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PRESS RELEASE

## Studenac launches program to support single-parent families

*Project set up in response to surveys showing more than half of single parents say they cannot provide the upbringing they would like for their children, and one in four feels unsupported by their family and community. There are almost 220,000 single-parent households in Croatia, of which 82% are headed by women.*

Zagreb, May 23, 2024 – As many as 53% of single parents say they cannot provide what they consider necessary for a high-quality, healthy upbringing for their children, up from 39% in 2021. Additionally, it is concerning that 70% of single parents find their role as the sole parent and provider to be extremely stressful and challenging, while one in four feels unsupported by their family and community. These are the key findings of a survey conducted by Henda\* on the quality of life of single-parent families, presented at the HUB385 coworking space in Zagreb as part of the launch of the Orange Fish project.

The project was initiated by the Studenac, Croatia's largest retailer by number of stores, in cooperation with civil society partners: the LET Association, the Center for Reproductive Mental Health, and the charity Mali zmaj. The project's goal is to empower single-parent families.

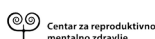
Through this initiative, Studenac continues to support the most vulnerable members of the communities where it operates and to drive positive change in their lives. This year, it will do so by providing vacations for children from single-parent families and systematically donating to the charity Mali zmaj.

### Number of single parents is rising, and they are increasingly left to fend for themselves

The results of the latest survey were presented to the public by Irena Starman Frančić, Head of Research at Henda. "Not only do single parents feel they are living more challenging lives compared to two-parent families, but the level of stress they believe they are exposed to is very high—about 70% of respondents feel their role as a single parent is stressful, that they have less opportunity for a more relaxed lifestyle, and that it is difficult to balance family and work obligations," said Starman Frančić, summarizing the most important indicators. She emphasized that compared to the results of a survey conducted three years ago, living conditions for single-parent families have become more difficult, and single parents are increasingly left without support from others.

According to 2021 census data, there were more than 218,000 single-parent families in Croatia, of which 82% were single mothers with children. The share of single-parent families in the total number of families increased from 15% in 2001 to almost 20% in 2024.

**This July, as part of the "Orange Fish" project, Studenac will provide a carefree vacation for 60 children—beneficiaries of the charity Mali zmaj**



Studenac d.o.o.  
Četvrt Ribnjak 17 Omiš 21310 Hrvatska  
phone +385 (0)21 430 801 | fax +385 (0)21 430 802  
studenac@studenac.hr | [www.studenac.hr](http://www.studenac.hr)



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The panelists of a roundtable discussion that followed the presentation of the survey results agreed that single parents should not hesitate to seek help, whether for everyday child care or something more complex, like seeking psychological support for themselves. At the roundtable titled "Orange Fish: Supporting Single-Parent Families," the topic was discussed by Aida Handžić, a law graduate and Head of the General Legal Affairs and Human Resources Service at the Central Family Center; Iva Jovović, a social work graduate, Executive Director of the LET Association, and owner of the samohrani.com portal; Martina Leopold, President of the charity Mali zmaj; Anja Škulje Makjanić, Project Manager of Corporate Communications at Studenac; Dora Zrinski Petrović, a psychologist from the Center for Reproductive Mental Health; and single mothers Tina Biloglav and Ivana Mance.

"I recommend to every single parent the most basic and important thing: not to hesitate to ask for help, whether it's changing diapers, dealing with a teenager, or something more complex like seeking psychological help," said Jovović. She emphasized that a parent should never forget themselves and their feelings, even during an extremely stressful period marked by the death of the other parent or a divorce.

Tina Biloglav, a well-known architect who recently became a single mother of two daughters after the death of her husband, Marko Babić, and Ivana Mance, a single mother of four sons, shared their experiences and challenges in everyday life. They agreed that the hardest part is exhaustion and worrying about the future, which prevents them from fully emotionally dedicating themselves to their children and leads to feelings of guilt. This is known as parental burnout syndrome, an increasingly common problem among single-parent families, manifesting as chronic exhaustion, emotional distancing from children and a feeling of inadequacy in the parenting role.

Anja Škulje Makjanić, Project Manager of Corporate Communications at Studenac and the creator of the Orange Fish project, explained the reasons for launching the project: "Through our company's social responsibility programs, we continuously support the development of a sustainable and inclusive community, and this project is a continuation of that journey. We are delighted to provide a vacation for 60 children from single-parent families in collaboration with the Mali zmaj association this July, giving them the opportunity to create beautiful memories and raise public awareness and discussion about the challenges faced by single-parent families," said Škulje Makjanić. She also explained how to participate in the initiative.

Through the project's website and the Moj Studenac app, it is possible to support the work of the Mali zmaj charity, and Studenac will match the amount collected before donating it to the association.

*\* The survey on the quality of life of single-parent families was conducted by the LET Association and the company Hendal from February to April 2024, on a sample of 180 parents, 89 percent of whom were mothers and 11 percent fathers. An online survey examined various dimensions related to single-parent families, especially the availability of social support in the family, the experience of parenting, the balance between private and work obligations, formal support from institutions, life satisfaction, and the sense of security. Data analysis used descriptive statistics, correlation tests, and difference tests.*