

# The European Wergeland Centre Inauguration Event

Conference 29 May 2009.

## ***Session II: Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship, from Policy to Practice.***

Panel intervention

By Professor Nils A. Butenschøn,

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### Summary of points:

#### **Promote Human Rights Education through the National Institutions for Human Rights!**

The agenda item is addressed from the perspective of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, based on the UN Paris Principles, since the speaker is the Director of Norway's national human rights institution. According to the Paris Principles, National Institutions have the responsibility for, *inter alia*:

*To assist in the formulation of programmes for the teaching of, and research into, human rights and to take part in their execution in schools, universities and professional circles;*

*To publicize human rights and efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, in particular racial discrimination, by increasing public awareness, especially through information and education and by making use of all press organs.*

The Wergeland Centre has an immensely important but huge task if it is to have a significant impact on the practice of human rights education throughout the membership countries of the Council of Europe.

A useful point of departure for identifying the dimensions, levels and aspects of this task would be to study the achievements in each member country of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education that ended in 2005. At the national level, the Decade's Plan of Action provided for the establishment of a national committee for human rights education involving a broad coalition of governmental and non-governmental actors. It is not clear how many countries actually established such committees or followed up other recommendations in the Plan of Action. With the Wergeland Centre the Council of Europe has a good opportunity to carry on the work that was initiated by the UN.

The best way to do this would be to coordinate with existing European national human rights institutions, either on a bilateral basis or invite a regional initiative. In the latter case, a suggestion would be to invite the European Group of National Human Rights Institutions to a workshop with a view to working out a common strategy for the promotion and practical implementation of human rights education in Europe.