

## RunCzech brings back the competition – a new mixed reality

The last few months have been very sad for the running world and especially for mass participation events. When COVID-19 hit, and races all over the world were either cancelled or postponed, event organizers worldwide looked for ways of keeping their running fans engaged and active.

RunCzech, the organizer of several international World Athletics Gold Label races, which attract over 120 000 participants a year, felt it is its civic duty to provide a program for its loyal runners and came up with a bit of a different approach. The challenge “Česko běží dál” (Czech Republic keeps on running) - a unique way of getting runners all across the country to compete at various distances from 5K through 125K, not virtually but on real courses – a new kind of mixed reality.

The foundation for this project was laid few years ago when RunCzech created the FreeRun program – a community service project that aims to make running more accessible and more fun for more people. 90 running courses, each 5K long and certified by the Czech Athletics Federation were created to crisscross the entire country. All of them extremely comfortable for runners, all carefully maintained and staffed with an experienced running coach. The network of courses is managed and navigated using the RunCzech app.

The main challenge (named) is to run a total of 125 kilometers whenever you're able, on any of the 5K FreeRun courses over a period of 90 days. People can also choose to run distances from 5 to 40 km. Or set a goal of traveling around the country, and running as many FreeRun courses as possible within the allotted time.

“We were looking for a creative way of capturing the thrill of mass sporting events that runners cherish so much, to give them new challenges and goals” says Carlo Capalbo, the president of the RunCzech organizing committee. “The goal of the project is to have 1 000 000 km completed. And this, we hope, will be a way for runners to compete, to compare their results, to have a feeling of solidarity and companionship until it's safe for us to all come together again.” Carlo adds, “It's also a perfect sample of ideal cooperation based on partnership and services between RunCzech, the main event organizer, and the Federation. We believe this could be successfully replicated in other countries.”

Each participant will receive a digital diploma, and those who complete the entire 125K challenge will receive a special digital medal. There will be ranking for 5K, 10K, 20K, 40K and 125K distances. In addition, the fastest runners will earn various awards. RunCzech will monitor the courses carefully, to identify where there are large gatherings of runners, fostering a friendly competition between cities to see who can bring out the more participants.

For more information about the project visit the RunCzech web site at [www.runczech.com](http://www.runczech.com).



# ALL RUNNERS ARE BEAUTIFUL