

Intro: SRF 1 morning guest.

Moderator: In more than 40 countries, Swiss experts are working in development cooperation. 160 of them are meeting these days in Switzerland for a joint exchange and workshop. Mr. Christoph Graf is one of them. He's been in Albania for two and a half years and at the same time is the head of the international development cooperation between Albania and Switzerland. Good morning, Christoph Graf.

GRC: Good morning, Mr. Brunner.

M: Mr. Graf, now tell me, Albania is a country that is actually working by now, do you have anything to do at all?

GRC: Yes, Albania is indeed a European country but it is one of the poorest European countries. However, at the same time you can say that it underwent huge development in the last 25 years. Because 25 years ago, Albania was actually on the level of North Korea, with a very isolated and drastic dictatorship.

M: What does your everyday life look like in that country?

GRC: Well, I have a very interesting function, I meet a lot of people, I have to negotiate with a lot of people from very different areas, with government representatives of course, but also with private entrepreneurs who come by or whom I visit, or with people from the cultural sector but also with representatives of NGOs. In this sense, the range is very wide.

M: Where do you feel more comfortable, in patent-leather shoes on the diplomatic stage or in rubber boots helping somewhere?

GRC: Well I have a dual function, one the one hand I am the head of the development program through which Switzerland invests about 20 million Swiss Francs per year in Albania and also supports Albania. On the other hand I am also at the same time the ambassador of Switzerland and represent the "official" Switzerland in that country and I am of course interested in very good relations. And those relations are indeed good and sometimes it happens that also the European Championship and football are a very good mediator and an expression of good relations. Those were very interesting and nice experiences now during the European Championship in football.

M: So, you're now addressing this, the brothers Xhaka played against each other and you watched the game together with the President of Albania. Would such personal contacts also be possible without a football game?

GRC: Personal contacts are very important but the emotions at a football game naturally help to get to know those persons, ministers and in this case even the President, better and to appreciate each other. Albania and Switzerland have a lot of similarities in this sense, we are both relatively small countries and interestingly, I would say that Albania is actually also rather a mountainous country even though it's located at the Adriatic Sea.

M: Tell me, how do you experience Albanians in daily life, in the mentality?

GRC: Well, Albanians don't have an incredibly good reputation in Switzerland I would say, I was told that of course when I started the job. And when I then saw the reality on site, I had to say that I came across something very different. And they are people that are actually very open, very cordial, emotional also, and they also want to move forward, and they have moved forward. They are eager and want to work. And in this sense you see this less, if you only talk about the negative sides of Albanians here in Switzerland. Maybe at the same time you have to say that Albanians in Switzerland are mostly not only persons from, or mainly not persons from Albania but usually people from Kosovo and Macedonia. So the community of Albanians is made up of an ethnic group that mainly lives in the three countries Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia.

M: But are there experiences that stuck with you, where you say that wouldn't have happened to you like this in Switzerland?

GRC: We live in the middle of the city in Tirana and I like to go to the city and there are a lot of people, it is a very lively city, and there are a lot of vegetable and fruit merchants on the sidewalks who sell their products basically directly from the countryside. And when I buy a bag of oranges there, I usually get some apples or tangerines more, which they offer as a gift to have good relations with the

customer. If you say you're from Switzerland you have a bonus anyway with those Albanians. So a kindness and joy that is expressed that maybe you don't come across in this way in Switzerland.

M: Mr. Graf I say thank you very much for a short insight into the life in Albania. What do you miss already?

GRC: I miss the good food that we have in Albania. It is usually light, Mediterranean food, often with seafood and fish.

M: Well, but Cervelat every now and then isn't bad either, is it?

GRC: That is good as well, yes. I also enjoy it. And Raclette also wasn't missing on the 1st of August in the Swiss Embassy in Tirana.

M: Thank you Mr. Graf, have a nice exchange with your colleagues and a very nice day.

GRC: Thank you, likewise.