Analyses OSW

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES 29.06.2011 www.osw.waw.pl

A German conference on preventing Islamic extremism

Marta Zawilska-Florczuk

The first conference devoted to the prevention of Islamic radicalism was held on 24 June upon the initiative of the Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich (CSU). The meeting, along with representatives of the state administration and secret services, was attended by members of the largest Muslim communities in Germany. The fact that the conference was held indicates that Christian Democratic parties are still strongly concerned about Islamic extremism, which the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution sees as the most serious threat to law and order in Germany.

The conference was aimed at developing a common strategy for preventing the radicalisation of young Muslim residents of Germany. The major Muslim organisations have been co-operating with German intelligence and counter-intelligence on preventing Islamic radicalism since 2005. Around four million Muslims live in Germany, approximately 36,000 of whom are members of Islamic organisations. One thousand individuals are under constant surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the federal police. The organisation of the conference by Hans-Peter Friedrich, who has held his post for several months, is a realisation of one of the priorities of the Bavarian Christian Democrats. This is also an attempt to put pressure on the FDP, the CSU's partner in the government coalition, which opposes the extension of the currently applicable package of 'anti-terrorist laws', extending the powers of the secret services to spy on the activity of individuals suspected of terrorism, until 2012. The meeting contributed to publicising more widely the conclusion included in the report by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution for 2010, according to which Islamic extremism currently poses the largest threat to law and order in Germany. Thus public support for extending the period of the application of the laws, which are now one of the most serious points in the dispute between the government coalition partners, has increased. <zawil>