

Annika von Redwitz' personal story

Rhein-Neckar-Kreis | from Sweden

My name is Annika. I came to Baden-Württemberg when I was 24 years old after finishing my studies. I had previously been in Munich and had read an advertisement in the Süddeutsche Zeitung for a job as a translator at an up-and-coming software company in Walldorf. I can still remember standing in the phone booth at the time and feeling that I was drawn there. After the interview, however, I first had to look up on a map where Walldorf was actually located. My application was successful - and I have actually kept the job ad from the newspaper as a memory. At the time, Sweden was not yet in the EU, so it was correspondingly challenging to obtain a work permit for Germany.

At work, I then had a lot of contact with colleagues from a wide variety of countries. In this environment, I felt like a fish in water, but initially had few points of contact with German culture. Nevertheless, I felt very welcome in Germany, but integration into society simply took longer. Integration is often expected to happen quickly, but in fact it requires time and patience. For me, many things were unfamiliar at first: small things like the opening hours of the stores, but also larger things in dealing with each other, such as form of address or gender roles.

A turning point in my personal integration process was certainly my starting a family. As a mother, my contact and exchange with German women in particular intensified, starting with the pregnancy courses and the private friendships that developed from them. Gradually, I learned about German traditions such as St. Nicholas, which I now celebrate with my husband and children.

The region has become the center of my life with my family. However, it is also important to me personally to have a say and the opportunity to help shape society as an active member. This commitment is important to me in all areas of my life. That is why I decided to apply for dual citizenship after more than 20 years in Germany. I never thought that the moment I actually held the certificate in my hands would be so moving for me. It was a milestone - now I can have my say and vote.

I now work as a freelance Diversity Consultant. The topics of cultural diversity and the roles of women and men are very close to my heart. This strong interest has accompanied and motivated me since my youth. My goal is to promote these topics in Baden-Württemberg as well - I do see the potential for development.

Do I feel part of the community? Absolutely. Over the years, I've built up a network and met great people. I feel like I've arrived. On my way, many people have been very supportive, and I am totally grateful for that. Now I'm happy to be able to pass on my knowledge and experience myself.

For me, success is when we can learn something side by side and we pull together as a community to change and shape things together. In my opinion, a diverse society brings many advantages - I think that everyone who gets involved can only learn and benefit. Diversity enables progress and innovation, it offers opportunities for everyone. But diversity alone is not enough. We have to deal with it consciously so that added value can develop from diversity. Basically, it's about seeing the strengths of each individual and giving them space. That's how we grow and win as a society.

Translation from original [Wir in BW - Europäer erzählen ihre Geschichten](#)