



Press Release 11.10.2019

**Europe rejoices**

## **Smiling Faces at PRIX EUROPA 2019**

### **The European Media competition awards 16 Prizes**

450 invited guests, high suspense until the end and 16 overjoyed winners at the PRIX EUROPA Awards Ceremony in Potsdam on Friday night. One of the highlights was the announcement of the European Journalist of the Year 2019. This honorary award was conferred on Armin Wolf, political TV journalist and News Anchor for ZIB2 at the Austrian broadcaster ORF. He has recently been under attack for his critical questioning of politicians. This was one of the reasons that Austria went down 5 points in the “Reporters without Borders” global ranking of press freedom.

In his speech Armin Wolf heavily attacked the interference of politics in the media: “Once in power, populists try to win control over influential media, as one can witness in Hungary in a frightening way, or as they aspired in Austria with the attempt to abolish the public broadcasting fee. Still, it’s not our job to react on the same level or by similar tactics. I’m utterly convinced that this is our best answer: To do our work, as professional, diligent, reliable and fair as we can.” PRIX EUROPA President Cilla Benkö, Director General of Sveriges Radio, addressed Armin Wolf and all other media professionals in the room in no uncertain terms: “We need journalists that dare to carry on asking uncomfortable questions, dare to put themselves and their jobs on the line and that dare to enter into a dialogue in an attempt to find the truth and inform the public.”

But not only the freedom of the press is in danger, the European construction itself is at risk. rbb Director General Patricia Schlesinger asked in her opening speech: “So, what is it that holds us together as Europeans. It’s the culture! Yes, the culture distinguishes us.” And in this the media play a crucial part. PRIX EUROPA sees itself as a platform for media professionals from the whole continent. They decide every year together which productions become Europe’s best.

The Best European Film about Cultural Diversity went to Switzerland for “But when mommy is coming?”, a documentary about a Syrian father, who had to leave his wife behind in Iraq to save their disabled son. The Best TV Documentary is a European co-production, submitted by Swedish television: “The Raft” about a human experiment in 1973, when five men and six women crossed the Atlantic on a raft and now meet again after all these years. Sweden also takes home the award for the Best European Television Investigation: “Mission Investigate: Deceptive Diplomacy Sweden”, an investigation that uncovers the connection between

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members of the Congolese government and the murder of two European UN-experts. The Best European Television Fiction Series was the Finnish production “Invisible Heroes”, about two diplomats, who saved over 2000 Chileans from the military junta in the 70s. The best TV-movie is “Care” from the United Kingdom, which tells the story of a single mother and her battle with the National Health Service.

In Radio expectations were high for the winner of the new award for the Best European Radio Documentary Series. The Norwegians are the first to take it home with “Lord of the Ring Pulls”, a fascinating series tracing ring pulls, that are sent to Thailand to be recycled for a humanitarian project. The Best European Radio Documentary “A Sense of Quietness” from the United Kingdom is a sensitive piece about women fighting for the right to abortion. The Best Radio Investigation also goes to Britain with “The Puppet Master”, looking at the backrooms of power in Putin’s Russia. The Best Radio Music Programme is “The Man Who Sings From The Heart” from Poland which tells the story of an Armenian singer in exile. The Austrian radio drama winner “Children of Purgatory” consists of the inner monologue of a woman, who kind of boils over on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Best Radio Fiction Series is “Desire Paths“, in which a young French woman explores her own sexual desires.

In Digital Media there were several innovations this year. Two new awards - “Rising Stars” - for young talent were conferred: the Digital Audio Rising Star goes to the German piece “Helena”, the Online Media Rising Star is taken away by the Swiss web documentary “Stand-Up”. In addition, the former Online Award was split up in two: the Best European Online Media Project was the Danish web campaign for children “ultra:bit” and the Best European Digital Audio Project, went to the Czech “Project 68”, a cross media production about the events of the Prague Spring 1968.

**On the PRIX EUROPA homepage there is a list of all the award winners and excerpts from the winning productions.**

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