



## **ACTION PLAN 2019**

This action plan is focused on five key objectives, that are designed to create a platform on which future development can be based. These are individually addressed within this action plan, and each have clear strategies outlined that will enable tangible targets to be reached (section one).

In addition to these key objectives, the federation will continue to work within the framework of the organisation's vision, mission, values and strategic objectives to achieve a range of ambitions. These appear in bullet-form as they are tied into ongoing activities rather than constituting more significant or unique objectives (section two).

### ***Vision***

To be a self-sustaining federation with the relevant required structures and having accredited, trained, competent and dedicated personnel in place to continue the growth of rugby in Finland and promote Finnish rugby regionally and worldwide within the guidelines of the relevant governing bodies.

### ***Mission***

To promote, develop and sustain the game for all stakeholders in Finland, including players, officials, coaches, sponsors, supporters and governing bodies.

### ***Values***

In line with those of World Rugby: Integrity/Rehellisyys, Respect/Kunnioitus, Solidarity/Solidaarisuus, Passion/Intohimo, Discipline/Kuri

### ***Strategic goals (SRL strategic plan 2016 - 2020)***

- Promote the values, spirit and ethos of rugby in Finland
- Facilitate and support long-term participation and continued involvement in the game by all stakeholders, encouraging cross-category migration
- Have a sustainable year-on-year increase in registered players in all categories
- Identify, secure and sustain long-term sponsors and ensure that they realise return on their investment



## **SECTION ONE: Key objectives**

### ***Youth rugby: 'Develop a common framework for the common good'***

#### **Issue**

Clubs throughout the country are targeting different age groups (ranging from 6-10 year-olds to 15-17 year-olds). With so few sustainable success stories, this means Finnish rugby is unlikely to ever reach critical mass whereby several clubs have enough youths at the same age grade to make inter-club competition possible.

#### **Strategy**

SRL will host a youth development meeting for all stakeholders with the desired outcomes as follows:

1. Reach an agreement on which single age range to target nationwide
2. Understand and commit to what will be offered to engaged children once they become excited about rugby in terms of training possibilities within their local club
3. Make explicit the level and type of rugby that players will be taught to (i.e. contact/no-contact and other law variations that will need to be defined)
4. Establish a clear structure for inter-team competition in the short-, mid- and long-term
5. Create a common training manual appropriate for the selected age group that will highlight the key skills to be taught and how they can best be delivered with the aim of making it easy for new coaches and volunteers to get involved nationwide

#### **Timeline and milestones**

- The initial youth development meeting to be held in Autumn 2018, with strategy numbers 1-4 achieved on the day
  - Minimum objective to have at least three clubs within two hours drive buy into the common framework to make #4 (inter-club competition) achievable
  - Hope and expectation that all clubs would buy into the common framework
- First inter-club youth competition to be integrated into the 2019 season
- Training manual for use by coaches and volunteers produced and distributed within two months of the common framework being approved

#### **Additional notes**

This proposal is not suggesting that any ongoing youth work is shut down, just that future focus would be on a specified age range. The federation is not attempting to undermine or reverse any of the great work that has already been done by the many hard-working volunteers that have already given their time freely to youth rugby development.



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**Marketing: ‘Create a sellable product, and sell the product’**

**Issue**

The brand value of the leagues and competitions with Finnish rugby is underutilised. Part of the issue is that there is no clear guidelines for what can be offered to potential sponsors nationwide and so there is no pre-approved mandate to approach or negotiate with potential partners.

**Strategy**

SRL will host a marketing development meeting open to all stakeholders, but primarily focused on the men’s and women’s Championship clubs 2018. The desired outcomes as follows:

1. Determine whether to offer men’s and women’s Championship as a twinned package or separately
2. Reach agreement on what Championship teams would collectively be willing and able to offer to potential partners that purchase league-naming rights
3. Determine the minimum expectation in return for the items laid out above and how this would be distributed
4. Develop an understanding of who would lead the search for such a partner
5. Address any additional items presented by stakeholders

**Timeline and milestones**

- The initial marketing development meeting to be held in Autumn 2018, with numbers 1-4 achieved on the day
- Final sponsorship package and associated material finalised in presentable form no later than two months after the meeting
- League naming rights awarded for the 2019 season

**Additional notes**

The objective is to develop a club-led approach to creating a marketable product, as opposed to a top-down imposition of terms. The intention is not to ignore the divisions below the Championship, but as the most attractive leagues to potential corporate partners, the two Championships are the best place to launch the initiative.



## **Grow the number of license holders**

### **Issue**

There is significant value in ensuring that the number of license holders increases. This is a key performance indicator for many of the organisations on whom we depend (World Rugby and the Finnish Olympic Committee, for example) and access to resources and support from the Finnish NOC will increase substantially once we hit a target of 1,000 annual licenses (note: total participation licenses, not player licenses exclusively).

### **Strategy**

Ensure that all active personnel within the rugby community have a valid license each season that is appropriate for their level of participation. This will be done by:

1. Introducing harsher penalties for clubs that field non-licensed players (currently, teams that lose a match in which they field an ineligible player are not penalised in any way)
2. Introducing suspension periods for individual players that take the field without a license (there is currently no sanction against players themselves)
3. Ensuring all match day pitchside staff are required to hold a valid admin license so as to qualify for the insurance policy that covers admin staff on game day.
4. Working more closely with FRRA to ensure that all active officials hold a license
5. Exploring the potential to introduce a nominal license for active youth
6. Facilitate reporting of participants' license numbers to reduce the level of admin required by clubs to accurately ensure their members' compliance

### **Timeline and milestones**

- All strategic items to be introduced by the start of the 2019 season

### **Additional notes**

This is not meant to artificially inflate our participation numbers, just more accurately identify the level of overall participation and help drive our license numbers toward the 1,000 benchmark. This is in no way seen as reducing the importance of active recruitment and genuine growth of participation numbers.



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## ***Focus on recruitment***

### **Issue**

There is a real need to recruit new players to the sport and to retain those that engage. This is important for long-term stability and growth in terms of healthy domestic competition, player development, competitive national teams and financial sustainability. While the federation must take an active role in encouraging and supporting clubs in their recruitment effort (where such activities are welcome), the desire to recruit new players and active planning and implementation of local recruitment events must be club-driven.

### **Strategy**

Attempt to motivate, inspire and promote local recruitment efforts by coordinating national Get Into Rugby/recruitment days, during which Suomen Rugbyliitto will promote the nationwide event and clubs will manage their own beginners courses and recruitment drives that the targeted audience will be directed toward. This approach will:

1. Help motivate clubs to ensure that they're included in the initiative and drive overall recruitment
2. Activate sources of funding (Get Into Rugby)
3. Ensure that a larger audience is reached than clubs would be able to achieve individually

### **Timeline and milestones**

- Preliminary dates for such event(s) to be decided in Autumn 2018 in conjunction with the clubs
  - Actual dates to be set for Spring 2019 during the typical recruitment window



## ***Re-evaluate the women's XV competitions to support sustainable development***

### **Issue**

The women's championship is now well-established as a five-team competition. Division 1 was established in 2016 as a development league with two teams, which then grew in 2017 and was due to expand again in 2018 before several clubs were forced to withdraw their separate teams. It is likely that division 1 will continue to exist in some form, but the long-term growth of the division is questionable, as is any teams ability to use this as a launch-pad from which to progress to the championship division. It is therefore important to re-evaluate the current format of the women's competitions to determine whether a better structure can be implemented for 2019.

### **Strategy**

The (acting) national league and competitions manager will, in conjunction with the women's rugby coordinator and all stakeholders in women's rugby teams, run a discuss on this topic and attempt to reach majority consensus on whether change should be implemented, and, if so, what this change would look like. Key considerations as follows:

1. Predicted player numbers and forecast for all clubs on whether they will enter a women's team(s) into 2019 competition
2. Importance of a clear pathway for teams to enter the championship if performance merits inclusion
3. Need to offer development opportunities to emerging teams without compromising the integrity of the championship by admitting teams that are unable to compete at that level

### **Timeline and milestones**

- Decision made and communicated by November 31st, 2018 in order to allow creation and publication of the 2019 schedule in December



## **SECTION 2: Ongoing activities and proposals to support wider objectives**

1. Oversee sustainable domestic competition
  - a. Support all clubs in their recruitment, development and retention efforts with knowledge or involvement as required
  - b. Aim to launch a version of the proposed *rugby development programme* based on localised volunteer commitment and club interest in participation
  - c. Work toward a consistent format for men's division 2 that would allow for change in numbers but meet the needs of competing teams
  - d. Ensure an appropriate balance between 7- and XV competition for both sexes
  - e. Re-evaluate current player loaning regulations for both sexes (end-of-season review) with a priority on ensuring future emphasis is placed on internal recruitment and development
  - f. Maintain active relationships with the men's and women's rugby coordinators to ensure smooth communication and ability to be proactive in identifying and addressing any issues
2. Continue to support the four national teams
  - a. Develop and promote the existing partnership with Eerikkilä to enhance its value as the national training centre
    - i. One national team game to be hosted in the next international window in exchange for tangible improvement in the rugby-specific facilities available
  - b. Provide ongoing support and guidance in the hunt for sponsorship
  - c. Continue to work closely with team management to aid proactive communication
  - d. Centralise kit ordering and distribution for players, management and support staff (to be channeled through the technical director, as opposed to individual team management, to streamline the process)
3. Improve training and education coordination
  - a. Grant host clubs/organisations more autonomy in how courses are run and managed
  - b. Work with local World Rugby educators to ensure that courses in all bands are delivered with frequency and according to need (coordinated with the technical director)
4. Continue to represent Finland's interests amongst partner organisations and governing bodies
  - a. Ensure sustainability of funding
  - b. Push for access to international competition (applies especially to the younger national teams)
  - c. Aim for greater cooperation in terms of access to knowledge and resources
5. Enhance awareness of rugby domestically and increase its attractiveness as a partner for corporations