ON EUROPEAN NARRATIVES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THEIR POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR COPYRIGHT

Professor Helle Porsdam
Center for American Studies, University of Southern Denmark

Abstract
‘The “idea” of Europe is very much with us now’, writes historian Anthony Pagden in the introduction to his edited volume of essays entitled The Idea of Europe, which came out in 2002. Pagden’s book is but one of many books published recently on Europe – on European culture, history and identity, and on the relationship of Europe towards other parts of the world. In his latest book, Das kosmopolitische Europa (Cosmopolitan Europe) from 2004, for example, German sociologist Ulrich Bech talks about the necessity to create a ‘European narrative’. This is a narrative that will emphasise a political vision for a multiethnic and cosmopolitan Europe.

It is this idea of a European narrative that I would like to develop further in my talk. My argument will be that such a narrative is intimately bound up with the topic of human rights – indeed, may be characterised as a human rights narrative. The problem is, however, that there is more than one human rights narrative at play here. I will take a look at these and also discuss some possible implications for copyright and for thinking about copyright that such human rights narratives may have.