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PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 11 January 2022 - The highly anticipated Winter Wonders certainly kept its promises for this holiday season! **Although threatened by and finally partially closed due to the latest health measures, the biggest event in the City of Brussels allowed close to 2.5 million visitors to enjoy the magic of the heart of the capital for over a month, featuring artistic innovations and traditions alike.**

Despite the bad weather and the difficult health situation (which led to its premature partial closure), **WINTER WONDERS** was still the number-one holiday season event. This proves once again (if proof were ever needed) the great attractiveness of this event. Between 26 November and 25 December, it welcomed 1,836.039 visitors.

Added to this figure were also people who visited the art installations and the Place De Brouckère between 26 December and 9 January, when the event officially closed.

In total, 2,451.832 visitors (of which 1.866.709 Belgians - 1.127.922 from Brussels and 758.787 people from other regions, and 565.123 foreigners – France, Spain, The Netherlands) attended this event, which greatly contributed to livening up the centre of the capital.

*"Beyond the attendance figures, the City of Brussels has made it a point of honour to offer a **particularly innovative programme**, reiterating its determination to support the cultural sector - which has been in great difficulty for many months. In addition to the traditional attractions, we ensured that we gave priority to collaborations with Belgian and Brussels artists or collectives in order to implement the new projects for this anniversary edition: Behind the Walls, with the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium; Mécaniques Discursives, with Beliris; Galaxy Express, with Train World and the SNCB; Connections, with Infrabel,"* explains Delphine Houba, Alderwoman for Culture, Tourism and Major Events.

Most of these works and installations - including the sound and light show and the Christmas tree in the Grand Place - were maintained until 9 January.

The same was true for the **ice rink** on the Place De Brouckère, which welcomed 49.303 visitors.

Its sister rink at the **Bois de la Cambre** delighted 9.190 skaters. This was yet another novelty for the twentieth anniversary of Winter Wonders: other attractions and light installations were also offered for the first time in this green setting. Although the event will certainly evolve in the future, the City has drawn positive conclusions from this unprecedented experience. Most of the tradespeople present also expressed their satisfaction, pointing out that attendance had increased and encompassed other visitors who were less familiar with the location.

The **Creators Factory**, another innovation of this beautiful edition, permitted the City of Brussels to lay a new brick in the construction of the project to highlight the craftspeople. This popup shop with a fairy-tale decor opened its doors for ten days in the Anspach Gallery, exhibiting eighty creative and sustainable "transformers of matter," most of them from Brussels and Belgium.

Brussels by Lights lit up 152 streets and commercial arteries, ten more than in 2020.

This year, it was at the Schuman roundabout that the public gathered to immortalize a magical moment in front of the Sky Castle, a five-meter-high inflatable work of light.

"Winter Wonders and Brussels by Lights, through the lighted route of the commercial arteries, have made it possible to animate and support the attractiveness and the economic dynamics during more than a month", states a delighted Fabian Maingain, alderman of Economic Affairs.

From the end of November, the **Winter Pop** caravans were set up successively in Marolles, Neder-Over-Heembeek, Ambiorix Square and Laeken. In collaboration with local associations, a host of fun and creative activities were organised and adapted to each location. The interest of the inhabitants in these unifying moments grows year on year.

The City of Brussels is committed to making its events as sustainable as possible, and has further strengthened the **mobility plan** to ensure that Winter Wonders is as easy as possible to get to, while encouraging visitors to choose *active* mobility.

In this 2021 holiday season, our beautiful capital radiated and was the centre of everyone's attention! Let's look forward to even more shared experiences and meet again from 25 November 2022 to 4 January 2023 for the 22nd edition of Winter Wonders.

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