

- *develop the rules of the association;*
- *give Worldloppet a status that will interest elite-skiers in taking part and increase the importance and economy of the organisation.*

*The body of Worldloppet is the big interest and engagement from all the ordinary skiers that make a tremendous work taking part in as many races as possible, hunting diplomas and medals. I met many skiers who were very thankful to the Worldloppet that it had given them a new life with better health and good friends all over the world.*

*Worldloppet today has a good position and all who have been working and today are working with Worldloppet have the right to be proud of the development.*

*Arne Andersson  
Secretary General of Worldloppet 1987-1990  
Mora, Sweden*

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### **1991-1998 Hans Reicherl, König-Ludwig-Lauf (GER)**

During the headquarters' location period in Sweden Hans Reicherl was involved with editing and printing the yearbook, because of lower printing costs. His work was highly appreciated and his candidature for Secretary General was the logical continuation of the process. At the same time Reicherl hold the position of Euroloppet Secretary General.

In 1992 Hans Reicherl made a proposal to found the Worldloppet Silver Master title and it was confirmed the same year at the annual meeting. The first concerns, that skiers might be more in favour of shorter races than the main races, were unfounded. Today most of WL members have in their programme various races for people with different preparation, age and gender, but participation in the main races has nevertheless stayed stable or even increased.

Regardless of missing a general sponsor for the series, Reicherl succeeded in bringing the Worldloppet budget out of constant deficit and providing WL Cup winners with financial prizes. 1993 was the year to elect the next Secretary General. The sponsorship agreements were under attack, because they were all connected to Germany. The elections were postponed for one year and the decision, by which the Secretary General is chosen by personal skills and not by the location of a Worldloppet race, was made. Later H. Reicherl changed the format of the Worldloppet Yearbook, to cover the printing cost by selling advertising pages and this way brought some additional income for the organisation.

In 1994 two races were ready to take over the office from the König-Ludwig-Lauf: American Birkebeiner and La Transjurassienne. Finally it was decided that regarding the financial situation, it would be better to avoid moving costs if Reicherl would continue for 4 more years. By the middle of the 1990s the number of passport owners had reached 4000 and the exchange of letters with passport holders took most of the headquarters' time.

Hans Reicherl together with Robert Steiner were very active supporters of Worldloppet's expansion to Eastern Europe and they visited personally the possible candidates. In 1990 Robert Steiner proposed to discuss two candidates: Tartu Maraton from Estonia and Kangaroo Hoppet (then Australian Birkebeiner) from Australia. The Estonians could not attend the annual meeting to represent their race because of financial problems and so only the Australians were accepted by the organisation. Bieg Piastow of Poland put up its candidature at the 1991 annual meeting but as Worldloppet just

had accepted a new race, the meeting decided to have a 3 year break before accepting any new members. The other decisive factor was a non-supportive report of the Worldloppet commission (Reicherl, Corradini, Peter), who evaluated the level of organisation and expressed their opinion, that Bieg Piastow was not yet ready to join the series.

In 1992 at the annual meeting in Vienna, Austria, 4 countries were represented – Estonia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland. They were told that there would be no expansion before 1995 and new candidates would have to accept the free weekends proposed by the organisation. In 1993, the requirements for candidates were reviewed.

In 1994 at the annual meeting in Lillehammer, Norway, 4 candidates made their presentations: Tartu Maraton of Estonia, Jizerska Padesatka of Czech Republic; Biela Stopa of Slovakia and Bieg Piastow of Poland. The decision was, that starting from the season 1994/1995 Tartu Maraton would be a new Worldloppet member; the other races were put on the waiting list again.

The Worldloppet Cup was under fire at every annual meeting, as the top athletes' interest was modest and in 1996 only 6 skiers were finally ranked. During this period communication with FIS started again through Paddy Field, Chairman of FIS Sub-committee for Popular cross-country. Paddy Field had been a Worldloppet passport owner from the first season of the organisation and knew all the member races by his own experiences as a participant.

This long 8 year period of location of the WL office in Oberammergau gave Worldloppet stability for focusing on new challenges like Internet. In 1997 Reicherl plugged Worldloppet to e-world by launching first website of Worldloppet, which was then by many members regarded as too expensive and unfounded.

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*During my 8 years work as Secretary General of Worldloppet I tried to treat everyone impartially and honestly.*

*The organisation was in a very bad economic situation on its the arrival in Oberammergau; there were no financial means at all. I succeeded in finding some generous sponsors. Even two cars were handed over as general prizes at this time and the headquarters were handed over to Tartu in good economic condition. The yearbook was also renewed and used as an income source for Worldloppet.*

*My biggest concern has always been helping and supporting of candidate races, to achieve the minimum requirements of Worldloppet, and having new members in the organisation.*

*All this hard work was done together with Helmut Kronthaler, Maria Heiss and Lilli Achilles as secretaries.*

*Hans Reicherl  
Secretary General of Worldloppet 1990-1998  
Oberammergau, Germany*

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### **1998-2004 Madis Lepajõe, Tartu Maraton (EST)**

The main supporter of Madis Lepajõe's candidature as the new Secretary General was Hans Eriksson, representative of the Nordic races in the Worldloppet Executive Committee. Hans Eriksson: "I followed the fast changes of