



SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO

FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION

Gender and cultural equality within rugby in Finland

Suomen Rugbyliitto is dedicated to ensuring that the sport in Finland is welcoming and accessible to all everyone, regardless of gender, culture, or ethnicity.

Gender equality

World Rugby, the governing body of the sport, have an explicit programme designed to accelerate the development of women in rugby and Suomen Rugbyliitto are fully engaged in this activity.

Of the seventeen separate clubs that will field teams in our 2021 competitions, eleven will aim to field a women's team. In fact, 211 of our 671 total licensed players last season were female, making rugby one of the most gender-equitable sports in the country. Women are also fully encouraged to complete World Rugby qualifications in match officiating, coaching, and strength and conditioning, and this is shown in the level of participation in those activities. Finland's only currently active internationally appointed referee is female, for example. This equity also extends to international competition: Finland fields national teams in both the XV's and 7s variations of the sport for both men and women. In fact, the women's 7s national team is, relatively speaking, the most successful of the four.

Finnish rugby is also completely committed to engaging women off the field and ensuring that they are reflected in all strategy, plans and structures, and making highly valued contributions to participation, performance, leadership, and investment. To reflect this commitment, Suomen Rugbyliitto currently has two women within the executive committee (occupying the posts of Chairperson, General Secretary) and has 1 more female holding a seat on the board. This diversity is also reflected in the typical structure of leadership at club level with many clubs having women in board positions and key positions within administration roles.

Cultural and ethnic equality

Rugby is one of the most played and followed sports in the world but is largely unknown in Finland. This has naturally resulted in a large amount of expat participation and one of our goals over the past decade has been to increase interest and engagement amongst native Finns, as opposed to vice versa. This drive has been successful, to the extent that 74.5% of licensed players in 2020 were Finnish (a huge increase in percentage from ten years ago). Still, nearly all clubs from the larger cities include a good diversity of culture and ethnicity, often communicating internally and externally both in Finnish and English to ensure that they remain inclusive. As an indicator, of the eight board members of Suomen Rugbyliitto six are Finns and 2 are expats (representing New Zealand). The federation also engages the services of a British (but Finnish speaking) full-time consultant. The nationalities representing rugby in 2020 were made up of 35 different countries. These statistics are only representative of those persons that have taken licenses through the SuomiSport portal, in addition to these there are many that participate in the backgrounds of clubs but are not active competitively.