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## **PRESS RELEASE**

Tinker Labs was founded in 2016 as the idea of the founder, Alan Orlic, Ph.D. to start a modern approach to teaching STEAM areas for preschool and school-aged children in Osijek, Croatia through the concept of workshops that cover a different topic from the STEAM spectrum of subjects (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) every week.

Since its inception, Tinker Labs has been actively promoting the development and popularization of natural and technical sciences through innovative workshops for children, which are designed to systematically and methodically approach extracurricular education for children, and the concept of the method has outgrown the framework of a Tinker Labs center and become a successful educational franchise in Croatia and the world.

In 2022, the Tinker Labs franchise has 37 educational centers in Croatia, 10 in Serbia, 10 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1 in Montenegro, 1 in North Macedonia and 1 in Hungary. In the school year 2022/2023, Tinker Labs has over 4,000 students who attend extracurricular workshops in franchise centers throughout Croatia and the region.

Considering the modern approach, we at Tinker Labs realized that there is very little opportunity to change the school system from the inside. But we can create conditions for inspiration outside the traditional school system. It is our belief that a child who spends one hour a week interested in doing activities with

their hands and who often experiences a "wow" moment, will remember their positive feelings related to studying and develop a love for learning. This passion will be transferred to a deeper interest within traditional education, as the child will learn to question and explore the subjects they enjoy in more detail.

At Tinker Labs, we have created one preschool and two separate school programs (each lasting two years (beginner and continuation course)) designed to introduce children to the world of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math).

Every week, the students deal with a different topic of the STEAM spectrum, and throughout the school year they do 36 independent lessons and 4 STEAM syntheses in which they reaffirm what they have learned through a board game. A total of 40 teaching hours per course are divided into 4 parts of 10 units each. Students have 4 encyclopedic textbooks for each course. Each textbook or picture book of the Tinker Tots, Tinker Tots Plus, Tinker Town, Tinker Town Plus, Tinker World and Tinker World Plus courses is accompanied by 10 teaching units. All our teachers are certified and trained to teach according to the Tinker Labs method. The work is organized in specialized classrooms of Tinker Labs centers provided by Tinker Labs franchisors, in small groups of up to 10 students per group, which allows for the personalization of the learning experience and the ability of the teacher to pay special attention to each student in the group. Each Tinker Labs center is designed like a laboratory that inspires the innovation process, and the classrooms have all the materials needed for experiments, including modular desks that adapt for each lesson. Each program is designed and adapted according to the abilities of certain ages. The program in each course introduces key STEAM topics and concepts that expand with each academic year. The course progression is designed to include as many concepts as possible each year and to build on the knowledge and skills acquired in previous years' courses.

After years of extensive research on the world's various education systems, we noticed that there is no common factor that can be found in all institutional education systems: they all separate knowledge into different categories that are later taught as independent school subjects. We also noticed that children's innate curiosity to investigate the world around them would be better fulfilled if children had a space where they can freely explore, study and ask questions about the phenomena that interest them the most. We understand the importance and necessity of learning from simpler to more complex concepts (we have to learn math and physics if we want to build a bridge), but we also take into account children's need for their world to be designed so that their curiosity has free reign (imagine letting a child build a real bridge while learning), by the trial-and-error method, about the laws of mathematics and physics). With this goal in mind, we designed groups of courses that serve as a metaphorical bridge between children's natural affinity for play and the structural requirements of the traditional education system.

The slogan that guides the development of our curriculum is "from play, to passion, to purpose". Each of our lessons is designed around a concept or theme designed to keep children busy with fun and interactive games and activities. Our goal is to provide an inspiring space where children can use their hands and minds to create and build different things. With this concept, we would develop their passion for learning, especially the passion for the multitude of different STEAM subjects that we would cover during the school years. Once introduced to a method of presenting new topics, our students develop the skills to critically approach different problems, something we affectionately call «through the Tinker Labs lens». This lens helps children experience the world from different perspectives. Rather than just learning the laws of science, they learn how to look at a subject or problem using an integrated STEAM approach to problem solving. This is what makes the Tinker Labs approach to learning different from conventional teaching

methods. It is designed to bring a holistic and integrated approach to critical thinking and problem solving; characteristics that go beyond defined school subjects.

Once children develop the "Tinker Labs lens" by engaging in work and participating in fun activities, our ultimate goal is for this passion for questioning the world around them and solving problems to develop naturally into finding their purpose, or more directly, a field of study that they would want to do one day after they leave Tinker Labs and go into higher education. We think this is a great opportunity for any parent: to expose their child to the many different directions they can take in life and allow them to find something they are passionate about to help them lay the foundation to continue and pursue that passion in life themselves.

The first Tinker Labs franchise center in Osijek was opened in 2016, and with its 100 enrolled students, it already showed great success in the first year. Parents of students were often interested in where the idea for such an innovative program came from, and we decided to develop the idea and the program so that it could be implemented as a franchise system. A teaching methodology and teaching manuals for teachers and different courses were developed and a team of designers was employed to design textbooks and accompanying materials available only within the franchise to confirm Tinker Labs as an innovation in the children's education market.

All textbooks, picture books and workbooks used as part of the Tinker Labs franchise have their own ISBN and CIP numbers under which they are cataloged in city and university libraries throughout Croatia and contain all copyrights as intellectual property.

The Tinker Labs logo is registered as a trademark at the State Intellectual Property Office in Croatia.

In April 2021, the school-age programs received a positive expert evaluation from the Education Agency and were recommended by the Ministry of Science and Education in Croatia as an extracurricular activity for children.

In April 2021 Tinker Labs was awarded by the international expert jury the Franchise Brand Leader Award for the fastest growing Croatian franchise in the regional market.