budynki przewidziane na schronisko dla uchodźców. [Germany: three buildings planned for shelter for refugees burnet down in Bavaria.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 12 December 2014. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/pl/niemcy-w-bawarii-sp%C5%82on%C4%99%C5%82y-trzy-budynki-przewidziane-na-schronisko-dla-uchod%C5%BAc%C3%B3w/a-18126307> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

<sup>43</sup> Stasik, E. 2015. Niemcy: Podpalone schronisko dla uchodźców w Troeglitz. [Germany: fire set to a shelter for refugees in Troeglitz.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 4 April 2015. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/pl/niemcy-podpalone-schronisko-dla-uchod%C5%BAc%C3%B3w-w-troeglitz/a-18361467> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

Saxony<sup>44</sup>. According to the BKA, in 2012 24 such cases motivated by the activities of the extreme right were recorded, in the following year as many as 58, in 2014 as many as 162<sup>45</sup>. In 2014 about 200 thousand people applied for asylum in Germany. In the following year even a double number of such people is anticipated because only in the first half 2015 179 thousand subsequent immigrants applied for asylum in this country. They came, among others, from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, as well as from the Balkan countries<sup>46</sup>.



Source: Bertelsmann-Studie. Ablehnung des Islam wächst. *Die Welt* [Online] 8 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article136137605/Ablehnung-des-Islam-in-Deutschland-waechst.html> [Accessed: 20 March 2015].

## OTHER OPPONENTS OF ISLAM

In Germany, there are also other environments which have a negative attitude towards Muslims. For example, in January 2007 the Central Council of Ex-Muslims (*Der Zentralrat der Ex-Muslime*) was founded in Cologne,

<sup>44</sup> Jarecka, A. 2015. Niemcy: zamach na ośrodek dla uchodźców w Miśni. [Germany: an attack on a refugee center in Meissen.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 29 June 2015. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/pl/niemcy-zamach-na-o%C5%9Brodek-dla-uchod%C5%BAc%C3%B3w-w-mi%C5%9Bni/a-18547070> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

<sup>45</sup> See Scheld, C. 2015. Angriffe auf Flüchtlingsheime 2014. 162 Mal Tröglitz. *Tagesschau.de* [Online] 8 April 2015. Available at: <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/fremdenfeindliche-uebergriffe-101.html> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

<sup>46</sup> See Coellen, B. 2015. Rekordowa liczba nielegalnych imigrantów w RFN. [A record number of illegal immigrants in Germany.] *Deutsche Welle* [Online] 14 July 2015. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/pl/rekordowa-liczba-nielegalnych-imigrant%C3%B3w-w-rfn/a-18583981> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

associating mainly people who have abandoned professing this religion<sup>47</sup>. Mina Ahadi, Iranian, became the Chairperson; she is an activist fighting for respect for human rights, including in particular women's rights, and belongs to the Worker-Communist Party of Iran in-exile. In January 2015 M. Ahadi spoke with understanding about people participating in demonstrations of Pegida, however, detaching herself from the organisers of these demonstrations. At the same time she criticised appearing in Germany slogans hostile to immigrants. She also rejected the possibility of dialogue with both 'racist' environments and 'Islamists'<sup>48</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The contemporary German socio-political discourse concerning Islam is dominated by positive slogans and opinions on this religion and its followers, supported by numerous examples of successful integration of parts of Muslim communities in the society of the FRG. Discussions conducted on this topic are, however, often permeated with political correctness. This situation results partially from historical conditions. The vast majority of German politicians and journalists enforces the idea of Germany which is absolutely tolerant and open to representatives of other religions, which, according to this conception, is to leave the door wide open to representatives of other nationalities and religions. Thus, Germany wants to prove that it is totally free from any xenophobic attitudes. As a result, the fear of the 'return of nationalist sentiments' often evokes negative reactions to the criticism of Islam and activity of some radical Muslims. The discrepancy between the official mainstream of political correctness and moods of certain groups of society increasingly leads to tensions which are visible both in the social and political spheres, the latest example of which is the emotional debate on the activity of Pegida.

In Germany there is also an intense debate on whether Islam and its followers do not affect the socio-political processes taking place in that country. The cited words of Ch. Wulff that 'Islam is part of Germany', repeated at the beginning of 2015 by Chancellor Merkel, do not find unequivocal support

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<sup>47</sup> <http://exmuslime.com/> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

<sup>48</sup> *Video: Zentralrat der Ex-Muslime: Sorgen der Pegida-Anhänger ernst nehmen.* [Online] 26 January 2015. Available at: <http://www.daserste.de/information/politik-weltgeschehen/morgenmagazin/videos/zentralrat-der-ex-muslime-sorgen-der-pegsida-anhaenger-ernst-nehmen-100.html> [Accessed: 20 July 2015].

of the German public which remains clearly divided on this issue, which is shown by opinion polls held on the subject.

Religious tensions associated with the stay of the increasing number of Muslims in Germany will be gaining momentum. Moreover, the radicalisation of moods in this area is influenced also by the increasingly complicated situation in the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, connected with the activities of the so-called Islamic State. As a result, with the inflow of a growing number of immigrants to Europe, including to the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, representatives of extreme environments, gathered around radical Salafists, or far-right groups located on the opposite extreme begin to express their opinions. The fight against Islamic extremism is also one of the biggest challenges for the German services responsible for national security. All these elements are not conducive to a substantive and emotion-free discussion about Muslims.

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## ISLAM IN THE GERMAN SOCIO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE

### Summary

The author of this article reflects on the contemporary role and place of Islam in the discourse of the Federal Republic of Germany. Among the actors of this discourse in the text we will find politicians and Muslim organisations, representatives of other religions, the German media and courts. The analysis concerns selected events related to the policy of multiculturalism in this country, for example, the annually organised Day of the Open Mosque. The article indicates both the positive and negative aspects of the life of Muslims in Germany. Activities of the German state aiming at the fight with Islamic fundamentalism, including against the extreme Salafist group, were presented. The text also analyses the attitude of German society towards Islam and its followers. Moreover, the article addresses the issues related to the activities of the anti-Islamic movement Pegida, which was founded in Dresden in 2014. Its activities have caused a lively debate both within Germany as well as in other European countries.

## ISLAM W NIEMIECKIM DYSKURSIE SPOŁECZNO-POLITYCZNYM

### Streszczenie

Autor niniejszego artykułu zastanawia się nad współczesną rolą i miejscem islamu w dyskursie Republiki Federalnej Niemiec. Wśród podmiotów tego dyskursu znajdziemy w tekście m.in. polityków, organizacje zrzeszające muzułmanów, przedstawicieli innych religii, niemieckie media oraz sądy.

Analizie poddano wybrane wydarzenia odnoszące się do polityki wielokulturowości w tym państwie, np. organizowane corocznie tzw. Dni Otwartego Meczetu. W artykule wskazano zarówno na pozytywne, jak i negatywne aspekty związane z życiem muzułmanów w Niemczech. Zostały również przedstawione działania niemieckiego państwa na rzecz walki z islamskim fundamentalizmem, w tym wobec skrajnej grupy salafitów. W tekście analizowano ponadto postawę niemieckiego społeczeństwa wobec islamu i jego wyznawców. Poruszono też tematykę związaną z działaniami antyislamskiego ruchu Pegida, który powstał w Dreźnie w 2014 r. Jego aktywność wywołała ożywione dyskusje zarówno w samych Niemczech, jak również w innych europejskich państwach.

## ИСЛАМ В НЕМЕЦКОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕННО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

### Резюме

Автор настоящей статьи размышляет над ролью и местом ислама в настящее время в дискурсе Федеративной Республики Германии. Среди субъектов данного дискурса в тексте можно найти, в частности, имена политиков, примеры мусульманских организаций, представителей других религий, немецких средств массовой информации и судов. Анализу подвергнуты отдельные события, связанные с политикой мультикультурализма в этом государстве, например, ежегодно организованные так называемые Дни открытой мечети. Статья рассматривает как позитивные, так и негативные аспекты, связанные с жизнью мусульман в Германии. Представлена также деятельность немецкого государства, связанная с борьбой против исламского фундаментализма, в том числе против махровой группы салафитов. В тексте имеет место также анализ позиции немецкого общества в отношении ислама и его приверженцев. Кроме того, затронута тематика, связанная с деятельностью антиисламского движения ПЕГИДА, сформированного в Дрездене в 1914 году. Его активность вызвала оживлённую дискуссию как в самой Германии, так и в остальных европейских государствах.