

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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The President of the ISHR adds personal words to Vladimir Novitsky

ISHR mourns president of the Russian section, lawyer Vladimir Novitsky

(Bonn, 10.04.2025) In the night of April 3 to 4, 2025 the President of the Russian section of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), lawyer Vladimir Mikhailovich Novitsky, passed away suddenly. In addition to the obituary of the International Society for Human Rights and its German Section to Vladimir Mikhailovich Novitsky, the President of the ISHR, Thomas Paul Schirmmacher, made a personal statement:

“No one was closer to Vladimir Mikhailovich Novitsky, the long-standing president of our Russian section, than Carmen Krusch-Grün, responsible for Eastern Europe and all Russian-speaking communities and now Treasurer of the International Council of the International Society for Human Rights. She was in regular and intensive contact with him, also on my behalf. I had many discussions with Vladimir at Board meetings, at several of our annual conferences in Bonn and on the two occasions when I was privileged to visit him and his team in Moscow and see them in action. I have lost a dear friend, ISHR has lost a beacon of justice and credibility in one of the most difficult political environments in the world. Many people owe him their human rights, some even their lives. May God reward him for this in eternity!”

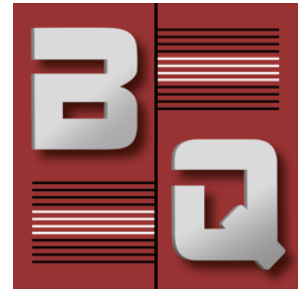


(from left): Vladimir Novitski, President of the Russian Section of the ISHR, Prof. Dr. mult. Thomas Schirmmacher, President of the ISHR worldwide, and Karl Hafen, successor to the founder of the ISHR, Managing Director for many years © ISHR

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The obituary of the ISHR

The President of the Russian section of the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), lawyer Vladimir Mikhailovich Novitsky, died suddenly and unexpectedly in the night of April 3 to 4, 2025 at the age of 68. The ISHR mourns the loss of a long-time colleague and good friend. Our thoughts are with his family and we express our deepest sympathy.

Vladimir Nowitski, an expert in European legal history, was one of the longest-standing employees of the ISHR. From 1992 to 1997, he worked closely with the founder of the ISHR, the exiled Russian Ivan Agrusov, in the Frankfurt office. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he headed the ISHR's Moscow office and implemented Russia-wide EU projects to build a civil society. As early as 2012, he warned of a return to Stalinist times in his analysis of the then-introduced law "On Foreign Agents" and organized a human rights conference on the topic in Moscow.

From 2015 to 2021, Vladimir Nowitski took part in numerous ISHR youth projects funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The ISHR, which historically has sections in all Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), was the only non-governmental organization that was able to work with all sections across national borders. With the aim of strengthening democracy and civil society, unforgettable shared moments have been experienced in youth exchanges and the development of joint media platforms has been achieved.

It was Vladimir Nowitski in particular who filled these encounters with joie de vivre and had a very special approach to the young people. Despite the serious human rights issues and the often traumatic experiences associated with them, it was Vladimir Nowitski who always made all the participants laugh with his wonderful sense of humor.

The last planned ISHR event in Moscow in 2019 already proved to be very difficult, as it was not possible to rent a room for an event organized by human rights activists. At this time, official cooperation with the ISHR was only possible for Russian colleagues at great risk. By the time the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine began, any communication was impossible. Standing up for human rights during this time meant

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Vladimir Novitski with numerous colleagues at the ISHR Eastern Europe Conference on Disinformation in Frankfurt am Main in 2019 © ISHR

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being prepared to go to prison and lose your property. Not every human rights activist was and is prepared to do this. Vladimir Novitski, husband and father of four children, was not. The ISHR understood and respected this.

In spring 2023, a final joint working meeting was held with the ISHR section in Armenia, where Novitskiy expressed his deep sadness at the developments. He asked at the time: “Will we be able to meet again?” Today we answer: “Dear good old friend, no, not in this life, and we are not even allowed to pay our last respects to you on the spot, not to shed our hot tears at your grave, but our memories are with you and our sympathy with your loved ones. We will meet again in another place. Rest in peace!”

Vladimir Mikhailovich Novitskiy studied law at St. Petersburg State University (formerly Leningrad State University, named after A. A. Zhdanov) and at the Institute of Management Personnel of the USSR Public Prosecutor’s Office. After his civilian service with the public prosecutor’s office from 1983 to 1990, he worked as a lawyer from 1990. At the same time, he was involved in a variety of functions for human rights and civic engagement: from 1992 to 1997, he headed the CIS department at the International Secretariat of the International Society for Human Rights in Frankfurt am Main. He was closely associated with this organization throughout his life, from 1997 as Vice President and from 1998 as President of the Russian section.

He also served as legal director of the Moscow Office for Human Rights from 2003 to 2006 and was Vice President of the Institute for Parliamentarism, Contemporary Politics and Human Rights from 2003. As co-chairman of the Foundation for the Protection of the Rights of Athletes and Sports Associations, he campaigned for fair conditions in sport from 2004. He was also heavily involved at city level: he was a member of the St. Petersburg Public Chamber from 2008 and became its First Vice President in 2009. In 2011, the registration of the “Russian Section of the ISHR” was renamed “National Bureau for Public Control of the Goods and Services Market, Consumer and Human Rights” for security reasons.

His commitment to civil society dates back to the years of perestroika, when he was a member of the Perestroika Club in St. Petersburg. With great foresight and tireless dedication, he shaped the work of the ISHR in Russia and beyond for decades.

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1** (from left): Vladimir Novitski, President of the Russian Section of the ISHR, Prof. Dr. mult. Thomas Schirmmacher, President of the ISHR worldwide, and Karl Hafen, successor to the founder of the ISHR, Managing Director for many years © ISHR
- **Photo 2:** Vladimir Novitski with numerous colleagues at the ISHR Eastern Europe Conference on Disinformation in Frankfurt am Main in 2019 © ISHR

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