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Autor: Uwer-Zürcher, Monika
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Mobility preferable to emigration

Over 760,000 Swiss citizens currently live abroad. Here we focus on one of them, Annemarie Tromp, a doctor. She is a member of the Council of the Swiss Abroad and lives in Hamburg.

MONIKA UWER-ZÜRCHER

“Out of sight, out of mind – we Swiss living abroad do not receive enough recognition in Switzerland.” This is the firm belief of Annemarie Tromp, a native of Berne who has been living in Hamburg for over seven years. She also feels that the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad’s profile in Switzerland is not high enough. The 34-year-old trainee anaesthetist is one of the youngest members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad. She hopes the OSA’s 100th anniversary celebrations will

her medical degree. It was pure chance. She had actually been keen to discover a completely different culture – perhaps on a different continent. But her brother was a Hamburg fan and suggested that she did her placement there, not without an element of self-interest.

The port city captivated the spirited young woman. After completing her degree in Switzerland, one thing was clear to her: she wanted to live in Hamburg. The search for accommodation proved a real challenge. She got in touch



“My emigration was quite unremarkable by comparison.”
Annemarie Tromp in Hamburg

now lead to better recognition for the Swiss Abroad.

“Many people have not yet realised that emigration has changed fundamentally over recent years,” she remarks. “We are not emigrants in the usual sense of the word like those up to the middle of the last century.” Annemarie Tromp prefers the term “mobile Switzerland” to emigration. “We go back quite often.”

Tromp did a three-month placement in the city on the Elbe as part of

with Vreni Stebner, who was president of the Helvetia Swiss society in Hamburg at the time. “She was unable to help but invited me to the society’s regular get-together,” she says. There, her more senior compatriots told her interesting stories about how they had emigrated. “My emigration was quite unremarkable by comparison. I had to get through a pile of red tape but my degree qualifications were recognised without any qualms thanks to the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the EU,”

Tromp says. She has now become so firmly established on Hamburg’s Helvetia scene that she was elected the society’s president in 2015.

Difficulty in returning owing to old-age and survivors’ insurance (AHV)

“The abolition of voluntary old-age and survivors’ insurance for the Swiss Abroad leaves a very bitter taste for us mobile Swiss,” she says with reference to the burning issues. Swiss architects and engineers have built houses and bridges throughout the world. Scientists have conducted research at foreign universities. After spending 12 to 15 years abroad they have realised to their horror that returning to Switzerland will be difficult owing to a shortfall in contribution years. This also represents a major loss to Switzerland itself, Tromp believes. She thinks our country is cutting itself off from the potential of its fellow citizens abroad.

When she tells friends in Berne that she is a member of the Council of the Swiss Abroad, the reaction is – what’s that then? She finds it remarkable that she only found out about the existence of the OSA herself in 2012 in Hamburg despite always believing she was well informed about politics as the daughter of a Bernese politician.

Annemarie Tromp is completely undecided as to whether she will ever return to Switzerland with her family. She enjoys the luxury of youth. She visits Berne with her family every two months. “I need to see the mountains from time to time,” she explains. And, of course, she speaks “Bärndüütsch” – the Bernese dialect – with her two young daughters.

MONIKA UWER-ZÜRCHER IS THE REGIONAL EDITOR OF “SWISS REVIEW” IN GERMANY