

recent years in the Baltic countries and saw the same big potential and will to prove in the Tartu Maraton team. The organisation was in need of new blood and Madis had impressed colleagues positively in working groups. Year prior to election his team demonstrated their organisational skills preparing the annual meeting in Tartu"

Madis Lepajõe was the first Secretary General with a Worldloppet Master title and the Worldloppet General Secretariat became the first international sports organisation's headquarters in Estonia. The transfer of the General Secretariat from Oberammergau to Tartu was completed in the Spring of 1999.

To stay in the highlights of the sports world it is necessary to forward race results to the press in the fastest way possible. That is why the Worldloppet office in Tartu started to work out the system for fast data processing. The unified database for WL Masters, passport owners and race results was worked out in 4 years and it is used intensively nowadays, although each marathon has its own system for managing the data.

For the first time the Worldloppet office was separated from the daily work of a race office. For that Kairis Leinus, WL project manager, was hired. During the first season Madis Lepajõe's work consisted of finding out the new WL member candidates' suitability, composing the WL yearbook and finding sponsoring possibilities.

Although the Executive Committee had already been operating since 1994, the intensive cooperation between the committee and the Secretary General started in the autumn of 1998. Contacts with the FIS representative Paddy Field were tightened to reform the WL Cup. Already in the winter of 2000 Worldloppet and FIS introduced the first FIS Marathon Cup, consisting initially of Worldloppet races. One of the most important steps in WL history was its legal registration as an international non-profit organisation Worldloppet Ski Federation on August 18, 2001.

The year 2001 started with the development of the Internet web page into a web portal and creating the web based database of passport owners, Masters and race results. The most difficult task was to work out a common format for race results, because the races use very different programmes for race data processing. Thanks to this change all the races can now publish weather forecasts and press releases directly on the Worldloppet web-page.

After the end of the first term of office in 2002, Madis Lepajõe was proposed to continue for the next 4 years. He agreed to continue only for 2 years because of an increasing work-load in his main occupation (Vice-Chancellor of the Estonian Ministry of Education). Madis Lepajõe as the Secretary General changed the management of the organisation to put it on a more professional footing.

In 2003 the Worldloppet Executive Committee nominated Angelo Corradini's candidature for the next election in 2004. According to the members of the Executive Committee, Worldloppet General Secretariat in Tartu definitely helped to promote Tartu and Estonia to the ski friends in the whole World and introduced Estonia as a great country of cross-country skiing.

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*I am proud and happy to say, that the time in WL office has been the most interesting period of my life. I had this wonderful opportunity and challenge to work together with many nice and active people from different countries and continents. My work could not be successful without the help of my colleagues and friends.*



Exotic guests. Elephants in front of Worldloppet Headquarters in Tartu, EST in 2000

PHOTO: MALL ELVET