Press release

**“WINE VISION BY OPEN BALKAN” - THE WINE PROMOTION MISSION OF VINITALY AND ICE TRADE AGENCY**

**16-19 NOVEMBER: BUYERS AND OPINION MAKERS FROM EASTERN EUROPE WILL MEET IN THE "ITALY AREA"**

(Belgrade – Serbia, 14 November 2023). The mission of Vinitaly and ICE Trade Agency to promote Italian wine sets off to the Balkans, arriving in Belgrade (Serbia) Thursday 16-Sunday 19 November 2023 for the second edition of "Wine Vision by Open Balkan". This is the first and largest wine trade fair in south-east Europe which last year hosted 350 wineries from 20 countries and more than 30,000 visitors from 40 countries. The "Italy Area" (more than 1000m2 exclusively for Italian wines) curated by Veronafiere and ICE will be a meeting point for buyers, professionals and opinion makers in the sector who are interested in finding out and studying not only the proposals from the 50 companies in the Italian group shoe but also contacts, strategies and commercial opportunities for Italian wine.

The Managing Director of Veronafiere, Maurizio Danese, said: “After successful attendance by the 'Open Balkan' delegation at the last Vinitaly, we are keen to continue overseeing and developing the wine business in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Italian wine managed to overtake France on this market in terms of quantity and values last year, becoming the main EU supplier. An important initial result that can be exploited further through targeted positioning and penetration action, as well as by attracting buyers and promoting incoming attendance with a view to Vinitaly 2024."

The Italian Ambassador to Serbia, Luca Gori, pointed out that “Italy's involvement in Wine Vision is part of the Week of Italian Cuisine in the World, the initiative by the Foreign Ministry to promote the excellence of Italian culinary traditions. In this regard, wine is one of the most highly appreciated products abroad, as clearly demonstrated by the value of exports coming to 3.7 billion euros in the first half of 2023."

The President of ICE, Matteo Zoppas, said that this initiative “Places the Balkans at the centre of attention of our government's control room and our agency is focusing a great deal on this area. These are still fast-developing countries with growing attention for Italy: Italian products are highly appreciated and wine is one of the most strategic. There is no high-level international restaurant that does not have a significant list of Italian wines and this demonstrates how Italy has become a landmark in the world even in this field."

The event in Serbia also includes four master classes involving more than 30 selected wines for tasting and a specific focus on the Veneto (16/11 at 14:00), Piedmont and Lombardy (16/11, 17:00), Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (17/11, 14:00) and Central and Southern Italy (17/11, 17:00).

The inauguration of the "Italy Area" (scheduled on Thursday 16 November) will be attended by the President of the Veneto Region, Luca Zaia, the Director of the ICE Office in Belgrade, Antonio Ventresca, the Managing Director of Veronafiere, Maurizio Danese, and the Sales Director, Raul Barbieri.

*The UIV-Vinitaly Observatory suggests that in the first 6 months of 2023 sales of Italian wine in Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary, as well as Turkey) saw Austria post an increase of 16.5%, worth 243 million euros in the first half-year 2023. This result goes against the trend for global performance by the sector in the first half-year (-0.4%) and confirms Italian leadership in the area considered.*