

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

THE EUROPEAN
WERGELAND
CENTRE



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“We are living in uncertain times.”



Ingrid Aspelund
Acting Executive Director

Many reports, opinion pieces and political speeches began this way in 2025. Europe is once again living through a period of war, uncertainty and unrest.

The European Wergeland Centre is named after the poet, public educator and social activist Henrik Wergeland, who himself lived in times of deep transition. Born during the Napoleonic Wars, he grew up in a Europe marked by violence and political upheaval.

Rather than retreating from a tumultuous world, Wergeland chose to act. He stood up for human dignity, freedom of expression and tolerance at a time of rigid hierarchies, fear of social change and scepticism towards the unknown. In his own time, he was often dismissed as a troublemaker with his head in the sky. Today, we are proud to carry his name and follow his example.

In 2025, the Centre worked to strengthen education for democracy and human rights in an increasingly challenging European context. Russia’s continued war against Ukraine, the rise of populism and polarised political debate, as well as shifting global power dynamics, including changes in U.S. leadership, have placed international cooperation, the rule of law and democratic institutions under severe strain.

At the same time, municipalities, universities, schools and educators across Europe have faced shrinking budgets, while rapid technological developments and growing disinformation have created new challenges. In this landscape, children and young people need skills to navigate change, practical experience with democracy and human rights, and hope for the future.

2025 was a transition year for the Centre. Previous projects concluded in 2024, while preparations began for the next cycle of the EEA and Norway Grants. Building on years of work in beneficiary states, new plans were developed—together with donors and partners—for how the Centre can continue to strengthen democratic culture through education in Europe.

Despite this transitional phase, the Centre achieved substantial results. At the start of the year, our Board

adopted the Strategy Plan 2025–2030, outlining how the Centre will address democratic erosion, human rights violations, social tensions, digital misinformation and sustainability through education in the years ahead.

Amid the ongoing war of Russian aggression, the Centre continued to support the Ukrainian education sector, in close cooperation with local partners, and with support from NORAD’s Nansen programme. We also celebrated the graduation of the first 123 students from our master’s programme in Greece, while in Norway, the Centre contributed to the Ministry of Education’s new strategy for Peace and Human Rights Centres, highlighting the vital role of these centres in addressing current democratic challenges.

Divided into the categories of our Strategy Plan, the full range of the Centre’s achievements is presented in the pages that follow.

For me, it has been both a challenging and rewarding year, as I have temporarily filled the shoes of Executive Director. As we look ahead to 2026 — with new opportunities, new partnerships and a new Director — I extend my sincere thanks to our dedicated staff and partners.

None of this would have been possible without you.

22 828

teachers, teacher trainers
and other education
professionals trained

127

pre- and in-service
teacher education
institutions benefitted

433

youth-led actions
promoting democracy
and inclusion

12

high-quality materials
and teaching resources
developed

The European Wergeland Centre

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) was established in 2008 by Norway in close cooperation with the Council of Europe. Based on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Wergeland Centre promotes democracy and human rights across Europe through education.

Our mission is to strengthen the capacity of children and young people, educators, educational institutions, and educational systems to build and defend a culture of democracy and human rights.

We serve as a European resource centre and a meeting place for people working in education, training and research. We lift insights from practice, encompassing both formal and non-formal settings, and convey them into the authorities' policymaking. At the same time, we facilitate the implementation of policy in practice. Via this two-way street, we support human rights and democracy through education in Norway and throughout Europe. Partnerships are central in these endeavours.

We are also active in research, employing the same two-way approach to contribute our experience to research efforts and convey results back into practice. Fostering networks of engaged professionals, we continually develop quality learning materials that are relevant and freely accessible.

This report showcases examples of our activities and achievements over the past year. It does not constitute a full and comprehensive coverage of our efforts.

The report is organised around the four thematic priorities outlined in our strategy for 2025-2030:

DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND PARTICIPATION

INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

CITIZENS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

11 projects in 15 countries in 2025

Bulgaria: Promoting Inclusion in Local Communities

Czech Republic, Slovakia: IncluRoma

Greece: MA Programme “Identity, Education and Competences for Democratic Culture”

Norway: 22 July and Democratic Citizenship

Norway: Youth who Change the World

Norway: Together against hate speech towards the Sámi (Sammen mot samehets)

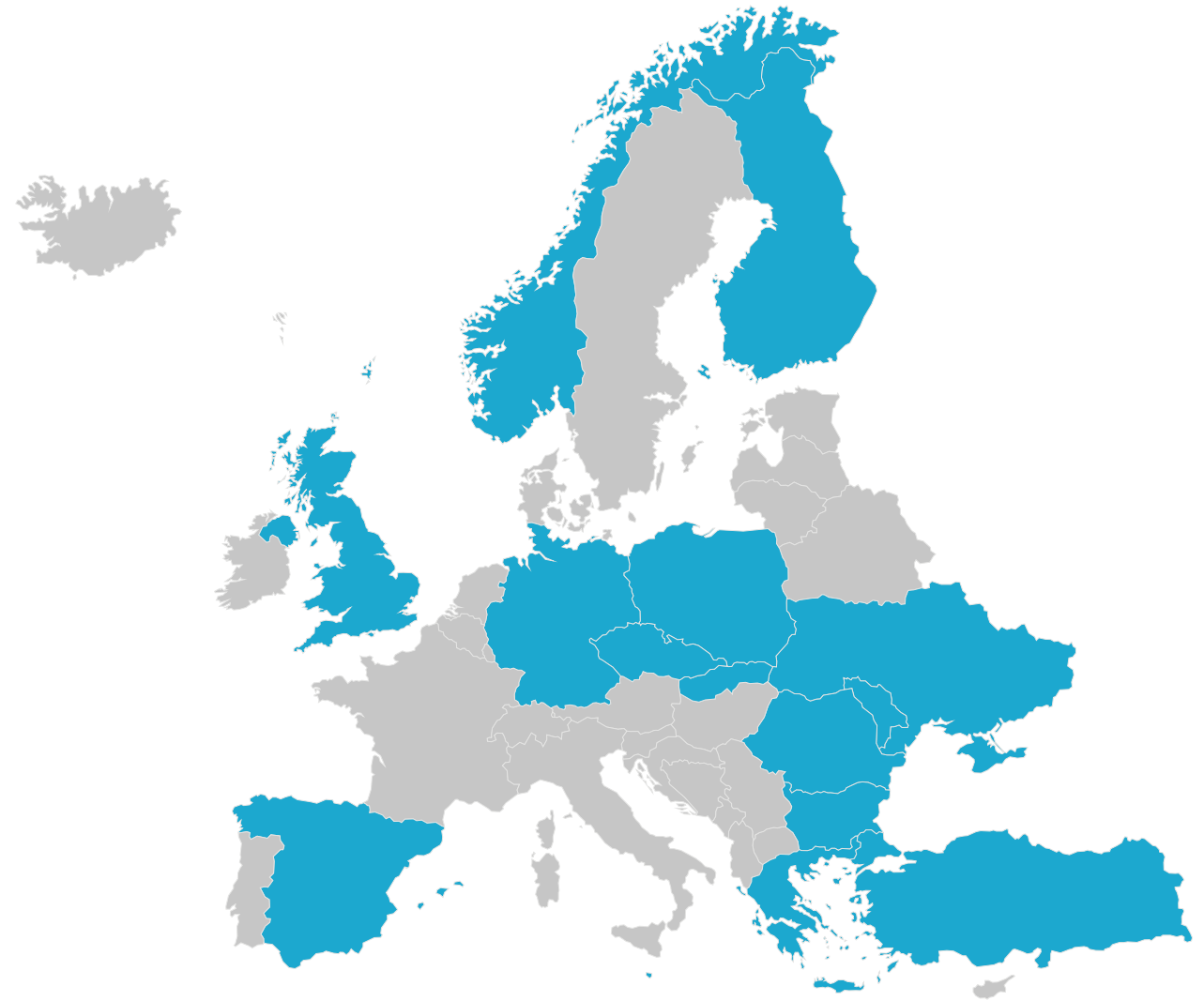
Norway, Germany, Finland, UK, Czech Republic, Poland, Turkey, Spain, Ukraine, Malta YOUROPE

Norway, Ukraine, Poland: MUCIT: Museums as Sites of Citizenship

Romania: Promoting inclusion and quality education in Romania

Slovakia: Bilateral Initiative: Together with Roma, we will achieve more

Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova: Schools for Democracy



Across all its projects, The European Wergeland Centre supports the practical implementation of relevant Council of Europe policy recommendations and standards. Guided by the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy and the New Democratic Pact, we heed the call to “invest in a democratic future by ensuring

that everyone is able to play their part in democratic processes”.

Our work is grounded in the Council of Europe *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* and aligned with the *Learners First Education*

Strategy, testing innovative pedagogies based on the learning resources and approaches of the Council of Europe and The European Wergeland Centre.

DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND PARTICIPATION

At Utøya, teens from across Norway learn how their voices can help protect and strengthen democratic culture.

"Young people often look at things from a different perspective. And that is important in a democracy," says 15-year-old Helma. In May 2025, she joined classmates Anna and Lilly, along with their teacher Gunnhilde Amundsen from Fagerborg Secondary School in Oslo, on a three-day democracy workshop at Utøya.

Since 2017, The European Wergeland Centre and its partner organisations have invited students and teachers from secondary schools across Norway to participate in workshops on democratic citizenship, youth engagement, and respectful exchange of ideas. This year around 280 teenagers made the journey to Utøya to learn what democracy entails and how they can become active citizens.

"The school has a responsibility to make our students believe that they have a voice and encourage them to engage in democracy. Just because you are 15 years old, it does not mean that your opinions don't matter," says Gunnhilde, who had attended one of the Wergeland Centre's teaching courses before returning to Utøya with her students.

Voices That Matter: Young People Learning Democracy at Utøya

One of the topics discussed was how young people can respond to expressions of hatred and bigotry. Homophobic, misogynistic, and racist comments are often dismissed as harmless banter in the schoolyard. But are they truly harmless if they silence voices and push minorities away from democratic discourse?

"Bad words have become very normalised. If someone says something racist, we don't always register it. It has become so commonplace. It is sometimes difficult to separate jokes from reality," explains Helma.

After three days of interactive exercises, creative workshops, shared meals with students from other schools, and even swimming in the fjord and playing football, the girls returned to school to share what they had learned. The democracy workshops encourage students to themselves take the role of teacher, believing that young people respond better to peers than to grownups.

"Teens often feel like they have no power to influence, and that grownups won't make room for us. But when you see someone of your age talking about



FROM FAGERBORG TO UTØYA: Teacher Gunnhilde was happy to return to Utøya with her students. From the left: Helma, Gunnhilde, Anna and Lilly.

democracy, you may be inspired to do likewise,” says Helma.

Although a bit nervous while standing at the front of the classroom, Helma, Anna, and Lilly successfully conveyed the message that free and respectful public discourse is essential to building a healthy democratic culture. Even without the right to vote, young people have many ways to be active citizens.

“We have gained insight into extremism and hate speech, and we believe our classmates have also gained a better understanding of how hate speech can occur, and why/how they should react. Democracy is vulnerable and must be protected. During the presentations, we noticed that not everyone was aware that democracy is under threat here in Norway, which makes it even more important to talk about these issues,” say the girls.

The National Learning Programme “22 July and Democratic Citizenship” is financed by the Ministry of Education and Research in Norway
EWC role: Project leader
Partners: The 22 July Centre, Utøya AS and the Rafto Foundation



MAKE SPACE FOR YOUNG VOICES: Helma believes young people connect more strongly with topics when they are presented by a peer.

NO HATE SPEECH

In April, The European Wergeland Centre, Stopp hatprat, the Council of Europe and Utøya AS arranged a Nordic youth training in human rights education for young trainers and educators from across the Nordic countries. During the training, participants explored how human rights education can be used to counter hate speech, extremism, and xenophobia. The training is an example of how experiences from The National Learning Programme “22 July and Democratic Citizenship” contribute to the Wergeland Centre’s wider European efforts.



TIME TO REFLECT: Every year, teens from all over Norway gather at Utøya to learn and reflect about democracy, freedom of speech and tolerance.

Strengthening Democratic School Culture in Wartime Ukraine



A REAR TREAT: In October, 30 school heads and teachers from 15 schools gathered in Lviv — a rare opportunity for educators across Ukraine to spend time in person.

Even in the midst of Russia’s ongoing war of aggression, thousands of teachers, school leaders, and youth workers across Ukraine continued investing in democracy. In 2025, 21,488 educators took part in trainings by The European Wergeland Centre—online, in shelters, and in classrooms.

The goal is to strengthen democratic citizenship and ensure that schools remain places where young people feel empowered, included, and heard.

Through a broad portfolio of initiatives, The European Wergeland Centre supported democratic citizenship in schools, nurtured democratic practices in kindergartens, and expanded youth participation across Ukraine. Among these efforts, the new “Institutional Development for Democratic Resilience” stands out as a long-term investment in systemic change.

Launched in October 2025, this 15-month initiative draws on the Wergeland Centre’s decade of experience in Ukraine. Twenty-nine schools from across the country are now developing sustainable strategies for strengthening democratic school culture, guided by the Centre’s extensive network of local trainers. Another 30 schools will join in 2026, expanding the reach of the project even further.

Placing school leaders at its core, this initiative dedicates sessions for school administration to establish a shared vision for change, followed by whole-staff training that brings democratic practices into every classroom. Each school creates its own development plan, tests new approaches, and strengthens cooperation with local communities. At the same time, teachers engage in continuous professional development to help them strengthen democratic culture in their schools.

“We expect to see changes in leadership styles, more democratic methods in teaching and assessment, cooperation in decision-making, stronger student self-government, better teacher–student relations, and deeper community engagement,” says Programme Manager, Khrystyna Chushak.

The project is grounded in the Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC), which provides a shared understanding of what knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values shape democratic behaviour. Schools also use our School Development Tool, a self-assessment instrument that helps teachers, students, parents, and administrators plan democratic development together.

Across participating schools, strengthened democratic practices are already visible. Many have



PROUD RECIPIENTS: The Ukraine team gathered at The European Wergeland Centre's office in Oslo. In their hands are certificates of recognition from the Ukrainian Government.

created or revitalised student councils, increased transparency in decision-making, and opened new channels for cooperation with parents.

At Zhuravnytska School-Lyceum in the Lviv region, students now design and lead their own initiatives—from launching recycling systems to organising

charity events for displaced families. Headmistress Nadiya Tsybak sees these changes as part of a broader cultural shift.

“Our teachers are excellent professionals, but like many, they can be cautious about giving students more freedom, fearing it will lead to noise or chaos

in the classroom. But democracy is not chaos, it is cooperation and partnership,” she says.

In 2025, the Centre received official recognition from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for its long-term contribution to educational reform—an important milestone that underscores the trust and impact built over years of collaboration.

"Since the start of the full-scale war, schools have faced multiple institutional challenges. They welcome children from other regions, build shelters, relocate and set up online learning. We are helping them to work more systematically with education quality, strengthen participation in teaching and governance processes, and educate active citizens resilient to antidemocratic tendencies in the horrible times of war," says head of section, Iryna Sabor.

“Schools for Democracy” is funded by the Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine
EWC role: Project leader
Partners: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Center for Education Initiatives, Ukrainian Step by step Foundation, SavEd, Step by Step Moldova

Museums as Sites of Citizenship: Building Bridges Across Borders

Museum educators from Ukraine, Poland and Norway joined forces to turn museums into spaces for dialogue, remembrance and democratic learning.

In 2025, the project Museums as Sites of Citizenship (MUCIT) brought together MAIDAN Museum, POLIN Museum, and Utøya AS to strengthen the role of museums in fostering democratic competences and interactivity within museum spaces. Through three in-person seminars and online networking, participants explored how cultural spaces can address controversial topics and engage young audiences, with interactivity as a recurring focus.

The first seminar in Oslo combined museum visits with discussions. A recurring theme was how talking about difficult topics with students builds democratic resilience. In Warsaw, participants visited POLIN Museum and reflected on the Ringelblum Archive (Oneg Shabbat), which documents life in the Warsaw Ghetto at the Jewish Historical Institute. The final seminar on the Polish Ukrainian border included a workshop on history, controversial issues and trauma led by the Ukrainian team and representatives of different Ukrainian museums.

These activities laid the foundation for long-term impact. Partners agreed to develop digital resources

for teachers, ensuring that democratic competences are not only taught in classrooms but experienced in museums across Europe.

“Our role as educators is to make young people aware of the warning signs,” noted one participant.

“Maidan Museum’s participation in the MUCIT project directly responds to our current institutional needs and to the changing role of museums in society.. Only through listening, engagement, and shared reflection can museums remain relevant, trusted, and capable of inspiring critical thinking and social responsibility.”

— Ihor Poshyvailo, Director of Maidan Museum



LEARNING FROM PEERS: Representatives from museums and organisations in Poland, Norway and Ukraine, met to learn from each other and share experiences and best practices. PHOTO: POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

“MUCIT” is funded by Creative Europe (European Commission, EU)
EWC role: Project leader
Partners: Maidan Museum (Ukraine), POLIN Museum (Poland), Utøya AS (Norway)

Libraries: Cornerstones of Democracy in a Digital Age

As public life increasingly moves online and cultural activities become restricted by high prices and subscription models, one place continues to resist this trend: the local library.

For The European Wergeland Centre, libraries are valued partners and vital spaces for dialogue, inclusion, and democratic resilience.

Libraries have always been more than shelves of books – they are gateways to knowledge, dialogue, and community. Today, their role is more critical than ever. In an era of polarisation, misinformation, and declining reading habits, libraries offer something increasingly rare: a physical space where people meet face to face, exchange ideas, and learn together.

“The library of today is a place for much more than ‘just’ books,” says Marianne Wulfsberg Hovdan at Sølvsberget Library and Cultural Centre in Stavanger. “It has become a natural meeting place for debate and knowledge-sharing.”

The European Wergeland Centre collaborates with libraries to strengthen democratic values and inclusion. At Sølvsberget, this partnership includes preparing teaching materials for the exhibition “Uncensored” on freedom of speech and teacher training on how to address the 22 July terrorist attacks and their broader context of radicalisation and



EVERY PAGE A NEW WORLD: A participant at “Erfaringskonferansen” (“the Experience Conference”) peruses the curated selection of books at the Deichman Bjørvika library.

extremism. These regional courses – hosted in public libraries – provide educators with tools to foster active democratic citizenship.

“When we talk about building democracy and counteracting polarisation, inclusion and physical meeting places are extremely important,” emphasises Wergeland Centre Advisor Ida Berge.

Libraries and the Centre share a common mandate: promoting democratic culture, critical thinking, and equal access to knowledge.

In 2026, the Centre will explore new avenues for cooperation with libraries – an investment in strengthening democracy across Europe.

This initiative is part of The European Wergeland Centre’s work to promote democratic culture and inclusive learning environments.

Partners: Sølvsberget Library and Cultural Centre, public libraries in Norway.

Graduates in Education for Democracy

The European Wergeland Centre and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens marked a milestone as the first 123 students graduated from the master's programme 'Identity, Education, and Competences for Democratic Culture.'

At the graduation ceremony, greetings were given by the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Professor

Dimitrios Drosos, the Director of the Master's program, Professor Marios Koukounaras Liagkis, and the representative of the European Wergeland Centre, Angelos Valliatanos, who emphasised the importance of democratic education, dialogue, and the cultivation of the values of democratic culture in education.

The programme was launched to strengthen democratic competences in education and offers

three specialisations: Religion, Education & Democratic Culture; Language, History & Literature in Education & Democratic Culture; and Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

Graduates have completed 75 ECTS credits through a curriculum that combines theory with practice, emphasising active participation and cooperative learning. Classes are held online, but with cameras and microphones on, ensuring interaction and engagement. The programme builds on the Council of Europe's Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and draws from our long-standing experience in teacher education and ERASMUS+ projects such as Step-Up.

From September 2025, the programme was also offered in English, opening opportunities for international students to join this innovative approach to democratic education.



CLASS OF 2025: Joy and excitement as the first 123 students graduated from the master's programme 'Identity, Education, and Competences for Democratic Culture.'

"Identity, Education, and Competences for Democratic Culture" is funded by partners
EWC role: Project partner
Partners: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

22 July in the Classroom: Building Democratic Resilience

Every year, The European Wergeland Centre brings together teachers and student teachers from across Norway to explore a central question: how can we teach about the 22 July terrorist attacks and democratic citizenship?

For most Norwegians, 22 July 2011 remains a date of deep national significance. Seventy-seven people were killed in the deadliest terrorist attack since the Second World War. Today, the national curriculum asks teachers to use the attacks as a starting point for discussions about threats to democracy and to inspire young people to defend democratic values and culture.

But how do you teach about an event your students barely remember – or were not even born to experience?

“Even though I never experienced World War II, the national trauma was passed down to me. It doesn’t look like my students have inherited the trauma of 22 July in the same way,” says teacher Sigrid Kjelland Olsen at Ingieråsen Secondary School in Kolbotn, outside of Oslo.

In the autumn of 2025, Sigrid and her colleagues attended of the Wergeland Centre’s condensed regional courses, held annually in Oslo, Tromsø and Stavanger. The courses introduce practical classroom

activities for discussing the ideological motives behind the terrorist attacks, including xenophobia, anti-feminism and anti-democratic attitudes rooted in online conspiracy theories.

The growing influence of social media in teenagers’ lives, with its constant flow of polarising, emotionally charged political content, presents new challenges for teachers.

“I’ve taught this for many years, and I still find it difficult,” says teacher Madelen Lunder Hærgard. “The students can talk about the conspiracy theories behind the attack for hours. It has been completely normalised. They encounter these ideas daily in their TikTok feeds.”

To support teachers, the Wergeland Centre offers four learning modules on different aspects of democracy, as well as challenging topics like gender stereotypes in online culture. The courses also provide strategies for tackling controversial classroom discussions – something Sigrid, Madelen, and many of their colleagues avoid for fear of how students will react.

“If students express opinions you see as anti-democratic, don’t push them away,” advises Kristin Flacké, Acting Head of the Wergeland Centre’s Youth Section. “Meet them with empathetic curiosity – and draw them closer.”

DEMOCRATIC PREPAREDNESS

The European Wergeland Centre was represented by Margit Mathisen in the reference group for the Center for Security, Crisis Management and Emergency Preparedness at the University of South-Eastern Norway. The centre will develop and share interdisciplinary, research-based knowledge that strengthens Norway’s overall preparedness. Mathisen contributes with Wergeland perspectives on how education can safeguard and strengthen our democratic preparedness.

In partnership with 22 July Centre, The European Wergeland Centre has offered regional teacher and student teacher courses since 2024, as part of the national learning programme “22 July and Democratic Citizenship.”



REACHING ALL OF NORWAY: The regional courses are condensed versions of the two-day teacher seminars held in Oslo and at Utøya. While shorter, they make the course content accessible for teachers all over Norway.

“We Invited the Entire Village”: Building Inclusive School Communities in Rural Romania

From empathy workshops to suggestion boxes, a rural school in Romania is showing how small changes can lead to big transformations in education.

Last year, Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 in Curcani – a small railway town about an hour’s drive from Bucharest – joined the eight-month bilateral project "Promoting Inclusion and Quality Education in Romania". The initiative was aimed at creating inclusive, safe, and democratic learning environments in some of

Romania’s most disadvantaged regions, by creating partnerships between schools, local authorities, and the wider community.

Curcani is home to a large Roma population, yet generations of prejudice and stigma have led many families to conceal their identity. According to UNICEF, Roma communities remain among the most vulnerable in Europe. Against this backdrop, the project placed a strong emphasis on Roma inclusion, building on The European Wergeland Centre’s long-

standing work with Roma communities.

Through multi-day local trainings and international study visits, mayors, school heads and teachers explored how democratic school governance and inclusive education can be put into practice. Participants were expected not only to share knowledge upon returning home, but to translate ideas into concrete action.

All in all, 37 schools, 188 teachers, 20 school heads and 20 local government representatives from seven municipalities in Călărași and thirteen in Suceava took part in the project.

At Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Curcani, the project has been transformative. Parents are now regular visitors to the school, taking part in coffee clubs, creative workshops, and seasonal events. At the student-organised Christmas fair, the entire village was invited.

The school uses interactive activities, presentations, and artistic performances to raise awareness of Roma history and to encourage students to reconnect with identities that have often been marginalised.

“We teenagers often struggle with social anxiety. That’s why we appreciate activities where we can communicate more with each other – even if having



REDISCOVERING WHAT WAS LOST: Having participated in several student- and parent-led activities, Erika (15) enjoyed those focusing on Roma history and culture the most. Curcani is home to a large Roma population, but prejudice and stigma have led many families to conceal their identity.

parents here can sometimes be stressful,” smiles student Erika (15). “I really like learning about Roma history. It is fascinating and inspirational.”

The students have created a roadmap describing what an ideal, inclusive school environment should look like. Now displayed in the school library, it serves as a daily reminder that democracy is a shared responsibility.

Headmaster Viforel Dorobanțu highlights how the project has helped teachers, parents, and school leaders see one another not as separate roles, but as partners. Sometimes, lasting transformation begins with a simple step – inviting the entire village in.

The pilot project Promoting Inclusion and Quality Education in Romania ran from 2024 to 2025 and involved schools across Călărași and Suceava. It was implemented under the Local Development, Poverty Reduction, and Enhanced Roma Inclusion Programme.

“Promoting Inclusion and Quality Education in Romania” is funded by the EEA and Norway Grants
EWC role: Project partner
Partners: The Romanian Social Development Fund (RSDF)



LEADING FROM BEHIND: Headmaster Viforel Dorobanțu leads Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 in Curcani – one of 37 schools that joined the project “Promoting Inclusion and Quality Education in Romania.”



EDUCATION AS TRANSFORMATION: The project “Promoting Inclusion and Quality Education in Romania” gathered schools and local administration to create real change – like a newly founded day centre for Roma children in Călărași. PHOTO: Călărași Municipality

Young People Take the Lead in Building Inclusive Schools in Moldova

Amid economic pressures and disinformation, young people across the Republic of Moldova are learning that inclusive classrooms and active voices are key to building stronger democracies.

The Republic of Moldova is undergoing rapid change. The country is grappling with accelerated price hikes, deep urban-rural disparities in educational quality, disinformation campaigns, and the spillover effects of Russia's war against Ukraine.

To address these challenges and prepare for EU ascension, one of the Moldovan government's key priorities is to strengthen civic consciousness across society, with a particular focus on increasing youth participation in civic life. This is also reflected in the Council of Europe's Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2025-2028.

In 2025, The European Wergeland Centre partnered with the Step by Step Educational Program in the Republic of Moldova to expand its long-running Schools for Democracy programme. The initiative now supports not only democratic school reforms in Ukraine, but also the development of inclusive classrooms and participatory school governance in the Republic of Moldova.

School leaders, teachers, students, and parents from 18 schools across the country gathered in Chişinău

for a three-day workshop focused on creating safe and inclusive learning environments — especially for disadvantaged and vulnerable students.

Participants were also introduced to the Whole School Approach, which encourages students, staff, parents, and the wider community to work collaboratively to build democratic learning environments.

Following the workshop, each school was tasked with implementing concrete measures to strengthen inclusion and democratic participation. To support this work, schools partake in webinars and receive ongoing guidance from trainers in the Step by Step network, who, as part of the project, completed a specialised training led by Wergeland Centre experts Andriy Donets and Marius Jitea in Chişinău.



BACK AT SCHOOL: Gabriel leads a conversation about democracy with the Journalist Club at his old primary school.



TRAINING OF TRAINERS: Local professionals in education received training from Wergeland experts Marius (seated in green shirt) and Andriy (to the right, black shirt)

“Our project complements the reform efforts which are already taking place in Moldova,” says Marius.

He explains that by creating an environment of trust and a place where young people felt comfortable, the project was able to create an honest and truthful participatory process between teens, parents and school representatives.

“Young people in the Republic of Moldova are now, more than ever, eager to commit and get involved, so the implementation will not just be “for them” but “with them.” The topics discussed were those

identified by youngsters as being the most important ones for their needs,” Marius says.

One of the participants was 15-year-old Gabriel Frei, who was unexpectedly reunited with the head of his former primary school, Pas cu Pas, during the seminar in Chișinău. Passionate about democratic development and participation, Gabriel decided to visit his former school to speak with the Journalist Club about the importance of democracy.

“I decided to meet with younger students because I believe that democratic values should be learned

from an early age. Children are naturally curious, open-minded, and willing to discuss fairness, rights, and responsibilities. By introducing these concepts early, I wanted to help them understand that their voice matters and that they can contribute to a positive school environment,” says Gabriel, who used to be a member of the Journalist Club himself.

Gabriel’s visit left an impression. In its November issue, the Pas cu Pas school newspaper *Over the Rainbow* invited readers to reflect on what democracy truly means, featuring drawings created by students illustrating their own interpretations of democracy.

20 more Moldovan schools will join the expanded Schools for Democracy programme in 2026. A final conference to share results and experiences is scheduled for June next year.

“Schools for Democracy” is funded by the Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine
EWC role: Project leader
Partners: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Center for Education Initiatives, Ukrainian Step by step Foundation, SavEd, Step by Step Moldova

New Friends, New Ideas and Slam Poetry: Young People Stand up against Anti-Sámi Hate Speech

While significant progress has been made in combating discrimination and prejudice against the Sámi minority in recent decades, Norway continues to face challenges related to anti-Sámi hate speech, particularly in politically sensitive debates on land use and Indigenous rights.

Against this backdrop, the Wergeland Centre launched the project "Together Against Anti-Sámi Hate Speech" in 2023, with the aim of strengthening young people's role in preventing hate speech and promoting cross-cultural understanding and democratic participation. Through collaboration

with the Narvik War and Peace Centre, the Sámi Parliament, the Saami Council, and Sámi youth organisations, the project has grown year by year.

In 2025, youth delegates from twelve regional youth councils took part in a workshop in Sørmarka, just outside Oslo. By bringing together youth leaders from across the country – also from outside the traditional Sámi settlement areas – the workshop helped participants gain knowledge, engage in dialogue, and develop tools to address anti-Sámi hatred in their local communities.

Participants explored Sámi history, the legacy of harmful assimilation policies, as well as contemporary human rights challenges faced by the Sámi communities.

One of the key outcomes of the project overall, has been a Democratic Checklist for the Prevention of Anti-Sámi Hate Speech – created by the northernmost regional youth councils, and since incorporated into the Norwegian Government's Action Plan against Hate Speech and Discrimination against Sámi people. In 2025, the checklist was further developed by the youth delegates, ensuring that it remains a living and evolving document.

Since attending the workshop in Sørmarka, several youth councils have initiated local measures,



RECLAIMING HERITAGE: Sámi activist, Ida Helene Benonisen, uses TikTok to share her journey of rediscovering and reclaiming her Sámi roots.

Building Inclusive Youth Policy Through Shared Democratic Spaces

including promoting the use of Sámi languages, integrating Sámi perspectives into consultations and policy processes, and raising awareness of Sámi culture and history within their communities.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Wergeland Centre aims to further develop the project, strengthening Nordic cooperation and expanding collaborations with youth organisations.

“Our Youth Council has gained more knowledge on Sámi history, and what to keep in mind when making political suggestions, like including Sámi voices in political strategies and public hearings. They have developed a conscious bond to the Sámi minority and to the hate speech directed at them,” said one local coordinator of youth councils after the workshop.

“No Hate against Sámi People” is funded by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs
EWC role: Project leader
Partners: The Narvik War and Peace Centre

Through YOUROPE, The European Wergeland Centre is helping strengthen young people’s participation in democratic life by contributing tools, training and expertise that support inclusive local youth policy development across Europe.

The YOUROPE project brings together 17 partners to rethink how young people engage in democratic processes. Grounded in the CommunityLed Research and Action (CLRA) methodology, the initiative creates shared democratic spaces where youth, educational institutions, communities, and policymakers collaborate. Across 21 educational institutions, young people and community members will work together to shape participatory democratic roadmaps that connect directly with European policymakers.

Within this effort, The European Wergeland Centre contributes to Work Package 5, where the focus is on developing a training manual for policy making. The manual builds on insights from the democratic spaces established in earlier CLRA cycles and helps bridge the distance between youth experiences and policy development.

So far, the Centre has shared practical experience on inclusion and youth engagement, developed a manual for trainers on conducting youth workshops,

and delivered two digital training-for-trainers sessions to support its implementation. These workshops aimed to strengthen young people’s ability to contribute to local youth policy, ensuring that underrepresented voices are included in shaping decisions that affect their lives.

“Our role is to support meaningful youth participation by offering practical tools that help connect young people and decisionmakers in constructive ways,” says Kristin Flacké, acting head of the Wergeland Youth Section.

“YOUROPE project” is funded by EU Horizon (HORIZONCL22024DEMOCRACY01)
EWC role: Contributor to Work Package 5, responsible for developing the training manual for policy making and delivering trainer support
Partners: Led by the University of Lodz and The Hague University of Applied Sciences, with 17 partners across Europe

CITIZENS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

One weekend each year, young people with a passion for gaming gather at Utøya to learn about democracy, inclusion, and freedom of expression online.

“Teens are mostly focused on gaming and having fun. Often, they don’t think that democracy matters to them. That is the gap we want to fill,” says Mahira Karim, advisor in The European Wergeland Centre’s Youth Section.

Social media and gaming are a large and important part of any teenagers’ life. Democracy workshops for gamers give young people the opportunity to explore how democratic culture can help address online challenges such as hate speech, exclusion, echo chambers, and radicalisation.

“Democracy is not just about what happens in the physical world. It extends into the digital realm too,” Mahira says.

According to Norwegian research, one in four young people has experienced hateful comments online, either on social media or while gaming. In some gaming communities, the tone can be harsh, with expressions of racism, homophobia, or misogyny often dismissed as jokes.

“Would You Say That to Someone's Face?” Bringing Democracy to the Digital Sphere

“Many girls are encouraged by their friends to start gaming, but when they do, they receive comments like: ‘Go back to the kitchen!’ or ‘You don’t belong here!’ It’s easy to throw out comments online that you would never say face to face,” says workshop participant Vilde Osnes Opland (17).

At the democracy workshop, hateful comments and online harassment are treated as democratic challenges rather than normalised gaming culture. Through play, dialogue-based exercises, and reflection, participants explore how they can respond to hate speech and support one another in digital spaces.

At the same time, the project avoids stigmatising young people for their interests. Mahira emphasises that gaming is a vital social arena where young people experience belonging and achievement. The workshops are rather designed as a democratic “vitamin boost.”

“The goal is not for young people to feel pressured to intervene every time they encounter hate speech, but to become more confident in recognising it, and understanding that they can do something about it. In this way, democracy is strengthened — also in the digital sphere,” she says.



Oliver Sjøbak-Husby (second from the right) enjoyed getting the chance to dive deeper into the building blocks of democracy than he usually would in class.

European Year of Digital Citizenship Education



“YOU DON’T BELONG HERE”: Vilde Osnes Opland doubts that people making hurtful comments or harassing people online, would actually do it in person.

For many participants, the workshop offers a deeper understanding of democracy than they have previously encountered.

“We have learned a little bit about democracy in school, but I haven’t thought too much about it. Here you learn all the components that make up a democracy. You go more in-depth, and it’s more informative than at school,” says Oliver Sjøbak-Husby (15).

“Young People who Change the World” is funded by the Savings Bank Foundation DNB
EWC role: Project Leader
Partners: Utøya AS

The 26th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education declared 2025 as the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education.

Equipping learners with skills for the digital reality is also a strategic priority for The European Wergeland Centre, which worked throughout the year to promote the importance of Digital Citizenship Education and integrate it into existing and new projects.

There is a need to strengthen teachers’ and other educators’ understanding of a democratic and human rights-based approach to evolving digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), and to foster critical thinking to secure democracy and human rights in the rapid development of new information technology, as well as how to tackle disinformation, misinformation, and fake news.

The European Wergeland Centre contributed to the development of the Council of Europe Digital Citizenship Education Planner (DCE Planner) through the contributions of experts Andriy Donets and Oksana Pasichnyk, as well as other experts at the Centre who provided feedback to the authors.



Illustrative photo from Fyrstikkalleen skole in Oslo. Photo: Lina Hindrum

The planner, published in February 2026, is an essential tool for empowering young citizens in the digital era. It aims at creating an agreed vision of competences that citizens need for constructive, responsible and meaningful engagement with digital technologies. The principles of the planner were also incorporated into two Massive Open Online Courses in the Schools for Democracy programme in Ukraine.

In addition, the Centre was represented at the Digital Citizenship Education Forum ‘Let’s Act Now!’, organised by the Council of Europe in May. Important discussions were had on how to ensure active youth participation both online and offline, and how to integrate Digital Citizenship in education and training.

Strengthening Teaching Through Digital Pedagogy in Ukraine

In 2025, more than 8,700 educators enrolled in a new online course developed by The European Wergeland Centre's Schools for Democracy programme, which helps educators combine traditional teaching methods with modern digital tools.

The course, "How to Teach in the Digital World", was developed in 2024 by Schools for Democracy programme consultant Oksana Pasichnyk, together with the Centre's Ukraine team, and officially launched in May 2025. Based on the approaches, principles, and educational materials of the Council of Europe and The European Wergeland Centre, the course supports teachers in applying digital

technologies to improve their lessons and motivate their students.

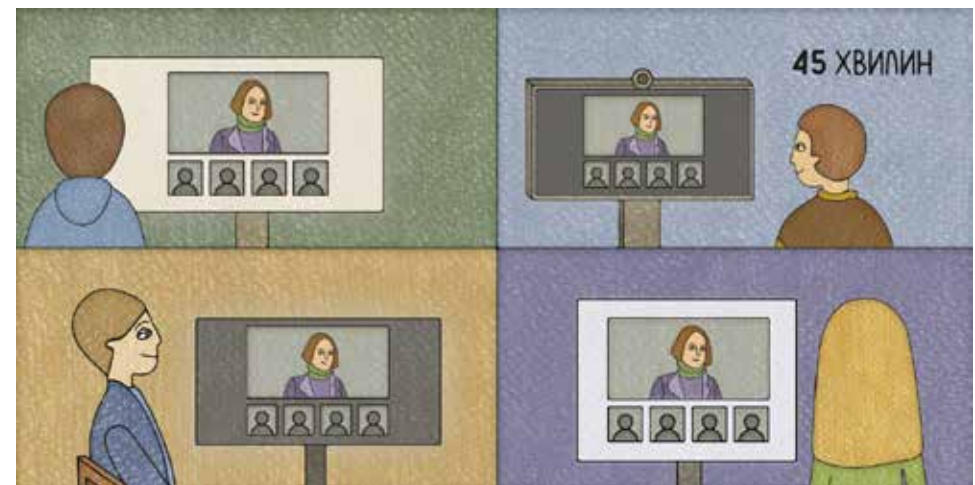
Both the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's continued war of aggression against Ukraine have made many teachers and students reliant on remote and blended learning. The course seeks to change how digital tools are perceived in education — not merely as substitutes for in-person teaching, but as pedagogical resources that can enrich the learning experience.

Since the outbreak of Russia's full-scale war, digital resources have become an important professional and emotional lifeline for many teachers, offering both opportunities for professional growth and a

sense of support amid difficult wartime conditions.

The Wergeland Centre began developing online courses in 2019. Today, a wide range of courses is available in Ukrainian on the Prometheus platform and the Centre's own e-learning platform. In 2025, a total of 24,277 learners signed up to the platforms.

Since its launch, How to Teach in the Digital World has awarded certificates to over 2,000 learners. Participants appreciate the course developers' on-the-ground experience and their awareness of the challenges associated with distance learning.



LINES THAT SPEAK: The distinctive artwork for the course was made by the young Ukrainian artist, Eva Hrynyk.

Nordic Approaches to Media Literacy and Democratic Resilience Shared in Sofia

“Thanks to the course, I was able to systematise my existing knowledge and master new approaches that are critical to my professional activities. The emphasis on practical aspects was particularly valuable, allowing me to immediately apply the skills I had acquired,” says Svitlana Matviychuk, senior lecturer at Mukachevo State University.

“I don’t have to know and be able to do everything in the digital world; I just need to learn how to choose what I need. The world is changing, children are changing, and the course helps me accept these changes,” adds Halyna Bukhno, teacher at the Dnipro Ukrainian-American Lyceum.

“Schools for Democracy ” is funded by the Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine

EWC role: Project leader

Partners: Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Center for Education Initiatives, Ukrainian Step by step Foundation, SavEd, Step by Step Moldova

At the international conference “Media Literacy – the Nordic Formula for a Sustainable Society” in Sofia on 27 March 2025, the European Wergeland Centre contributed Norwegian and Council of Europe educational perspectives through its workshop session, helping participants connect media literacy with the competences required for democratic resilience.

Organised by the Digital National Coalition together with the Embassies of Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway, and supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the event highlighted the essential role of media literacy in sustaining democratic societies. Opening the conference, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark in Bulgaria, Flemming Stender, underlined that “media literacy is not just a technical skill – it is the foundation for informed and active citizenship.”

Two panels examined the challenges posed by disinformation, the need for early educational interventions, and the experiences of Nordic and Bulgarian institutions in strengthening teachers’ skills. Speakers stressed that building media-literate societies is a long-term, context specific process with no single model to follow.

The practical workshops offered hands-on tools that could be adapted to Bulgarian schools. During her session, Valentina Papeikienė from The European Wergeland Centre invited participants to reflect on democratic resilience as the capacity of democratic systems to withstand crises without compromising human rights. She highlighted the close link between media literacy, civic education and the Council of Europe’s concept of digital citizenship education—an approach echoed in Norway, where digital skills and critical thinking are embedded across subjects.

BlueLightS: Empowering Youth for Blue Resilience

The European Wergeland Centre is represented in the Advisory Panel for BlueLightS, a Horizon Europe project (2025–2027) that strengthens the knowledge and skills of European children and youth to deliver resilience and sustainability for rivers, seas, and oceans.

BlueLightS is rooted in the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030,” aiming to empower

communities – especially younger generations – to safeguard aquatic ecosystems. The project collaborates closely with initiatives such as ProBleu, SHORE, PREP4BLUE, and the UN Ocean Decade.

Its objectives include creating a blue education platform, building a robust network of European Blue Schools, and testing methods for mainstreaming blue education in nine countries. The project also

seeks to develop a framework recommending conditions for integrating blue education into classrooms across Europe, shifting responsibility from individual teachers to the education system as a whole.

The next milestone will be the launch of a new Blue Education framework on 19 January 2026, based on experimentation in France, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Ireland, Finland, and Sweden. This work is highly relevant to our thematic priority on “Sustainability, Environment and Engagement” and offers strong synergies with our efforts to link Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE). The ESD Handbook may play an important role in this dialogue.



“BlueLightS” is funded by Horizon Europe.
Ministry of Education and Research in Norway
EWC role: Project partner
Partners: BlueLightS consortium and related
EU Mission projects.

Piloting Curriculum. Competence for Democratic Culture Framework and Education for Sustainable Development

In 2025, the Council of Europe working group on Education for Sustainable Development completed its work, with the Council of Europe's Education Department, publishing a Guidance on applying the Competences for Democratic Culture framework in the area of sustainable development – a practical reference for policy-makers, educators and other practitioners working in the field of education. Valentina Papeikiene from the Wergeland Centre, represented Norway in the working group.

The document acts as an important link between civic competences / active citizenship and education for sustainable development, emphasising that ESD is most powerful when it equips learners to think

critically, act responsibly, and participate peacefully in democratic life. The guidance provides an overview of key concepts, outlines what to consider when integrating the Competences for Democratic Culture into sustainable development, related themes, and includes practical examples and recommendations.

Importantly, the document emphasises the RFCDC as a strong foundation for ESD and, at the same time, explains how it aligns with other competence frameworks—such as UNESCO's ESD framework, the European Commission's GreenComp, and the OECD's Global Competence framework, ensuring complementarity of efforts.

A Practical Handbook for Educators

In line with the Council of Europe's work on Education for Sustainable Development and its explicit linkage to the Competences for Democratic Culture, The European Wergeland Centre has developed a practical handbook for educators to support them in introducing ESD-related topics through civic education, social studies, and other non-science lessons, while simultaneously strengthening learners' competences for democratic culture. The handbook has been authored by Felisa Tibbits, with activities partially piloted by educators with students in Ukraine, Romania, Norway, and Montenegro, as well as with educators from Lithuania. Further piloting will continue with finalisation of the booklet expected in 2026.



Students at Tudor Vladimirescu Secondary School, Călărași. Romania, piloting activities from the new handbook on Education for Sustainable Development.

In 2025, The European Wergeland Centre continued its privileged partnership with the Council of Europe, contributing to fostering European values and standards in education to address democratic backsliding.

In March, Chair of the Board Sofie Høgestøl and Acting Executive Director Ingrid Aspelund met with Council of Europe Secretary General Alain Berset in Oslo. Their discussions focused on the role of education in countering democratic decline and supporting a culture of human rights across Europe. As a long-standing partner of the Council of Europe, The European Wergeland Centre works with national and local authorities, teacher education institutions, schools, parents, and civil society to lay the foundations for inclusive learning environments.

This collaboration continued in May, when Ingrid Aspelund participated in two panel debates during a meeting in Trondheim, hosted by the Norwegian Parliament and the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). She highlighted that democratic practice in schools depends on everyday participation.

“When young people are actively involved in democratic processes at school, it strengthens their sense of political efficacy and contributes to schools

A Privileged Partnership for Democratic Education

being more resilient to emerging threats to democracy,” Aspelund noted.

In December, more than 200 participants gathered in Budapest for the Human Rights Education Forum, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Forum brought together educators, youth leaders, policymakers, and civil society representatives from all regions.

Under the theme “Unleashing Human Rights: Education for, with and by young people,” discussions addressed current pressure on human rights and civic space.

The European Wergeland Centre played an active role throughout the Forum. Advisor Mahira Karim served on the Steering Group and contributed to the development of sessions. Our online learning expert, Andriy Donets, joined a panel on Human Rights Education in the context of conflict, offering perspectives from Ukraine.

On the Forum’s final day, Mahira Karim and trainer Margit Mathisen led workshops on strengthening democratic citizenship and human rights across curricula. Senior Advisor Larisa Leganger Bronder and school principal Moise Liviu shared a good practice from our work on Roma inclusion with a focus on



Chair of the Board Sofie Høgestøl, Council of Europe Secretary General Alain Berset and Acting Executive Director Ingrid Aspelund.

practical classroom approaches, while the 22 July Centre shared teacher experiences from Norway.

Throughout the year, The European Wergeland Centre remained engaged in Council of Europe bodies including the *Steering Committee for Education CDEDU*, participating with observer status. This continued involvement allows the Centre to share practice-based insights and contribute to coordinated European efforts to support democratic learning.

Practising Hope: NECE Festival Turns a Civic Ideal into Action

Can hope be taught as a civic skill? At the NECE Festival in Oslo, co-hosted by The European Wergeland Centre, nearly 300 educators, practitioners, and thought leaders from 40 countries gathered to put this idea to the test.

Over three days of panels, masterclasses, and open spaces, participants explored hope as a discipline of imagination, courage, and care – a practice that can strengthen democracy.

“Democracy, human rights, freedom – none of these maintain themselves. They require a continuous

effort,” said Oslo’s Mayor Anne Lindboe in her opening remarks.

Her call framed the festival’s central question: how do we turn hope into a civic habit? The festival offered practical tools to do just that and the Wergeland Centre contributed actively throughout the festival, including two walk-in sessions under the theme “Lessons of Hope”.

The first, “What Ukraine Teaches Us About Democratic Resilience”, explored how, through more than three years of full-scale war, Ukrainian civil society and

schools have preserved hope rooted in action – rebuilding homes, reopening classrooms, defending human rights, and reimagining education for democracy.

“Ukrainian youth are not waiting for peace to start shaping their future – they are already doing it,” said Wergeland Expert on Ukraine, Khrystyna Chushak.

The second, “22nd July”, examined Norway’s response to the Utøya massacre and how the island has been rebuilt as a site of remembrance and democratic learning.

As one student reflected: “Something I have thought a lot about since then is how Utøya has returned to being a summer camp and a place for education, while still commemorating what happened there in an incredibly beautiful way.”

Next year, NECE will take this work further at the NECE Festival: TRUST in Lisbon, 14–16 October, focusing on how civic education builds trust as a shared infrastructure for democracy.

The European Wergeland Centre co-organised the NECE Festival as part of its mission to strengthen democratic culture and civic education across Europe.



Photo: Werner Anderson

HOPE AS A MUSCLE: Acting Executive Director, Ingrid Aspelund, in conversation Thomas Coombes on the opening day of the NECE festival 2025.

The Experience Conference 2025

Authoritarian trends are on the rise worldwide – and schools are no exception. At the 2025 Experience Conference, The European Wergeland Centre gathered over 200 educators, researchers, and youth voices to explore how classrooms can remain safe spaces for dialogue.

Anti-democratic attitudes are increasingly visible among young people. Many say they hesitate to speak up when they know someone disagrees. How can schools foster democratic resilience?

“We are living in a time of democratic decline,” said Sofie Høgestøl, Chair of the Board of the Wergeland Centre and Associate Professor at the University of Oslo, citing data showing that 72% of the world’s population now lives under autocracy.

Speakers emphasised the school’s role as a safe arena for difficult conversations. Emma Helle Loffeld from the Norwegian Student Organisation urged teachers to address topics like war and conflict: “Both teachers and students must practice being in disagreement.”

EDUCATION POST CONFLICT

In June, the Wergeland Centre co-organised the seminar "Education in Post Conflict societies" in cooperation with OsloMet. Participants from Ukraine, Ireland, the Balkans and Georgia joined. The Wergeland Centre presented lessons learned from our work in Ukraine.

Panels explored how belonging – more than persuasion – shapes whether young people enter extremist environments. Discussions also tackled polarisation among young men and the need to engage boys in democratic dialogue. As one youth representative noted: “Democracy has been good at talking about boys, but not always with them.”

The message was clear: democratic culture is built over time, and classrooms must feel safe enough to “go where the fire is” – addressing the issues that matter most.

The 2025 Experience Conference was organised by The European Wergeland Centre in cooperation with UiO:Democracy, with support from the Ministry of Education and Research in Norway.



EXCHANGE OF IDEAS: At the Experience Conference in Oslo, researchers, teachers and students gathered to talk about rise of authoritarianism, radicalisation, and growing conservatism among today's youth.

A joint contribution to democracy

New strategy for the Peace and Human Rights Centres in Norway acknowledges the centres joint contribution to democracy.

“An important common trait of the centres is the distribution of democratic values and their efforts to strengthen schools’ work against various forms of group-directed hostility”.

- Strategy

In 2025, the Ministry of Education in Norway launched a new national strategy for the Peace and Human Rights Centres. The strategy outlines the authorities’ ambitions and expectations of the centres. In 2025, the Wergeland Centre, together with the other seven centres, have been cooperating closely to give input to the strategy.

Since the previous strategy was launched in 2017, the cooperation between the centres has been strengthened. Today, the centres cooperate on many different areas and levels.

One example is to join forces at Arendalsuka, organising together a range of events at the “Human rights tent”. In 2025, the theme was “The price of freedom”.



“I WILL”: Directors of the Peace and Human Rights Centres gathered in Arendal. The T-shirts are part of artist Siri Hermansen’s work «I Will,» which is based on “On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the 20th Century” by Timothy Snyder. PHOTO: Sigurd Rønningen/Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue

The centres also strive to contribute to each other’s events like Arkivet’s seminar marking the opening of the exhibition “Minnekammeret: barn og krig”, which shares deeply moving stories of children who have survived wars in Ukraine, Gaza, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, and other conflict-affected regions. Iryna Sabor, Head of the Early Childhood and School Section, contributed with Ukrainian perspectives, and shared lessons learned from our project “MUCIT: Museums as Sites of Citizenship.” Likewise, Advisor Veslemøy Maria Svartdal spoke of how history may be weaponised, and how museums in Ukraine and Poland work to counter state propaganda at the Falstad Seminar: “The Price of Freedom – Memory, Power and Democratic Resilience.” Arkivet’s Joseph Salomonsen gave inspiration to our work on the activity plan for 2026.

In 2025, we cooperated with the other centres also on project level, such as in Democracy workshops at Utøya, in which Rafto Foundation is a partner. We worked together with the Narvik Peace Centre on Sammen mot Samehets and with Falstad Centre in the MUCIT project.

The Peace and Human Rights Centres in Norway consist of eight independent foundations. The centres have different history and background, but share common values and all work to support schools in preparing children and young people for democratic participation. The Centres are funded by the Ministry of Education and National Directorate of Education.

“This is how our children learn what democracy is.”

Ukraine is reforming its early childhood education system. Amid war, Deputy Minister Science of Ukraine, Anastasiia Konovalova, visited Norway to learn from Norwegian kindergarten practices.

The European Wergeland Centre hosted the visit of Ms. Konovalova to Norway in August. The aim of the visit was to explore the Norwegian kindergarten model and was organised as part of “Schools for Democracy” supported by the Nansen Support Programme for Ukraine.

While in Norway, Ms. Konovalova met with Jorun Nossum, Director of the Nansen Programme, and expressed Ukraine’s gratitude for Norwegian support.

“Your support is very important for us,” Ms. Konovalova said “Without educated people, there will be no Ukraine.”

Ukraine inherited a rigid Soviet-era kindergarten system, and reform has become essential.

“We must get children back into kindergarten and parents back to work. We need to move beyond just survival,” Ms. Konovalova said.

During visits to Norwegian kindergartens, she studied daily routines, facilities and approaches closely.

“It is like a parallel world,” she exclaimed at OsloMet’s SiO kindergarten.

Ms. Konovalova also met with State Secretary Kjetil Vevle, Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, and State Secretary Synnøve M. Skaar, Ministry of Education and Research.

Ms. Konovalova also participated at the Norwegian political festival Arendalsuka and our panel discus-

sion “Democratic Resilience: from Kindergarten to School: What can we learn from Ukraine” where her message was clear:

“Every night when I bring my child to the bomb shelter, there is this question: “Why again?” And then you, an adult, have to answer: “They want to kill us because we don’t want to obey their rules. We want to decide for ourselves. We want to live in our homes.” This is how our children learn what democracy is.”



“IT’S LIKE ANOTHER WORLD!”: Both inspiration and instances of culture shock awaited Deputy Minister Anastasiia Konovalova, as she toured three different kindergartens in Oslo.

CURRICULUM WORKING GROUP

Wergeland Expert Khrystyna Chushak participated in a curriculum working group hosted by the Office for the Implementation of the New Ukrainian School reform under the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The group focused on making the secondary school curriculum, which was introduced in 2022, more accessible and practical for educators. The curriculum grants teachers greater autonomy to design their own lessons, and shifts learning toward a competence- and skills-based approach with a particular emphasis on civic-oriented topics. Concrete teaching activities have been compiled on the online platform "Education for Life".

CONTRIBUTION TO FAFO REPORT

The European Wergeland Centre contributed to Fafo's mapping and assessment of the relevance and impact of EEA and Norway Grants in relation to the objective of strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation between the beneficiary countries and Norway. The project is a desk study supplemented by interviews in five beneficiary countries and in Norway. The findings will be published in a Fafo report.

PROMOTING EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

The European Wergeland Centre aims to promote education as a way to strengthen and defend our democracies. In 2025, the Centre contributed to raising awareness of this issue through editorial coverage in Norwegian media.



Governing Board

The Board of The European Wergeland Centre is appointed by the by the Norwegian Minister of Education upon nomination by Norway and the Council of Europe.

Board members

Sofie Alexandra Engli Høgestøl (Chair)
Knut Christian Clausen (Deputy Chair)
Claus Neukirch
Adele Matheson Mestad
Sjur Bergan

Deputy Board members

Snježana Prijić Samaržija
Luisa de Bivar Black
Nanna Paaske
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The Wergeland Centre Team



Ingrid Aspelund
Acting Executive Director



Luvisa Hansen
Head of Finance



Øystein Sassebo Bryhni
Head of Communications



Veslemøy Maria Svartdal
Advisor, Communications



Tania Holt
Advisor Finance



Hege Knudsen
Advisor, HR

Early Childhood and School Section



Iryna Sabor
Head of Early Childhood
and School Section



Marta Melnykevych-Chorna
Senior Advisor, Early Childhood
and School Section



Andriy Donets
Online Learning Expert



Khrystyna Chushak
Head Programme Expert
in Ukraine



Marianthi Antoniou
Project Officer, Early Childhood
and School Section

Youth Section



Kristin Flacké

Acting Head of Youth Section



Ole Mathias Rustad

Project Officer, Youth Section



Mahira Karim

Advisor, Youth Section



Ida Berge

Advisor, Youth Section

Teacher Education and Civil Society Section



Caroline Gebara

Head of Teacher Education
and Civil Society Section



Larisa Leganger Bronder

Senior Advisor, Teacher
Education and Civil Society
Section



Valentina Papeikiene

Senior Advisor, Teacher
Education
and Civil Society Section



Angelos Vallianatos

Head Programme Coordinator
(Greece)

FINANCES

The total income for 2025 amounts to 43 841 498 NOK (3 839 638 EUR).

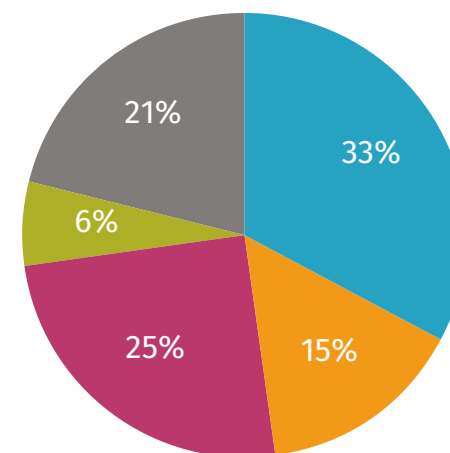
The core funding from the Ministry of Education and Research constitutes 20 757 000 NOK of the total income and covers parts of the EWC staff as well as operational costs. The core funding includes funding for the national 22 July and Democratic Citizenship program.

In addition to the core funding, EWC income comes from projects funded by Norwegian and international donors/sources, covering both project activities and staff. Since 2018, this additional funding has exceeded the core funding, with main donors being the Ministry of Education and Research, NORAD, and EEA and Norway Grants. We recognize the importance and value of stable and predictable funding over time. It provides

the necessary resources to plan effectively, execute projects efficiently, adapt to changing circumstances. And like before, we value the collaboration with our partners and donors.

Income in numbers

	NOK	EUR	% of total
Ministry of Education and Research core funding	14 257 000	1 248 628	33 %
Ministry of Education and Research project funding	6 500 000	569 270	15 %
Norad	10 878 466	952 736	25 %
EEA and Norway Grants	2 644 749	231 627	6 %
Other*	9 561 283	837 377	21 %
Total	43 841 498	3 839 638	100 %



*Savings Bank Foundation DNB, The Civics, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, etc.

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