Interview with Ranko Tepavcevic, FINA Development Centre Kazan, General Coordinator

Kazan DC / FINA Communications Department

“Kazan, Russia, has organised numerous major international events in the past decade, including FINA World Championships 2015 and matches of the FIFA World Cup 2018. We have witnessed how the city is transforming alongside the events and how all citizens are welcoming athletes and visitors with a great warmth and hospitality. Today, the city known as the “Sports Capital” of Russia is ready to play an active role in a global arena. Recently, FINA has assigned Kazan an important international role within the future development of aquatics. This project will help us position ourselves not only as global leaders in the event management industry, but as a proactive world hub in the further development of aquatics and international sport in general”.

What is the FINA Development Centre, can you provide us with a more detailed insight?

"Last September, together with the Russian Swimming Federation, FINA opened a new Centre for the development of aquatic sports in Kazan, Russia. There was an official signing ceremony during which a cooperation agreement with the
As previously announced, the new Centre in Kazan joined the other training and Development Centres already existing and supported by FINA, namely: FINA Development Centre in Dakar (SEN), Thanyapura (Phuket, Thailand) – FINA Training Centre, and Spire Institute (Geneva, OH, USA) – FINA Training Centre.

These hubs are used within the framework of various FINA Scholarship and Development Programmes. Each module is geographically targeting different continents and regions worldwide. Recently, FINA has decided to launch the diving scholarship programme, where Kazan will be a single hub that is able to provide excellent services to all National Federations (NF).
Operational work and all development activities have been entrusted to the ANO “Directorate for Sport and Social Projects”. It was a logical step, having in mind that it is an organisation with a ten-year experience of staging major events including the 16th FINA World Championships in 2015 and managing FINA Diving World Series, Swimming World Cup and Artistic Swimming World Series on an annual basis.

“As first athletes are arriving in Kazan, training sessions are already taking place at one of the world’s unique sports venues – Aquatics Palace, while Olympic Reserve School is also ready to receive scholarship holders, where they can...
practice in the same pools that hosted the FINA World Championships in 2015.

While many of the benefits are for high-performance athletes, local students will also take advantage from the new FINA Development Centre being able to share the pool and trainings alongside the top athletes."

What is the aim of establishing the Centre in general and in Kazan in particular?

"As FINA states, the main goals of the FINA Development Programme are to promote and encourage the development of the aquatic disciplines all over the world by reinforcing the cooperation and mutual support with its 209 National Member Federations. At the same time, it is strategically important to provide progressive educational opportunities for Coaches..."
competitive potential.

"In this view, on the operational level, Kazan Development Centre is providing athletes of different nations with top services and facilities for training opportunities. In the meantime, Kazan may offer them to participate in the competitions that fall under the FINA umbrella, such as World Cup and Series annually organised in Kazan, with no additional travel expenses, but providing a good chance to compete in the “resident” pool."
"The Kazan Centre will organise training courses annually for both coaches and officials under the FINA Scholarship Programme and FINA Schools. The programme will also include international FINA seminars. They may participate in educational events that are going to be connected with the FINA events staged in Kazan. Overall, eight events have already been planned and scheduled for 2019."
Today everyone talks about sustainability and legacy. Is Kazan a positive example of that?

"Definitely! For both Kazan and FINA it is very important to use a legacy from the major events in a best way, to establish reliable and sustainable partnership with countries and cities worldwide that can not only organise events, but also provide support and platform for the further development of all disciplines within the aquatics family.

As FINA President Dr. Maglione previously stated: "We are very happy to see the legacy of the FINA World Championships 2015 embodied by the inauguration of the Centre. It is a testimony of the impact of our signature event in the Tatarstan region. This Centre will not only welcome the world’s swimming elite for training camps, but will also act as the driving
authorities to ensure a smooth operation of the Centre.

"Kazan and Tatarstan are enjoying the fruits of the previous events, where infrastructure has been significantly upgraded. Over the last seven years only, the number of swimming pools has soared from 150 to 225. Since infrastructure is just a single aspect of legacy, we are speaking about a whole city experience, knowledge and a strong volunteer’s movement today. The statistics show that the number of people practicing aquatics in the region has increased from 66,000 to 90,000 people for the period from 2011 up to date. Today, Kazan leads in number of swimming pools in Russia and shares the rank with the most developed cities in the world. It is a leading region in both staging sporting events and practicing sport, since
How will FINA Development Centre liaise with the National Federations and other centres?

"FINA established the development department several years ago, which supervises the overall activities worldwide, and we are ready to actively take part in this process."
"Let me thank the National federations, their coaches and parents, on behalf of the FINA Development Centre Kazan for trusting us with their best athletes.
They have selected Kazan as an important step in the development of their personal career. It is not an easy personal decision to move to a foreign country for a period of six months or a year. We can assure them that we will do our best to provide our scholarship holders with top services and a comfortable stay so that they can develop and improve not just their sports results, but their personalities and education as well. There are many universities in Kazan, and we are ready to support their individual efforts in that direction additionally.

"We are communicating with NFs on a daily basis on the matters from visas and arrival to everyday practice and routines. Working with young people is always a challenge, but together with FINA, with the support of national coaches and
Olympics.

“We are going to pay a lot of attention to cultural and social adaptation of athletes. We know that they arrive from different cultures, therefore, in addition to the tight training schedule, young talents will be offered some cultural and educational activities, such as language lessons, SMM and their own brand management courses. They are all future leaders and ambassadors of FINA in their countries. Additionally, sporting events and outdoors activities complete the comprehensive care about them.

“We are communicating with other centres as well, initiating the idea to organise, together with FINA training centre in...
development programme together. We are looking forward to meeting their coach Miguel Lopez, who is successfully running the programme there.

"Athletes will also have a great possibility to take part in the FINA Swimming World Cup and compete with the best swimmers and stars. In the coming years, with the support of FINA it may become an annual global promotion event. Representatives of all FINA Centres, participants and managers may arrive in Kazan, share their experience, while athletes
What are the Centre’s goals for one-year perspective?

“We now just start all the activities with first athletes arriving at our centre. They are very excited and positive towards the possibilities conferred by the programme. Since FINA has a limited number of scholarships per year, we are all working within the determined frames and previously established goals. We are very thankful to the FINA Bureau and FINA Office for their support of the idea to start the diving scholarship programme in 2019 as well.
"Kazan has one of the best diving pools and all infrastructure to offer. We are waiting soon for the first divers to be confirmed by FINA.

"I would like to underline the full support that we have from both Russian Swimming and Diving Federations. They have proposed and FINA has approved excellent coaches, such as Gulnara Garipova for swimming and Pavel Mouyakin for diving. They both have trained top-level athletes.

Both federations also play active role in methodological support as well.

"Overall, we would be happy to have around 20 athletes in Kazan by the end of this year. Eight educational events have
"Together with FINA, we are proactively thinking over a few steps in advance. In the future, we would like to embed and provide services to all six disciplines if needed.

"Kazan Aquatics Palace is among the few venues that may provide even high divers with 19m training platform. It is one of the longest swimming venues in the world, because it has three pools in a line: two full-sized 50m pools end-to-end, followed by a 33m diving pool. Each pool has its own entrance and separate locker rooms. Currently, about 3,000 visitors and children a day use the Aquatics Palace for swimming, artistic swimming, or diving."
Who will become the first to train in the Centre? When does the programme start?

"On February 15, 2019, Kristina Panasenko from Kyrgyzstan was the first athlete to arrive in Kazan, Russia. Kristina, a breaststroke specialist, is a member of the Kyrgyz national swimming team that took part in the FINA World Championships in Budapest (HUN) in July 2017 as well as in the Asian Championships in Tokyo (JPN) in 2016.

"Few days later Nikita Bortnikov from Moldova joined the athlete who arrived earlier. Giorgi Biganishvili (GEO), Arina
days and next month.

“In Kazan the athletes are welcomed by the local FINA Development Centre coordinators. The athletes’ programme at the Development Centre includes morning and evening training sessions (8:00-10:00 am and 4:00-6:00 pm) at the Aquatics Palace, gym sessions (10:15-11:30 am) are scheduled for them, too.

“The ten-lane 50m training pool, which meets the highest international standards, is equipped with everything required for effective training, catering facilities for meals and even rooms and lounges for daily rest.

To conclude, I would like to thank one more time FINA and National Federations that have already entered athletes into
encourage others to apply as well and use the benefits of such programme. Our coaches and staff will be there for them all the time to support their endeavours.

"Kazan is a great place for the athletes! Welcome to Kazan, to the FINA Development Centre."