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„**Rally Guild” against the established order**

**Earlier this week a meeting was held between Lithuanian Automobile Sport Federation (LASF) management and a part of motorsport community, calling themselves “The Rally Guild”. During the meeting, participants stated their demands for resignation of the Rally Committee Chairman in an official statement, signed by twenty-seven of almost two hundred and fifty Lithuanian rally participants.**

Although representatives of the “Guild” justified a reason for their demands being the changes for 2017, the sportsmen didn’t want to discuss this document in the meeting. Only a single demand was declared – resignation of Rally Committee Chairman, Mr Maris Simson. Questions, intended find out what specifically is wrong with the Regulations, were asked by LASF President – Mr Romas Austinskas and General Secretary Ms Renata Burbulienė were left without an answer with no possibilities to lead the meeting to a positive direction. Mr Maris Simson tried to clarify the Committee’s position once again as well as there are basically no changes in the Regulations for the next season. He also stated that the decisions were made not only from separate competitors’ requests, but also by taking into account the “Big Picture” of all three leagues of Lithuanian rally and a strategy, formed by LASF President, that is based on working with all neighboring countries, including Poland.

After the meeting LASF Rally Committee Chairman said: “I made a conclusion that the constant efforts by the Rally Committee that lasted for two years and were intended to improve and set the direction for sports development coordinated among the strategy of our region and the rest of European countries, are unfavorable by some authoritative Lithuanian rally championship participants. The Rally Committee has clearly and reasonably declared its vision by publishing project regulations and constantly communicated with the society, who had their questions or uncertainties, for two weeks. The goal was to explain and synchronize all the actions and the effects they bring. Unfortunately, the discussions were over together with the fact-based arguments. A group of sportsmen decided to work out the discussions by force. The arguments from us and the interests from the other part of the community did not impress them and they insisted that the demands were carried out without reservations. The attacks in the public media have started as well, forming negative opinion about the Rally Committee. I can find no other definition as misleading to describe the actions that were taken against us. It was often not related to the Regulations or the strategy of the Committee at all. There was a good remark during the meeting that the Committee must work for the prosperity of the whole community. However, if a part of it resists the common interest and another is not bothered or does not want to see into it and chooses a role of a passive observer, we have no other choice but to give in. We started our work only for a better tomorrow for motorsports by representing all the interests of all the sportspeople, forming a strategy, which was agreed upon with the national authorities of our partner countries. Rally Committee has been working for two years free of charge. If there are nobody to appreciate that, we shall retire”.

According to another member of the Rally Committee – Mr Dainius Sviderskis, the Rally Committee was without any doubt the mostly active among them all. He hopes that the new one will be able to keep up with the pace. He stated that all of the Committee members regret that the greater part of the work was not advertised for wider audience due to lack of the human resources. Although, there are plenty of evident work. It is almost weekly conversations with the Latvian and Estonian national sporting authorities, reopened relations to the Polish colleagues. New organizers as well as new events, identical national technical requirements in N4LT/N4LV classes, clear partition of the different rally leagues with definite rules and migration strategy among them. More attention was given to the leagues B and C as well as the start position index system was implemented. The Rally Committee has created the database on the Internet, online survey system. Volunteers were involved into Rally Committee. The more professional communication with the media was begun, however this was not a priority, because the Committee has dedicated more time working than talking about it. Despite of having extremely low budget, the Rally Committee has managed to create a new brand name – “Lithuanian Rally Awards” gala event that has connected the finals all three rally leagues. A good practice, shared with countries like Sweden, Germany, Belgium and others, is also worth mentioning together with cooperation with the FIA committees. There was also an innovative licensing systems proposed, intended to improve the situation of compliance of the rules in the events.

“Despite of the fact that we were constantly criticized for promoting the international classes – only them can raise such world-known sportsmen like Estonia’s Ott Tanak and Latvia’s Ralfs Sirmacis. For this reason, we hope that our precious sport will continue to develop in this direction, chosen wisely by our neighboring counties at the time. The Committee also wishes more clarity for the whole community: the rules cannot be flexible for the “Stars” by violating the interests of another sportspeople. Personal and collective initiatives are crucial: it is now very important that this part of the community, who sees things constructively, would involve into making decisions. Variety of opinions and having courage to speak up are vital at this time. We have not been successful, however we believe that by making firm decisions, we forced that ice – that separates us from the real inevitable progress – to crack. I am sure that that day will come, when we finally will advance to another level’, - Mr Maris Simson summarized.