



# ACTION PLAN 2020

## **INTRODUCTION**

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**

### **a) YOUTH RUGBY**

#### **Issue**

The federation and clubs throughout the country have typically been targeting different age groups (ranging from 6-10 year-olds to 15-17 year-olds) with their youth work. With so few sustainable success stories, it is recognised that Finnish rugby will be unable to ever reach critical mass whereby several clubs have enough youths at the same age grade to make inter-club competition possible with this approach. A country-wide strategic meeting was held in April 2019 that resulted in the below club-led strategy for 2020 outlined below.

#### **Strategy**

Utilise schools rugby as the primary pathway into sustainable youth programmes within clubs that would then feed into youth competition.

1. Collectively target the 16-17 age range nationwide so that successfully-recruited juniors can immediately transfer to senior rugby once they are no longer youths and so won't be lost due to lack of competition
2. Teach and develop skills related to 7s touch, as this will be the format of competition
3. SRL to support clubs in their schools work by supplying equipment, helping to 'train the trainer' in terms of demonstrating how to best promote coaching skills among teachers, or to help run such sessions were needed
4. Develop and evolve a common training manual appropriate for the above 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 (many such materials are already available through GIR)

#### **Timeline and milestones**

- Participating clubs to organise an inter-school tournament within their clubs in April or early May 2020
- SRL to host an inter-club tournament (players to be drawn from the earlier schools events) in mid-late May 2020
- If successful, follow up tournament(s) to be organised later in the 2020 season

#### **Additional notes**

This proposal is not suggesting that any ongoing youth work is shut down, just that future focus should be within this framework. Full minutes of the club-led action plan from the Spring meeting are available on request.



## **b) MARKETING**

### **Issue**

There are several sponsorable entities embedded within the operational umbrella of SRL, not limited to the four national teams, elements of youth work and the various leagues and competitions themselves. Few of these have had any kind of long-term success in establishing and maintaining long-term sponsorship however; largely because the securing of partnerships is not a primary function of any individual within these frameworks.

### **Strategy**

To implement and trial an opt-in commission-based partnership with those within the community that have the time, willingness and skillset to try and bring in some sponsorship on behalf of these sponsorable entities.

1. Confirm [the conditions](#) under which the relationship between SRL and agents engaged in the seeking of sponsorship
2. Facilitate the cooperation between SRL-based entities and potential agents
3. Maintain oversight, control and final approval over any final proposed offering to external organisations

### **Timeline and milestones**

- To be implemented immediately
- Continual evaluation of all agents and the partnership programme so that corrections, improvements or termination can be implemented in real time

### **Additional notes**

The objective of this framework is not to suggest that those engaged in marketing/sales are in any way more deserving of financial compensation than those working in any voluntary role. Instead, the hope is that this will incentivise some within the rugby community that would otherwise not consider actively seeking sponsorship, either for their own specific teams or otherwise, to engage in the process and potentially increase revenue.



## **c) LICENSING**

### **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), especially in the championships
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 in conjunction with the youth section of this action plan
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 2020 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.



#### **d) 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 continuing coordinating a national Get Into Rugby week (actually a 9-day window to incorporate two weekends to try and ensure that as many clubs as possible can participate), 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 the general meeting in November 2019 in conjunction with the clubs, but presumably this would be most effective in Spring 2020 in the typical recruitment window



## **e) RE-EVALUATE ALL XV COMPETITIONS TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Issue**

While appropriate formats have been established during the off-season, some late withdrawals ahead of the last couple of seasons have led to reduced game-time among teams in both the men's division 1 and division 2. In addition, there is the potential for additional clubs to participate in women's XV competition if the barrier to entry can be lowered. It is therefore important to re-evaluate the current format of all XV competitions to determine whether a better structure can be implemented for 2020 and beyond that would be sustainable enough to not require immediate restructuring if a late withdrawal occurred.

### **Strategy**

The national league and competitions manager will run a discussion on this topic with all teams and stakeholders 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 are seeking to enter teams into 2020 competition
2. Importance to maintain the competitiveness of all divisions, but especially the championships
3. Need to offer development opportunities to emerging teams and ensure the ability for promotion

### **Timeline and milestones**

- Decision made and communicated by December 31st, 2019 in order to allow creation and publication of the 2020 schedule in January



---

## ***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. Ensure an appropriate balance between 7- and XV competition for both sexes
  - c. 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 - likely to be highly dependent on the format of XV competition
  - d. 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
  - b. Provide ongoing support and guidance in the hunt for sponsorship
  - c. Continue to work closely with team management to aid proactive communication
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