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"I see myself as the representative of the Fifth Switzerland"

Beat Eberle is the first Swiss Abroad to be elected to a cantonal parliament. The 43-year-old from Sargans works as the military attaché in Stockholm and was elected as CVP representative to the St.Gallen cantonal council.

"Swiss Review": *Where were you on 14 March when the election results were announced?*

In Stockholm. I was very surprised and, of course, delighted.

Why surprised?

It was my first candidature, and I didn't expect to be elected so easily. Voters in my constituency might conceivably have chosen not to be represented by a Swiss Abroad.

So why do you think you were elected?

Mainly because of my commitment to promote security. But I also owe much of my success to my international experience. For many years I lived in the USA and for seven months in Kosovo.

And how do you aim to find out the needs of people back home?

I have strong ties and roots in Sargans and keep in close contact with the people there.

You have been a police officer and lawyer, were posted as national commander of the Swisscoy troops in Kosovo and are now military attaché in Stockholm. What influence has this professional background had on your political priorities?

Security is my main priority. Situated as it is on the Zurich-Chur and St.Gallen-Chur



Beat Eberle lives in Stockholm, where he is military attaché at the Swiss embassy in Sweden, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania.

axes, Sargans is a main junction. At the same time it is close to the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Vorarlberg. So petty crime and drug-related crimes are hot topics.

At the same time, this context also explains why the Sargans region is an SVP bastion. What differentiates you from the Right?

I am a practical person and don't like window dressing. Proposals that sound good on the rostrum but are impossible to put into practice are not my thing. I know from my own experience what is legally possible and which solutions are effective.

Some 1,600 kilometers separate your home from the cantonal council chambers in St. Gallen. You also have a full-time job, a wife and three children. How do you intend to juggle all this?

I will be travelling to sessions in St. Gallen four times a year. Added to this, there are meetings with interest groups and committee meetings. So I reckon on being in Switzerland at least eight times a year for a few days at a time. My family supports me

and we spend our free time together very wisely and intensively.

You are privileged: not every cantonal parliament combines all its council meetings into sessions, and if you were in the private sector your employer would not be so flexible with your free time!

That's right. I could not manage without the full support of my superiors (who rightly expect me to maintain the same standard of performance) and my family. The militia system on which Swiss politics is based naturally depends on such flexibility.

Since when have you been living abroad?

This is my sixth year, but I have spent lengthy periods in Switzerland during that time. I have never lost my ties with the home country.

Are you interested in any topics that specifically affect Swiss Abroad?

I am familiarising myself with the material and am happy to find areas that need addressing. I see myself very much as the representative of the Fifth Switzerland and aim to leverage this opportunity to advocate the interests of Swiss Abroad to the best of my ability.

Do you have a message for the Swiss Abroad?

Yes. I would like to encourage them to exercise their voting rights in their home country. We cannot be ambivalent about political affairs at home! Plus, our international influence is good for Switzerland and it's worth exerting it back home.

Interview Gabrielle Keller 

Translated from German.