

# Article – Jaromír Štětina: “Freedom of the press is a core condition of democracy”

“When freedom of the press ends, so does democracy. We’ve seen this in the past,” said MEP Jaromír Štětina. The Czech member of the EPP group is a former journalist who lost his job during the Prague Spring back in 1968 when the Warsaw Pact armies invaded Czechoslovakia. He has been a member of the European Parliament since 2014. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, we asked him about the importance of free media. Watch our video to find out what he had to say.

Štětina studied at the University of Economics, Prague, in 1961-1967. In 1968 he started working as a journalist for the newspaper Mladá Fronta. His work coincided with the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, during which the Soviet army seized control of Mladá Fronta. Štětina was subsequently fired due to his disagreement over the Warsaw Pact armies entering Czechoslovakia. During the next 20 years he was employed at the Geological Survey, of which eight years were spent working as a miner.

He returned to journalism in 1989 when he co-founded the journalists union and started working at the re-established newspaper Lidové Noviny. In 1990 Štětina started working as a foreign correspondent in Moscow, where he covered numerous conflicts in the former Soviet Union. He worked in Moscow until he was expelled from Russia as a persona non grata.

In 1992 he started the Lidové Noviny Foundation as well as the People in Need Foundation. During 1993-1994 he was editor-in-chief of the Lidové Noviny newspaper. In 1994 he founded the independent journalist agency Epicentrum, dedicated to war reporting.

He entered politics in 2004 when he became a senator in the Czech republic. He served in the Czech senate for 10 years until becoming an MEP in 2014.