

DRAFT**THE FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION'S ACTION PLAN 2007**

The objective of the Finnish rugby Federation is to act as the central body of rugby in Finland, as a member of the Suomen Liikunta ja Urheilury and of the International Rugby Board and to promote, develop and spread the practice rugby or similar ball sports. (Finnish Rugby Federation's rules, §2)

The Action Plan 2007 is based on the member clubs' thoughts regarding the challenges and actions needed to develop Finnish rugby, as put forward in the working group meeting conducted with the clubs on the 14th of January 2007 in Tampere. The Action Plan [was agreed upon] in the Annual General Meeting in Jyväskylä on the 4th of March 2007.

1. Growing interest in Rugby as a sports' activity

OBJECTIVE: Increase the number of practitioners by at least 20 % during 2007.

REALISATION:

The IRB has set Finland a clear target in its Grant Award 2007: increase the level of players (men, women, youth) by at least 20 % during 2007.

According to the 5- and 10-yearplans of the Finnish Rugby Federation, in 2007 member clubs should increase the number of participants especially in youth and women's rugby and at the same time keep up the level of male players.

In order to reach the target, it is essential that all member clubs participate in making rugby more known on the local level, that clubs enforce their administrative structure and their coaching capacities, so that recruiting and committing new players is possible. During the discussions in Tampere (14.1.2007), the clubs underlined the need for specific trainings or beginners' courses for newcomers – there is a clear need for special "rugby basics"-coaching, so that new players stay within the club structure. The best model for this seems to be that clubs have a beginners' coach, whose responsibility is clearly defined: introducing rugby basics to the newcomers.

Alongside the need to recruit new players is the need to create opportunities for more experienced players to develop and maintain their interest in the game, in order to commit them to the activities of the clubs. This means giving the players the opportunity to develop their skills through quality coaching and bring forward new challenges through high-quality national competitions and national team activities.

RESPONSIBILITY: Member clubs, with the support of the FRF

- Project 1: Support to new clubs (FRF coordinates coaching-support to new clubs, material help).
RESPONSIBILITY: FRF together with member clubs
- Project 2: Recruitment of players: Organising "Open day-trainings", bringing rugby to schools and training centres (demonstrations and rugby trainings during school sports), communication through the local media and through local mailing-groups
RESPONSIBILITY: Member clubs
- Project 3: Starting women's and youth rugby activities in all member clubs.

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RESPONSIBILITY: Member clubs with the support of the FRF (Coaching education, material help).

The FRF will further develop the national competition activity (see ch. 6) and encourages member clubs to participate in the international tournaments in the region (Stockholm Tens, Tallinn, Baltic Cup). The National Team activities give the opportunity for active players to further develop their skills and game sense and contributes towards maintaining the interest of sportsmen and –women in rugby (see ch. 7).

FOLLOW-UP: Increase in numbers per player group. Amount of club recruitment events and their participation numbers.

2. Committed and able coaches in all clubs

OBJECTIVE: Increase the level of know-how of coaches and the numbers of coaches

REALISATION: In Finland there are more than 30 coaches, who have received basic training in rugby coaching. Nevertheless, only 1/3 of them are active in club coaching. The majority of club coaches are players, whose priority is playing rugby. The level of training of these coach-players is not high, which can become a problem due to the physical nature of rugby. The level of rugby coaching training of the current active coaches is to be developed at the same time as training for new coaches for men, women and the youth starts. The FRF organises training for both experienced and beginner coaches in 2007. The clubs are encouraged to support the training of their coaches and to actively recruit among their players for people, who are potentially interested in coaching.

Developing the networking and the identity of coaches in Finland is a target, which will be addressed through a specific coaching forum of discussion on the Finnish rugby forum, through organising regional training events, where coaches can exchange ideas and best practices and learn new drills from their pairs. Clubs are encouraged to strengthen the regional cooperation between clubs. This can be seen as an opportunity to create motivation also for players (friendly games, joint trainings).

The FRF will draw up recommendations according to the Suomen Valmentajat ry (Finnish coaches' Association) material on coaching contracts and the use of expense reimbursement and allowances in the clubs.

- Training programme 1: In 2007 the FRF organises a I-level basic coaching training programme, consulting the SLU VOK-coaching practices. The basic course target group consists of new coaches and future youth coaches. The training programme includes producing Finnish-language training material and distributing the material to coaches.
RESPONSIBILITY: FRF training coordinator
- Training programme 2: Together with the FIRA-AER, organisation of a IRB level 2-coaching course. The target group consists of active club coaches and National Team coaches. In 2005 the FRF organised a IRB level 1-coaching course.
RESPONSIBILITY: FRF and FIRA-AER

FOLLOW-UP: The number of coaches taking part in the training events.

3. Referees in the heart of the development activity

OBJECTIVE: Develop the know-how of current referees and increase the number of referees by 50% in 2007-2008.

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REALISATION: As was noted in the Tampere meeting 14.1.2007, the level of Finnish rugby can only develop at the rate that the level of refereeing develops. The referee has a crucial role regarding the conduct and the nature of the game. There are 14 referees in Finland, of which 5 refereed in the Finnish Championships in 2006. In 2007 there must be 10 new referees in the referee activity coordinated by the FRF, so that also women's and youth games will have referees. At the same time the players' knowledge of the rules must be increased. In the Tampere meeting it was decided that all clubs should have 2-4 people, who have taken part in the referee courses and who are ready to organise rules training to their club's players. The clubs are encouraged to consult the FRF referee coordinator when preparing the basic rules training for their players.

In 2007 the FRF organises two basic refereeing courses. These Finnish and English-language courses are targeted at beginners. There will also be a further referee course for the participants of the 2006 refereeing course, as well as a IRB Level-2 course targeted at more experienced referees and those who referee in the Finnish Championships. In 2005 the FRF organised a IRB level 1-refereeing course.

RESPONSIBILITY: FRF Referee coordinator, member clubs

FOLLOW-UP: The number of participants on the referee courses and their feedback. The feedback on referees from clubs.

4. Active and well-established clubs throughout the country

OBJECTIVES: Increase the level of administrative know-how in the clubs and thus stabilise the associations' activities in Finland. Broaden the scope of active officials in the clubs. Find solutions to the training facilities problem of clubs.

REALISATION: The FRF encourages member clubs to take part in local SLU-courses for sports' associations. The FRF covers course fees for each club for beforehand-agreed courses.

The FRF distributes information regarding rules and regulations of sports' associations through its web pages and by sending course material to clubs. The FRF will make use of advisory services and material of such organisations as the SLU.

The FRF may organise a specific course for rugby clubs regarding the obligations and rights of associations, and the FRF encourages exchanges between clubs regarding best practices.

The clubs have mentioned the scarceness and the lack of know-how of active officials as a major challenge for the developing club activities (too many jobs for too few people). Most of the active people have too many simultaneous roles to fulfil (players, coaches, club officials) and this puts limits to time spent at administrative or practical deeds, especially if playing rugby is still the priority of most.

The local cooperation and networking with other associations and sports' organisations broadens the experience- and participation-bases of clubs. Also starting youth activities can be seen as a good way to broaden the scope of officials and their know-how (integrating parents of players on the administrative side).

Clubs will strengthen their dialogue with the local sports' administrations (liikuntavirasto) in order to get more appropriate training and playing facilities. The club managements will actively seek to influence the decision-makers at the city councils and will make rugby more known to them (members of the sports' commissions, members of the Sports' councils etc). The FRF will contact the national sports' organisations (such as the Finnish Ball Sports' Federation) to increase the visibility of rugby.

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The FRF will inquire on the possible integration of rugby into the system of accreditation of points according to the football-league structure when dealing out training- and match facilities in cities.

RESPONSIBILITY: FRF board, Member Club boards

FOLLOW-UP: Number of club officials taking part in the trainings. The estimate of clubs regarding the amount of active officials regarding the amount of activity.

5. Rugby World Cup 2007 – bringing the visibility of rugby to the national level

OBJECTIVE: Make use of the Rugby World Cup 2007-event in order to market rugby in Finland.

REALISATION: The 2007 September RWC in France 2007 provides an excellent international background to bring rugby up in the Finnish media. With the help of its member clubs, the FRF will bring information about rugby to the knowledge of school pupils and sports' people. The FRF will also actively contact the media in order to market the biggest European sports' event of the year in Finland.

The FRF updates web pages on www.rugby.fi and member clubs update their web pages. The accuracy of contact information and of game results shall be especially monitored.

Visibility will be developed through active contacts with the media (press releases, providing articles to the media) both by clubs on the local level and by the FRF at the national level.

RESPONSIBILITY: FRF media coordinator, Member clubs' communication officers

- Project 1: Introduction to rugby-event on ten locations throughout Finland (same day).
RESPONSIBILITY: Member clubs with the support of the FRF.
- Project 2: Basics about rugby-leaflet. The leaflet can be distributed in schools (when clubs hold rugby lessons). The leaflet can also be given to the media as background material on rugby.
RESPONSIBILITY: FRF is responsible for creating and producing the leaflet. Member clubs are responsible for the distribution of the leaflet.

FOLLOW-UP: Number of introduction to rugby-events and their participant numbers. The number of rugby-leaflets distributed.

6. Broader competition activity

OBJECTIVES: Renew the men's Finnish Championships structure during the seasons 2007-2008 in order to create a challenging competition for teams with different levels and to find a solution to the travel distance-problem. Increase the game-time in the women's Finnish Cup and realise two full 15's games in the form of Finnish Championships' finals. Realise under 17-yearolds' tournaments in 7's and 10's rugby.

REALISATION:

The competition activity is stable in men's Championships, but the amount of games and players in the Development League is unstable. In 2007 6 teams will play in the men's Finnish Championships and 8 teams will play in the Development League. Out of the 8 teams 3 are B-teams of clubs competing in the Championships.

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Women's competition activity started in 2006 in the form of Finnish Cup-tournaments, in which 3 teams took part. In 2007 5 teams participate in the Finnish Cup. Four best teams participate in the Finnish Championships' finals.

Competition activities for under 17-yearolds will start in 2007 in 7's and 10's rugby.

RESPONSIBILITY: League Manager, women's coordinator, youth coordinator and club youth coordinators.

FOLLOW-UP: Number of mens' Championships and Development league's games, number of players on game-lists. Number of teams in the women's Finnish Cup, number of players on the game-lists. Number of youth games and participants.

7. National Teams – carrying the flag

OBJECTIVES: Stabilise the men's 15's national team activity and continue its good results from 2006. Start the women's NT activity by taking part in the European Cup in both 15's and 7's. Create the basis for taking part in the U20 men's European Cup in 2008.

REALISATION:

The national team activity is a central indicator for the development of Finnish rugby, as well as a crucial factor in the international commitments of the FRF. The degree of participation in the European Cup-competitions organised by the FIRA-AER have a direct consequence on the development budget the IRB allocates for Finland. The visibility of Finnish rugby as well as its value as a national sport is also dependant on the broadness of the different national team activities (men, women, youth).

The added value of the national team activities relies in the capacity to stimulate players' motivation for the sport, to provide opportunities for players' to develop their game skills and abilities, to evaluate the level of Finnish rugby coaching, and to gather fruits of networking within the international rugby community. Nevertheless, the national team activity has to have its basis in a sustainable and broad rugby development activity throughout the country.

- Men:

Men's 15's will take part in the European Cup 3 C. In 2007 Finland will receive Slovenia, Israel and Luxemburg, and play Israel and Slovenia abroad. Men's team will participate in the Baltic Cup-tournament and the Tallinn tournament.

RESPONSIBILITY: NT manager, men's NT coaches

- Women:

The women's 15's team participates in the European Cup-tournament in Belgium 10-15.4.2007. The women's 15's will play against Luxemburg on the 10.3.2007 in Luxemburg. There may be regional friendly games.

RESPONSIBILITY: Women's 15's NT coaches, WNT Manager.

The women's 7's team will start its activity in Spring 2007. The team will participate in the Emerging nations's 7's-tournament in Poland 26.4.-1.5.2007 and European Cup tournament in Bosnia-Hertzeogovina 19-21.5.2007. There may be friendly games or tournaments.

RESPONSIBILITY: Women's 7's NT coach, WNT Manager.

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- Under 20-yearold men:

The regular practice activities of under 20-yearold men will start again in 2007. In May 2007 the U20-team will play against an English side, and the team will play opening games before the men's NT games in Finland. The team may participate in local or international friendly tournaments in the neighbouring countries.

RESPONSIBILITY: U20 coach

FOLLOW-UP: Number of practice sessions, games, victories and ranking (men, women, U20).

8. Recognition at the national level for the FRF

OBJECTIVES: FRF as member of the SLU in 2008, State aid status for the FRF. Appropriate representation of FRF in the FIRA-AER and IRB member meetings.

REALISATION: The objective of the FRF is to get State aid status in 2008 as a national sports' federation, as well as become a member of the Finnish Sports' Federation SLU. In 2007 the biggest financial support comes from the International Rugby Board IRB. The objective is to increase the level of national aid in order to broaden the development activities in Finland.

Through membership in the SLU, a possibility to take part in the advantageous player- and club insurances, as well as in the player licence registration system will be opened. The development plan of the FRF makes use of the SLU expertise and material in developing Finnish sports. It is thus natural for the FRF to seek full membership in the SLU.

The FRF takes actively part in the activities of the European rugby association FIRA-AER. The President and Secretary General of the FRF are responsible for the communication with the FIRA-AER management and with the IRB Regional Managers and other IRB officials.

The FRF seeks to build a sound financial basis for Finnish rugby development activity.

The FRF board started a structural reform in 2006, which aims at rendering decision-making more efficient and to clarify the internal rules of procedure.

RESPONSIBILITY: FRF General Secretary and FRF board

FOLLOW-UP: Timing and completeness of the applications (fall 2007). The quality of the structure of the FRF administration and the respect for internal rules.

9. Stronger together – better cooperation between the Federation and the clubs

OBJECTIVES: Nationwide commitment to the development plan for rugby. Good exchange of information between the clubs and the federation.

REALISATION: The FRF organised meeting for its member clubs on the 14th of January 2007, in which the clubs' short and mid-term challenges in all areas of development were discussed, and action plans for 2007-2008 and 2007-2012 were prepared. The basis for a 10-year strategy for Finnish rugby were also laid down.

The regional and national dialogue regarding the realisation of the actions planned for in the Action Plan will be strengthened. For geographical reasons (the major distances between clubs) electronic means of communication will be used in order to prepare the meetings. Clubs are encouraged to dele-

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gate certain development areas to specifically nominated people, and inform the FRF and other clubs of the responsibility, so that information flows can be streamlined.

RESPONSIBILITY: FRF and Member Clubs

FOLLOW-UP: Feedback from clubs and level of response to federation questionnaires, club activity in the annual general meetings, working-groups and other joint meetings, participation numbers in the training- and competition-activities organised by the federation. Quality and amount of FRF communication (clubs' appraisal).

One essential factor to succeed in rugby is the ability of a team to find a common game-plan and to develop common references. Let us thus join forces and commit ourselves to work towards a common goal in the development of Finnish Rugby. There is a place for everyone in a rugby team. Bringing forth diverse perspectives and opinions will also strengthen our common passion: that ever more Finns and people who live in Finland will have the chance to find a new sports' hobby for themselves: Rugby.