**Press release**

**WRC Croatia Rally – the major sporting event again in Croatia for at least another three years!**

*The major sporting event and one of the most watched sporting shows in the world is returning to Croatia in April, officially and for the first time in the presence of spectators who will be able to follow the mastery of the world’s best drivers in a total of 20 special stages through five Croatian counties. Fans of octane thrills will also be able to lay eyes on the revolutionary new generation of hybrid Rally1 vehicles in Croatia, which premiered in Monte Carlo last week. The season-opening round of this 50th anniversary championship announced an apparently extremely exciting season full of twists.*

**Zagreb, 27 January 2022 –** The major sporting event in Croatia since its independence and one of the top 20 most watched sporting events in the world is returning to Croatia. The WRC Croatia Rally, which is going to bring together the world’s best rally drivers, will be held from 21 to 24 April at attractive special stages through five Croatian counties – Zagreb County, Karlovac County, Krapina-Zagorje County, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and Varaždin County; while the ceremonial start, the finish line and the service park, where a rich program is being scheduled, will be located in Zagreb. This year, a record number of spectators is expected at one of the biggest sporting events in the country ever. Indeed, according to the predictions of the Organizer the event will be followed by more than 350,000 people in special fan areas and along the tracks, arriving from Europe and many countries worldwide.

Thanks to the excellent organization of the sports and collateral contents of the race, including also the environmental protection, Croatia has been mentioned many times as refreshing and a real surprise in the WRC calendar. Thus, following the excellent assessment for the overall impression, the Organizer was given the opportunity to sign a contract and organize this octane show for three years.

Along with many surprises and rich content for which the preparations are in full swing, the year 2022 is a special one also due to the fact that the WRC - World Rally Championship is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout the whole year. This special anniversary will be marked by a new, hybrid era of Rally1 vehicles using electricity in addition to sustainable fuel. And that further excitement will not be left out of this WRC 50th anniversary season was confirmed by the season-opening round in Monte Carlo last weekend. In a race that was uncertain until the very end, the victory was grabbed by Sebastien Loeb and Isabelle Galmiche in a Ford Puma. At the age of 47, Loeb became the oldest driver to win a WRC round as he claimed his 80th overall win in Monte Carlo.

The WRC Croatia Rally is an event that has a much broader significance and, besides sport, it also includes the impact on the Croatian economy due to the extensive organization as well as to the increased tourist arrivals of automotive enthusiasts and adventurers. For the purpose of comparison, the organizers of the Portuguese WRC 2019 edition carried out a study in collaboration with the University of Algarve on the contribution of events to economic growth and their results showed direct and indirect economic impact in the country worth 142 million euros. Beside F1, the WRC is the most popular world motorsport competition and probably the biggest sporting event in Croatia in the last 30 years that provided to the Republic of Croatia more than 42.5 million euros worth media promotion and generated a hotel occupancy rate between 60 and 100 percent in the wider area, in the pre-season part of a very unstable year marked by the pandemic and other adversities. The importance and the success of this event has been recognized by the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the City of Zagreb, that decided to provide co-funds for the organization of the competition in 2022 and in the subsequent years.

“Croatia has proven to be a sports organizer you can highly count on. It is a huge success for our country to be included in the world calendar, as well as to have brought the world championship and to have organized a race at such a high level. The race itself is a Croatian product because it was almost entirely organized by Croatian sports functionaries, whom we are very proud of. This race, in addition to providing a shot in the arm to the development of motorsport, it significantly contributes to the promotion of Croatia in the world and I am convinced that, like last year, we will host some of the most important individuals of the world sports industry”, says Davorin Štetner, President of the Croatian Car and Karting Federation.

„We thank the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the City of Zagreb, the counties, the sponsors and all other partners, without whom this top sports event would not have been possible. With great pride and thrill we are bringing one of the biggest sports events to Croatia once again. In addition to the world’s best rally drivers, the audience of the WRC Croatia Rally will now have the opportunity to see what the WRC is going to look like in the future. FIA’s new technical regulations have steered the competition towards responsible and sustainable hybrid technology, to which new dynamic performance has been added combined with safety enhancements that make driving extremely attractive while contributing to significant reductions in harmful emissions. We are especially happy that the images of our beautiful country will go around the world again and we have also made sure that there is no lack of great excitement for all generations”, says Daniel Šaškin, President of the Organizing Committee of the WRC Croatia Rally.

“Early bird” tickets for limited places in fan areas will be on sale soon, where in addition to the most attractive passages of the rally stars, a rich catering offer and all-day entertainment will be organized.

**About WRC**

WRC (World Rally Championship) is the most popular motorsport competition in the world besides F1, which is regularly broadcast by over 250 TV stations and watched by about 836 million people worldwide.

After many years of vying with much richer countries, Croatia had the opportunity to organize an event of the World Championship for the first time in 2021, which has been labeled WRC Croatia Rally and took place in Zagreb and the surrounding area in April of the same year.

Photo: Uroš Modlic, Mario Pavlović, Walter Sirotić, Marjan Radović

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