

Report on the Activities of the Dutch-Russian Law Association (DRLA) in 2023

In 2023, as in 2022, exchanges between our members in the Netherlands and Russia continued to prove challenging – if not impossible – to realize in view of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and consequences on the global political climate and ensuing limitations for citizens on all sides. Fortunately, there was one exception – the visit of our Russian member Arkadii Gutnikov, who stayed with us for a couple of days in October 2023. However, on the whole, the outlook did not improve and remained grim. The repression of critical voices in Russia has removed any remaining optimism with respect to the direction the Russian legal system has taken since February 2022. Also, in spare contacts with Russian colleagues, Dutch lawyers must be extremely careful as not to compromise them. Sadly, it is at this stage difficult to see any signs of improvement with regard to the rule of law in Russia.

In the spring of 2023, the Board organized a series of lectures by Russian lawyers on the impact of the post-24 February 2022 events on different areas of Russian law. The lectures took place online and were given by:

- Marina Agal'tsova on the 'Impact on Human Rights Law', 25 April 2023;
- Denis Karimov on the 'Impact on Economic Law', 25 May 2023; and
- Anatoly Semenov on the 'Impact on Intellectual Property Law', 22 June 2023.

The Board was very pleased to welcome speakers and listeners alike to these lectures and especially with the cooperation that was established with these young, driven lawyers.

On 5 July 2023, the DRLA held its annual general meeting, at which the financial report for 2022 and the report of the 2022 activities were discussed and approved.

For the autumn we had scheduled a Q&A meeting with our Russian member Arkadii Gutnikov in The Hague. Unfortunately, however, the campus of Leiden University in The Hague where the get-together was to take place had been closed due to a bomb alert. Fortunately, the drinks organized afterwards in a nice restaurant in the centre of The Hague could still take place. Mr Gutnikov informed us of the current situation in Russia and there was ample opportunity to ask questions.

A symposium on sanctions and countersanctions was scheduled for December 2023 but eventually postponed until end of January 2024. The Board was pleased to welcome speakers Heleen over de Linden and Anna Fischer as speakers, in addition to its very own Wim Timmermans as the third speaker.

2023 was the current Board's last full year in office. The Board wishes to thank all DRLA members for their trust, support, and interest. The Board is grateful to the candidate Board members Heleen over de Linden and Ernst van Gassen, who are willing to assume the task of managing the DRLA in the capacity of president and treasurer respectively (a third Board member (for the position of secretary) is still very much wanted). The current Board wishes them lots of success in their new task.

The Board of the DRLA
Leiden, June 2024