

Armin Wolf is European Journalist of the Year 2019

PRIX EUROPA awards honorary title



Imagine you are a news anchor and interviewing a high-ranking politician. You pose critical questions on camera and are then personally threatened. Afterwards his political party demands your dismissal. That's exactly what happened to Armin Wolf, political television journalist and anchor of the ORF News-Show ZIB2, when he interviewed the General Secretary of the right wing populist party FPÖ. And it was not the first time that Wolf was massively attacked for his critical questions.

Armin Wolf engages in a dialogue with the powerful, he has interviewed the likes of Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel, Henry Kissinger, Al Gore, Saddam Hussein, Yassir Arafat, Shimon Peres and most recently Vladimir Putin. He does not let himself be intimidated by threats and criticism and stands firm when it comes to the way he questions his interview partners: "I confront them with criticism, opposition, contradictions and counter-arguments to their political position. When a politician declares that 2 plus 2 is 5, it is of course the journalist's job to know it better, to make clear that that's not true. And to question why this was said and in whose interest it is."

At the same time Armin Wolf engages in dialogue with the public: "I believe that the media and journalists need to make their work and their craft much more transparent than before to keep the faith and trust of the audience." To the enthusiastic tweeter and active blog author, seeking out the audience is a central task of trusted journalism, as much as investigating the truth and providing information. His conclusion: "If the audiences don't come to us anymore, we have to go to them."

For his upright and transparent stance as a journalist, Armin Wolf was honoured with the title European Journalist of the Year on Friday night in Potsdam in the presence of 450 invited guests. The award was one of 16 prizes conferred at the PRIX EUROPA Awards Ceremony.

Armin Wolf is the ninth person to receive the honorary title European Journalist of the Year. Former laureates include the Turkish publicist Can Dündar, the BBC-legend Sir David Attenborough and the German film producer Regina Ziegler. Last year Laurent Richard was honoured, a French investigative journalist who founded Forbidden Stories, a non-profit platform that saves and continues the work of investigative journalists killed in the field.