

Rugby Europe: united and focused

Balanced growth of rugby in Europe

1. Introduction

In mid-June, I announced my candidacy for the role of President of Rugby Europe and sent a letter and video to all members of Rugby Europe, explaining why I wanted to do this. Also, I listed a number of focus points, which I believe are key to enable Rugby Europe to lead the organic growth of rugby in Europe over the next decade and beyond.

Over the last few months, I have spoken with most member unions to understand their expectations of Rugby Europe and what they would need to develop and grow rugby in their country, and how they feel they can contribute to one united Rugby Europe.

This document, “Rugby Europe: united and focused”, revisits these focus points, and elaborates on the challenges and conditions underpinning what must be done to achieve the dynamic and balanced growth of rugby in Europe, based on what has to be a sound financial footing.

This document doesn’t go into the granular detail of specific targets or how and when they should be achieved because that is the responsibility of the Board which is to be newly appointed in November.

The current by-laws are the leading document of reference, and if any adjustment is required to make desired changes possible, the correct procedure will be followed.

2. Rugby Europe: united and focused

From the discussions with the unions, the most common feedback comments are: more transparency, communication, listening, decisiveness, and a change from some of the policies of recent years.

In other words: we need to act more **united** - good cooperation between Rugby Europe and the member unions, and between the unions.

We need to be more **focused** - not everything can be done all at once, we need to establish our priorities.

This will require for a different management approach, not just in words, text or photos, but in effective actions and results.

Therefore, the new President, Board and Committee members, should be skilled, open-minded, communicative, decisive, take responsibility and act accordingly.

The mission, vision, and strategy of Rugby Europe, as defined in the Strategic Plan “20-“24, should be re-evaluated and redefined in the updated Strategic Plan “25- “29, based on the input from the newly appointed Board, Committees and the operating staff. This should consider the needs and wishes of the member unions.

However, strategic plans require patience. The successful implementation and results depend on the quality, experience and commitment of the people leading the process.

3. How I see Rugby Europe and rugby in Europe in 2032

- Rugby in Europe grown >10 % in players, most unions > 500 players
- 15- a side is the main format, 7-a- side increased importance and exposure
- Women's rugby counts for > 30% of players
- Union boards, technical staff and referees > 30 % women
- European competition for women 15 and m/w U 18 and U 20
- At least 12 Rugby Europe countries in World Cup (m/w)
- Rugby Europe is financially sound with a balanced source of income
- Rugby Europe has strong, constructive relationships with World Rugby, the 6 Nations, the European Olympic Committee, and other relevant partners
- One European / World Rugby broadcasting platform for all high-performance competitions

4. Rugby Europe today

A lot has been achieved, since the FIRA/AER became Rugby Europe, including professionalization of the organization and the creation of new competition formats. The staff worked hard to implement these changes.

However, in my meetings with member unions I have heard a number of shared frustrations and disappointments:

- Quite a few unions feel no-one is listening and that there is a lack of adequate support.
- The level of cooperation between the governing bodies and unions is perceived as insufficient and lacks transparency.
- Unions perceive the level of visibility of the President and the Board to be inadequate.
- Equally, the financial situation is worrying and needs fast action.
- The relationship with World Rugby and the 6 Nations needs to be improved quickly.

In short, unions are asking whether Rugby Europe have set the right priorities and have operated in the most effective way.

5. Roles and responsibilities of Rugby Europe

The main goal is to develop and grow the game of rugby in all European countries. But there is more to this than just competition and high performance. Education, player welfare, data, broadcasting, and commercial factors play increasingly greater roles.

This growth has to be achieved by and through the individual unions. Rugby Europe should act as a service provider and facilitate and support the countries with various non-financial resources to strengthen their capacity for growth and development. Rugby Europe must involve and support the member unions, rather than just tell them what to do.

It is essential that we clearly define the role and responsibilities between World Rugby and Rugby Europe as its biggest Regional Association.

6. Focus points

- Implementation of the Governance
- Board: responsibility and competencies
- Communication with and improved visibility towards unions
- Cooperation with 6 Nations, World Rugby and institutions
- Service provider to the unions
- Priority and support level
- Create formats for growth
- Sound financial organization