

Bridging Latvia and Hamburg – the remarkable legacy of Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann



Photo by the Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Latvia in Hamburg

Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann is the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Latvia in Hamburg

In a world increasingly in need of cultural diplomacy and human connection, Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Latvia in Hamburg since 1997, stands as a beacon of dedication, intellect, and heartfelt service, building bridges between Germany and Latvia across culture, academia, and diplomacy.

Linas JEGELEVICIUS

“My main task is to strengthen German-Latvian ties – building bridges, developing projects and activities, particularly in the fields of economy, culture, science, tourism and social relations.” Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann tells *The Baltic Times Magazine* proudly.

She has carved an extraordinary path not only as diplomat, but also as a philologist, journalist, poet, painter. Her

CD album *Back in Time – Songs from the 1930s to the '60s* supports SOS Children's Villages in Latvia, and her painting “Latvia” was turned into an official postcard during Latvia's EU Council Presidency in 2015.

A diplomatic mission rooted in heart and heritage

It was in the 1990s, a few years after Latvia regained independence, that Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann felt drawn



Photo by the Chancery of the President of the Republic of Latvia

Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann, together with Edgars Rinkēvičs, President of the Republic of Latvia, and her son, Alexander A. Sommerkamp-Homann, a medical doctor, at Riga Castle

to the Baltic country's resilient spirit.

“From the very beginning, I was fascinated by the spirit of change among the Latvian people after gaining independence. This forward-looking attitude remains strong to this day,” Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann says.

Her work as Honorary Consul has been nothing short of transformative. She's initiated numerous cultural, academic, and economic collaborations, bringing Latvia and Germany ever closer. Events like Riga Days in Hamburg and Hamburg Days in Riga were among her proudest achievements. Perhaps most notably, she played a key role in restoring direct flights between Hamburg and Riga in the early 2000s.

“Traffic routes are commercial routes. Reestablishing the airBaltic connection was a tangible way to reconnect people and businesses,” she says.

In 1999-2000, she helped launch the “International Media and Cultural Management” program at the Latvian Academy of Culture in cooperation with Hamburg's University of Music and Theatre. Top professors from Hamburg still teach there voluntarily, demonstrating the sustainable nature of her impact.

Honored at home and abroad

Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann's unwavering commitment

to Latvia has not gone unnoticed. In 2002, she was appointed Honorary Senator of the Latvian Academy of Culture, a role that reflects her deep educational ties with the country. In 2010, Latvian President Valdis Zatlers awarded her the Latvian Cross of Recognition, a high national honor acknowledging her service to the country. Two years later, she was named “Consul of the Year” by *Diplomatisches Magazin*, recognized as the best Honorary Consul in Germany in 2010.

Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann: “Receiving the ‘Cross of Recognition’ and the title ‘Consul of the Year’ confirmed to me that even voluntary service, when done with love and vision, can move nations.”

She was also named “Donor of the Month” by SOS Children's Villages Worldwide in 2012 and received the Silver Badge of Honor from the German Journalists Association in 2016.

Empathy sets her apart

What truly sets Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann apart is her empathy. One of the most poignant stories from her consular career involved a man named Kurt Hagen, a Latvian-born German citizen. Imprisoned in Hamburg, he reached out to her in desperation.

“My secretary hesitated to let him in – he looked un-

kempt and neglected – but I received him and listened to his story,” she remembers.

Mr. Hagen, a wealthy but solitary man, wanted to create a foundation at the University of Latvia to support gifted students. He trusted no one, except her. After his death, she honored her promise, navigating diplomatic and legal complexities to help establish the Kurt Hagen Foundation in 2008, endowed with 2.4 million euros.

“No one in Hamburg knew him in connection with Latvia, except me. It was a sacred trust, and I did everything I could to fulfill it,” Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann says.

Today, that foundation supports Latvian students pursuing studies in Germany – an enduring legacy of her care.

A scholarly foundation with a creative soul

Her intellectual journey began with the study of German, English, and American literature, pedagogy, comparative religious studies, and Japanese literature in Bonn, Hamburg, and Hull (UK). In 1984, she completed her Ph.D. with a dissertation exploring the influence of haiku on modern Western literature and art—*Der Einfluss des Haiku auf Imagismus und jüngere Moderne*. This seminal work remains a cornerstone in German-language haiku research and was even translated into Japanese.

But Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann’s love for literature is not just academic—it’s deeply personal and poetic. In 1981, she founded Haiku-Spektrum, Germany’s first regular platform for international haiku. She later co-founded the German Haiku Society in 1988 and authored the haiku fairy tale *Die Sonnensuche* (“*The Search for the Sun*”), which is now part of school curricula in countries including Hungary, Latvia, and China.

Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann says: “The Japanese short poetry forms of tanka and haiku have much in common with the Latvian *dainas*... It’s a joy to discover these shared emotional rhythms between cultures.”

She sees Latvia not just as a nation she serves but as a muse, too.



Photo by the Chancery of the President of the Republic of Latvia

Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann receives the state award "Cross of Recognition" from Latvia’s President Valdis Zatlers

“I love Latvia – its history and traditions, its cosmopolitanism, its devotion to music and dance. It’s a land that sings from its soul,” she says, smiling.

Her recent haiku, composed spontaneously during the interview, captures this deep affection:

*Roses, red and white,
Latvia’s flag, red and white –
eternal beauty...*

Consul’s eyes are set on the future

Despite her many accomplishments, Dr. Sommerkamp-Homann remains focused on the future. She advocates reopening the Latvian Investment and Development Agency (LIAA) office in Hamburg — a key economic move she helped initiate in 2002 but which was closed due to the 2008 financial crisis and relocated to the Latvian Embassy in Berlin.

Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann says: “Reopening the LIAA office would support the efficient, Germany-wide work of the LIAA with additional presence in Hamburg.”

With around 1,000 Latvians living in Hamburg, she continues to support their community in cooperation with Germany’s oldest Latvian association, founded in 1951. Her efforts are grassroots and heartfelt—from political meetings to cultural events and from scholarships to song.

Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann’s life is a testament to the extraordinary difference one person can make – when they act with integrity, creativity, and compassion. As a poet of nations and a diplomat of the heart, she continues to weave together the stories of two countries – Germany and Latvia – into a shared narrative of friendship, progress, and peace.

“Connecting people remains my greatest joy. Between Germany and Latvia, we haven’t just built a bridge – we’ve created a living, breathing dialogue of cultures,” Dr. Sabine Sommerkamp-Homann emphasizes.