



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF
THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Fourth session
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**Nomination for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List in 2009
(Reference No. 00314)**

A. STATE(S) PARTY(IES): **Latvia**

B. NAME OF ELEMENT: **Suiti cultural space**

C. COMMUNITY(IES), GROUP(S) OR, IF APPLICABLE, INDIVIDUAL(S) CONCERNED:

The Suiti is a small Catholic community in the Protestant (Lutheran) western part of Latvia. In the course of time, religious differences have led to development of a strong sense of identity which has helped create and preserve a unique cultural heritage. Today this heritage is a mixture of old cultural elements, some of which date back to the pre-Christianity period, and religious traditions which have blended with modern lifestyles. Today the Suiti Cultural Space covers 400 square kilometers. It is inhabited by around 2000 persons of Suiti ancestry - down from 10,000 at the beginning of the 20th century.

D. BRIEF TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE NOMINATED ELEMENT:

The Suiti Cultural Space historically has developed as a complex cultural phenomenon, diverse in both content and its manifestations. Today the Suiti community strongly recognizes elements of this heritage as a significant part of their identity and lifestyle. The synthesis of pre-Christian traditions and religious rituals has created a unique blend of intangible cultural heritage in the Suiti community.

The Suiti Cultural Space can be described by a number of distinct features, such as vocal drone singing performed by Suiti women, wedding traditions, colorful traditional costumes, the Suiti language, local cuisine, religious traditions, celebrations of the annual cycle, a remarkable number of folk songs, dances and melodies recorded in this community. Old-fashioned extended family structures are still common here like different customs, traditions and unwritten rules.

The origins of vocal drone singing performed by Suiti women are believed to pre-date Christianity. Due to their ancient origin, Suiti wedding rituals are very different from what is today considered Latvian wedding traditions. Wearing of traditional costumes is gradually coming back. The Suiti appreciate their difference and the importance of being preservers of a unique heritage inherited from previous generations with an obligation to pass it on to the generations to come.

E. BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE VIABILITY OF THE ELEMENT, ITS NEED FOR SAFEGUARDING AND THE PROPOSED SAFEGUARDING MEASURES:

The main pre-condition for safeguarding the Suiti Cultural Space is the community itself. The existence of the old families and local practitioners of old traditions and rituals, support on state and municipal levels, as well as general improvement of economic conditions to decrease outward migration of the younger generation are significant aspects. Only the young can carry on the unique values of the Suiti intangible heritage.

Prior to World War II, the Suiti Cultural Space flourished in its unique diversity. The situation changed after the Soviet occupation in 1940. Deportations, the war, emigration, deportations again, collectivization, nationalization of land and property - all these factors negatively influenced the community. Many centuries old farms – the cradles of Suiti culture - were destroyed, property seized and their owners deported. The role and authority of the church was intentionally destroyed. Due to the fact that the Suiti lifestyle was different from that of the surrounding regions, they were often portrayed as uneducated, backward and simply under-developed people. In the 1950s, some enthusiasts started trying to preserve the Suiti intangible cultural heritage in folk groups. But they were small-scale efforts. The number of people, who knew Suiti customs and traditions and actively practised them on a daily basis, dramatically decreased during the Soviet period (1940-1991).

Taking into account the fact that currently only a few people – all of them over 60 - have a good knowledge of the elements of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage, safeguarding measures are aimed at urgent recording and transfer of this knowledge to the younger generation. However, these efforts will never bear fruit if all the young Suiti will continue leaving their region due to unfavourable employment and living conditions. Therefore, safeguarding measures are also proposed to start improving economic conditions in the community.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ELEMENT

1.a. NAME OF ELEMENT: Suiti cultural space

1.b. OTHER NAME(S) OF THE ELEMENT, IF ANY:

Suitu zeme (Suiti land)

1.c. IDENTIFICATION OF THE COMMUNITY(IES), GROUP(S) OR, IF APPLICABLE, INDIVIDUAL(S) CONCERNED AND THEIR LOCATION:

The Suiti is a small ethno-confessional (Catholic) group of Latvians in predominantly Protestant Western Latvia. Due to religious differences that existed here for over 375 years, the Suiti community has created, accumulated and largely preserved a unique intangible cultural heritage. Some elements of this heritage predate the advent of Christianity to this region and bears imprints of not just early Curonians (Western Latvians), but also of the almost extinct Fenno-Ugric Livonians, as well as the Polish and German communities, which once flourished in this area.

Still today the borders of the Suiti homeland very much resemble the borders of the von Schwerin family's property in the 17th century. It was back then, when the landowner decided to convert to Catholicism, taking with him also his peasants. The Catholic faith was the one that over time created this conservative environment within which, like in a live museum, a unique intangible cultural heritage has survived until the present time.

This has traditionally been a rural area rich in forests and dotted with isolated farms. In the beginning of the 20th century, the total population of the Suiti community here was even up to 10,000 people, of which only about 2000 remain today. The main reason for this decline is economic migration, mostly of young people, to towns, cities and

sometimes also abroad. Today a lot of persons of Suiti origin live in the neighboring towns of Ventspils, Liepāja, Kuldīga, as well as, increasingly, in the capital city of Riga, where they gradually lose their unique cultural identity.

An isolated lifestyle and ongoing struggle with a harsh environment, as well as the pressures of assimilation are often mentioned as main causes for such well-known traits of the Suiti as: individualism, stubbornness, straight talk and sometimes a bit rough sense of humor. Many of the old farms have existed here for several centuries, and they represent real cradles and fortresses of the Suiti cultural heritage. It is very common in this area that farms have belonged to the same family for many generations.

The Suiti have succeeded to preserve their identity over centuries. This tiny community is closely interknit by family ties. When the Suiti start discussing their ancestors, it is very likely that they will find some common relatives. Even today a cultural distinctness along confessional lines still can be sensed in the local population of the Suiti homeland area. Maybe due to this reason the tiny Suiti community has not yet been assimilated and has for so long preserved a unique heritage, which can make a noticeable contribution to the intangible heritage of not just Latvia and Europe but the whole world.

1.d. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND RANGE OF THE ELEMENT:

The Suiti Cultural Space covers an area of 400 square kilometers in the western part of Latvia. On one side it borders the Baltic Sea, but on other three sides – the neighboring Protestant areas. The distance from the East to the West is about 24 kilometers, but from the North to the South - 28 kilometers. The coastline border is around 14 kilometers long. The highest point is *Kīķa kalns* - 112 meters above the sea level. The distance to Riga, the capital of Latvia, is 180 kilometers. To recognize and preserve the uniqueness of the local environment, four nature reserves have been set up here. Almost a half of the total land area is covered by forests. The dominant tree species are the pine, birch and spruce – common trees in Nordic forests.

In terms of topography, the Suiti homeland can be roughly divided into three parts. The most densely populated is the hilly eastern part dotted with farms, ponds, forests, marshlands and beautiful lakes. The western part, closer to the sea, is flat, dominated by large tracts of forests, marshlands and natural meadows. A narrow area along the coastline is again densely populated and, due to its natural beauty, is considered quite valuable for building large country houses by wealthy inhabitants of Latvian towns and cities.

During the 20th century some small stretches of historically Protestant areas were integrated into the three Suiti municipalities. Some areas, such as the former Adze manour, were heavily depopulated during the Soviet period. The territory around Jūrkalne, due to its location at the costline, has experienced the largest influx of people from other parts of Latvia. Alsunga, as a major population center, has also been strongly influenced by such migration.

Even though every Suiti village has its own folk group and often also a dance group today, the traditional way of life and knowledge of intangibe cultural heritage has mostly been preserved in Alsunga area and some pockets of Basi. In Jūrkalne area much more of the unique Suiti cultural environment has been already lost due to the recent influx of people.

In the neighboring Protestant areas in the South and Southwest of the Suiti Cultural Space, elements of the traditional Suiti costume, dialect and cuisine were found in the past. Due to the fact that these territories have mostly lost their intangible cultural heritage, nowadays it has only a historical meaning.

1.e. DOMAIN(S) REPRESENTED BY THE ELEMENT:

The Suiti Cultural Space to a varying degree is manifested by all domains of intangible cultural heritage, as identified in Article 2.2 of the Convention:

- a. oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage;
- b. performing arts;
- c. social practices, rituals and festive events;
- d. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- e. traditional craftsmanship.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ELEMENT (CF. CRITERION U.1):

In the course of its colorful history, the tiny Suiti community has developed and largely preserved a very rich intangible cultural heritage. The dawn of many of its elements dates back hundreds of years and some of them may even predate the advent of Christianity in this area. Today the most important elements of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage are:

- a. Vocal drone singing performed by Suiti women. It is believed that its origin dates back over a thousand years. Vocal drone singing is often performed at public gatherings, weddings and also on stage. Good lead singers often make new texts (teasing songs) right in the middle of singing. This style, with its diverse variations, is considered a unique phenomenon. Unfortunately, today there are only six good lead singers left – all of them over 60.
- b. Despite the small number of the Suiti community population, a considerable number of folk songs (over 52,000 including their variations) have been recorded in this area. As this is the last place where bagpipes and *kokles* were played in a live (not staged) environment, a high percentage of Latvian melodies for these instruments have also been recorded here. Thus the Suiti have provided a significant contribution to the intangible cultural heritage of the whole country.
- c. Suiti folk groups today often help enact small scenes of Suiti wedding rituals in real weddings. Such performances are very popular not only within the Suiti community but also all over the country. These rituals are very different from the ones generally considered Latvian wedding traditions. Although these Suiti rituals are well recorded, and main elements of them are still known by many community members, a full-scale Suiti wedding has not taken place for several decades.
- d. Bright traditional costumes worn by many people on important religious and public occasions; traditions of their wearing. It is possible to tell the Suiti from other Latvians by these costumes immediately due to their significant differences. Some of the skirts, collars, headscarves and belts are over a hundred years old passed on through several generations. Some articles of this clothing have existed unchanged for several centuries and skills of their making have not been lost in the community yet. However, there is only one 80-year-old woman who can make the whole set of a Suiti woman's national costume.
- e. Quite specific Suiti foods and dishes are still made in many families though they have to compete hard with modern sweets, barbecues and potato chips. Some families have also still preserved a tradition of making home-made bread and beer by using recipes inherited from generation to generation, and they usually differ from one farm to another. In some respect all these recipes, often known only by one woman, are unique and they usually have not been recorded.
- f. The Suiti language, basically a dialect of the Latvian language, today is very close to extinction. The generation which knew it has already passed away but the generation

which understands but does not speak this language is getting older year by year. The Suiti have been taunted for speaking their own language for decades, therefore today it sounds funny even to them. Books have never been printed in the Suiti language, and today there are only about seven good speakers of the language left. All of them are over 60.

- g. As the Catholic Church has performed not only its usual religious role in the Suiti Cultural Space but has also served as the main pillar of local identity for almost four centuries, this conservative community has also created and preserved a considerable number of different church-related traditions. This is demonstrated by distinctive songs and decoration traditions, home-made candles, a custom that certain things can be done by women only, etc.
- h. Various rituals and customs are still observed regarding the annual cycle, the deceased and funerals. Bits and pieces of these traditions can be found almost in every family of the Suiti. However, today indepth knowledge about them is limited to only three ladies who all are over 60.

Important bastions of the Suiti cultural heritage are the so-called old farms and old families where the transfer of skills from generation to generation still takes place. These old farms are often real depositaries of traditional garments, furniture and household articles. People who live there often still look at all these items as a value to be preserved not just because they are old, but because they have been used by previous generations in the family. These families often observe different old customs because the previous generations have done the same.

Despite the ageing problem, the Suiti community still has a considerable number of people actively interested in the preservation of their culture. Today there are three folk groups and two traditional dance groups for adults who enjoy active practicing of these activities. There are two folk groups and three traditional dance groups for schoolchildren at local schools to introduce the Suiti younger generation with the local culture from an early age. *Alsungas Suitu Sievas* (Suiti Women of Alsunga) is among the most popular folk groups in Latvia performing about 80 times per year all around the country.

Over the past years, the Suiti Cultural Space has experienced a gradual renaissance. The pillar of the Suiti identity – the Catholic Church – has successfully recovered after the Soviet period. Pride in the Suiti identity and its different cultural manifestations have returned. As today only a few, mostly old people, have a good knowledge of the Suiti cultural heritage, there is an extreme need to disseminate this knowledge and to involve more people in its preservation. This period of strong interest in the Suiti community must also be used to recover the elements preserved only in written documents, film archives and museum depositaries. It must be done immediately - before it is too late.

3. NEED FOR URGENT SAFEGUARDING (CF. CRITERION U.2)

3.a. VIABILITY ASSESSMENT:

Rapid shrinking of the Suiti population in their historical area started in the 1940s. A large-scale migration of the younger generation to towns and cities continued during the following decades. Today this has already caused a noticeable ageing of the Suiti community. The death rate in this region has been exceeding birth rate for a long time. In a rural community like this, it is difficult to offer employment opportunities available for young and educated people in urban centers of Latvia and abroad.

Today only around ten persons aged over 60 have a good knowledge of one or several elements of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage. Children participate in activities of school folk groups but after graduating from schools they continue their education elsewhere and very seldom return to their native place to settle there. Some of them return only at an older age when they have to take over family properties. Adult folk groups are ageing as well. The ongoing efforts and resources aimed at transferring of skills at schools will not

be successful if the outward migration continues at present rate.

Today general awareness and the sense of belonging to the Suiti community is on the rise again. Wide-ranging attendance of important cultural and religious festivals is a proof to it. More and more people like to manifest their identity by wearing traditional costumes on special occasions. Interest in the Suiti cultural heritage is increasing. Almost every Suiti family has small pieces and elements of local traditions, superstitions, habits and dishes inherited from previous generations. However, in-depth knowledge about the Suiti culture is limited to a few people, mostly active participants of folk groups.

Some old recipes of bread, beer and different Suiti dishes, kept in a family for centuries, remain in possession of one or a few persons. The same refers also to different old skills such as candle, trumpet and whistle making. Today many items have to be made outside the Suiti Cultural Space, as there are no more skilled artisans left in the local Suiti area. This applies also to the making of jewelry, pottery, traditional musical instruments and many other things.

The Suiti language, used by the community throughout its history, is disappearing right in front of our eyes. The older generation that, despite the negative attitude by authorities and bullying by inhabitants of surrounding regions, used it in everyday communication has passed away. The next generation, which no longer uses the language but understands it, is ageing. As there are very few written records of the language, it can be lost forever. Nowadays even the native Suiti sometimes find words in folk songs that nobody understands anymore.

The Suiti intangible cultural heritage is still alive in many ways. Besides, there is a strong interest within the community to recover these skills through education, training and public events. However, urgent efforts need to be made, as loss of any senior member of this small community often means an irreversible loss of old knowledge forever.

3.b. THREAT AND RISK ASSESSMENT:

Depopulation of this rural area today is the major risk for long-term sustainability of the Suiti Cultural Space. The population of Alsunga municipality has decreased by 50% over the past 70 years. In Gudenieki the population today constitutes 25% of what it was in the 1930s, but in Jūrkalne - about 30%. Depopulation continues despite considerable inflow of people from other parts of Latvia during the same period of time. The key reason for this trend is economic stagnation and the lack of competitive employment opportunities within a commuting distance.

Today the shrinking Suiti community constitutes only about 2/3 of the remaining population in the Suiti Cultural Space. The community, which to a great extent is maintaining alive the rich Suiti intangible cultural heritage, is ageing quickly. If this process is not stopped, soon this area will be inhabited by retired people who arrive from elsewhere, who are unfamiliar with the Suiti culture and traditions and who are more interested in escaping hustles of city life by settling in this peaceful place. Measures boosting economic activity and increasing local loyalty supplemented by teaching of local heritage at schools and support to folk groups and local NGOs are the only ways to reverse this trend in the future.

The Suiti language is the most endangered element of the Suiti intangible heritage. If no action is taken, it will be completely lost after 20 years. No grammar of the language has ever been studied. No vocabularies have been made and no books have been printed. The people who know this language are shy or hesitant to use it. Proper recording of the language can help not to lose it forever. To keep the Suiti language alive, efforts and resources will be necessary to bring it back as a means of oral and written interpersonal communication within the Suiti community.

There is a number of cultural elements which are not part of everyday lives in the Suiti community anymore. But they have been well recorded and therefore can be restored through dedicated activities in the education system, courses, festivals, books, etc. Some

examples of this include a large part of wedding rituals, games, oral storytelling, old songs, dances, playing traditional instruments, such as *kokle*, bagpipes, horns, pipes, etc. There are ongoing attempts to restore *kokle* playing by children that may result in a real success story.

Every year less and less families, under impact of modern trends and fashions advertised on TV and in glossy magazines, follow the old habits and superstitions that once governed in the local life. A strong sense of Suiti identity and patriotism is a good pre-condition but it has to be supplemented with constant efforts and material resources to enable this small community with such a rich cultural heritage to withstand and resist the onslaught of today's ever-present pressures of assimilation posed by popular culture.

4. SAFEGUARDING MEASURES (CF. CRITERION U.3)

4.a. CURRENT AND RECENT EFFORTS TO SAFEGUARD THE ELEMENT :

For a long time Suiti folk and dance groups have played a critical role in preserving and transferring many elements of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage from generation to generation. Only following the creation of the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation in 2001, a number of other activities involving education, research and external experts to promote collection, preservation and transfer of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage were started.

The first summer school for schoolchildren was organized in 2002. The next ones followed in 2005 and 2008, and they all focused on vocal drone singing and playing of the *kokle*. High importance was attached to the involvement of practitioners of Suiti traditions and local artisans. Local children have always demonstrated high interest in these summer schools which have always been well attended. Funding has been raised to continue *kokle* classes during the school year 2009/2010.

To increase publicity and raise the profile of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage internationally, two international drone singing festivals have been organized since 2004 (once in three years). Many practitioners of vocal and instrumental drone from the Suiti community, other parts of Latvia and abroad have participated in these events. Programs of these festivals contain not only concert performances but also seminars and presentations regarding Suiti and other traditions, as well as issues of the preservation and transfer of intangible cultural heritage.

Since 2007, considerable efforts have been made to develop the Suiti community web site: www.suitunovads.lv. Today it is an impressive digital library containing various articles on the Suiti community, its life, history and intangible cultural heritage. Due to financial constraints, currently this information is available only in Latvian. It has been planned to develop also a shorter English version.

Mobilization of state and EU funding for the restoration of the Alsunga medieval castle started in 2007. It has been planned to use part of the complex of buildings for hosting the Suiti Culture Study Center. Fundraising for renovation of community centers in Alsunga, Basi and Jūrkalne is also in progress.

Last year Alsunga Secondary School joined the UNESCO Associated Schools Project for a three-year period in order to study the Suiti intangible cultural heritage and to identify its practitioners. The UNESCO Latvian National Commission together with experts in education and intangible cultural heritage has developed a study guide to assist schoolchildren in documenting this cultural heritage. This activity was financially supported by the State Culture Capital Foundation.

In 2008, a small weaving workshop was set up in Alsunga to revive traditional weaving skills in the Suiti community. A number of ethnographers and skilled weavers have been involved in the training process.

The implementation of the abovementioned Suiti NGO activities require significant efforts

of fundraising and project development. During 2008, the Ethnic Culture Center Sui Foundation and *Suitu Novads* Foundation mobilized EUR 70,000 for their activities. Financial constraints are the main obstacles hampering the operation of these NGOs.

4.b. SAFEGUARDING MEASURES PROPOSED:

To support the preservation and restoration of the Sui intangible cultural heritage until 2014, the following safeguarding measures have been planned:

No.	Components and activities	Implementing institutions and partners	Estimated budget EUR	Work schedule	Expected outcomes
1.	Objective: to enhance and ensure preservation of the Sui intangible cultural heritage and its transfer at the levels of preschool, general, interest and vocational education, as well as through lifelong learning.				
1.1.	Ensure that children are taught to play the <i>kokle</i> at the preschool level.	The Ethnic Culture Center Sui Foundation; Alsunga kindergarten; the Alsunga Municipality; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	5,000 per year.	2010 - 2014	Six-year-old children are familiar with the basic <i>kokle</i> playing skills.
1.2.	Participation of Alsunga Secondary School in the UNESCO Associated School Project.	Alsunga Secondary School; the UNESCO Latvian National Commission; the Ethnic Culture Center Sui Foundation; the <i>Serde</i> Foundation; Alsunga Municipality; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	3,000 per year.	2009 - 2010	An expert-supervised folklore expedition organized; previously unknown practitioners of the Sui intangible cultural heritage identified; and skills to collect and document such a heritage acquired.
1.3.	Launch a new curriculum designed for playing traditional musical instruments at Alsunga Music School.	The Ministry of Culture; the Education Center of Culture and Creative Industry; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; Latvian Academy of Music; Alsunga Music School, the Ethnic Culture Center Sui Foundation; Alsunga Municipality.	15,000	As of school year 2009/2010.	Skills to play traditional musical instruments acquired by children and the transfer of local playing traditions ensured.
1.4.	Develop and introduce a special curriculum focusing on local life and intangible cultural heritage at	The Ministry of Education and Science; the Ministry of Culture; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; Alsunga Secondary School; Basi and Jūrkalne basic	30,000	As of school year 2010/2011.	Sui schoolchildren familiar with different manifestations of the local intangible cultural heritage and its practitioners.

	Suiti community schools.	schools; the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the State Culture Capital Foundation.			
1.5.	Integrate elements of Suiti culture into subjects of the existing curricula (history, music, etc.) at Suiti community schools.	The Ministry of Education and Science; the Ministry of Culture; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; Alsunga Secondary School; Basi and Jūrkalne basic schools; the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation.	20,000	As of school year 2010/2011.	The existing curricula are used as instruments to provide indepth knowledge and understanding of the Suiti local culture, history, music, etc.
1.6.	Ensure continuous operation of Suiti children folk and dance groups in Alsunga and Basi.	Municipalities of Alsunga and Kuldīga; the Ministry of Education and Science.	10,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	A favorable environment and material resources provided to engage schoolchildren in indepth acquisition of the local intangible cultural heritage.
1.7.	Support activities of adult folk and dance groups in Alsunga, Gudenieki and Jūrkalne.	Municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the Ministry of Culture.	10,000 per year.	2009 – 2014	Suiti folk and dance groups actively involved in preservation and transfer of the Suiti intangible heritage.
1.8.	Organize practical training seminars for the general public by involving practitioners of the local intangible cultural heritage.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils.	5,000 per year.	2009 – 2014	Knowledge of Suiti community members improved and more people involved in further collection and preservation of the local intangible cultural heritage.
1.9.	Organize regular summer schools and camps for Suiti children to increase their interest in local traditions (playing of	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; Latvian Academy of Music; Latvian University; archives of Latvian folklore; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the	7,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	Suiti schoolchildren involved in indepth mastering of various aspects of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.

	traditional instruments, vocal drone singing, verbal folklore, traditional crafts, Suiti cuisine, etc.).	State Culture Capital Foundation.			
2.	Objective: to ensure urgent safeguarding measures for protection, restoration and popularization of the endangered elements of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.				
2.1.	Restore traditional ways of celebrating Midsummer.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; archives of Latvian folklore; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	3,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	Information available in archives compiled and proper traditions of Midsummer celebration gradually restored in the Suiti community.
2.2.	Restore ancient wedding traditions in present-day weddings in the Suiti community.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; archives of Latvian folklore; the Latvian State Archive; the State Film Archive; the Latvian State Archive of Audiovisual Documents; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation; the Suiti Wedding Fund.	15,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	Relevant information from archives and museums compiled (including the 1935 film); a special Suiti Wedding Fund established to financially support traditional Suiti weddings; and ancient Suiti wedding rituals gradually restored in weddings in the Suiti community.
2.3.	Restore the making of Suiti traditional costumes in the community and facilitate their wearing.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; ethnographers; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	15,000 per year.	2010 - 2014	The relevant information from archives and museums made available; training seminars to ensure restoration and transfer of skills organized; and the making of Suiti traditional costumes restored.

2.4.	Organize a training course for community members interested in learning bagpipe making and playing skills.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	7,000 per year.	2010 - 2014	Traditional bagpipe making and playing skills restored.
2.5.	Organize a band of traditional Suiti musicians and support their activities.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; Latvian Academy of Music; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	5,000 per year.	2010 - 2014	Performing of traditional Suiti music with traditional instruments restored.
3.	Objective: to facilitate research and publicity about the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.				
3.1.	Organize studies and research of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.	Latvian Academy of Music; Latvian Academy of Culture; Latvian University; archives of Latvian folklore; the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation.	10,000 per year.	2010 – 2014.	Regular researches on topics of the Suiti intangible heritage and its practitioners carried out.
3.2.	Inscribe elements, manifestations and practitioners of the Suiti intangible heritage on the Latvian List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; research institutes; universities; the State Agency of Intangible Heritage; the Ministry of Culture; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	In accordance with the available allocations from the State budget.	2009 - 2014	Information on various aspects of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage and its practitioners recorded and made publicly available.
3.3.	Computerize data from the old Suiti church registers (data on birth, marriage and death).	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	7,000 per year.	2009 – 2014	Information from birth, marriage and death registers as of 1690 regarding the Suiti community made publicly available in an easy-to-read form.
3.4.	Computerize all recorded Suiti folk	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation;	5,000 per year.	2010 – 2014	52,000 Suiti folk songs publicly available on the

	songs.	the State Culture Capital Foundation.			Internet.
3.5.	Record, compile and map geographic place names of farms, fields, forests, bogs, streams, etc. in the Suiti community.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	10,000	2010. – 2014.	Preservation of Suiti geographic place names in publicly available records (maps) and in live memory of the Suiti community ensured.
3.6.	Prepare and publish books in the Suiti language.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; research institutes of the Latvian language; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	10,000 per year.	2010 – 2014	Best practitioners of the Suiti language identified and general knowledge of this language increased.
3.7.	Prepare and publish Suiti grammar.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; research institutes of the Latvian language; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	20, 000	2012 – 2014	The principles of Suiti grammar identified and recorded, more research on the Suiti language carried out.
3.8.	Issue a monthly publication with articles in the Suiti language.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils.	8,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	General Knowledge of the Suiti language improved and gradually restored in the daily communication of the Suiti community.
3.9.	Further develop the Suiti community web page: www.suitunovads.lv .	<i>Suitu Novads</i> Foundation; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils.	5,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	A user friendly web-based digital library created for dissemination of information about the Suiti community and its cultural heritage.
3.10.	Produce a TV documentary to demonstrate various aspects of the Suiti intangible	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	15,000	2011	Public awareness of values of the Suiti intangible culture and issues of its preservation raised.

	heritage.				
3.11.	Organize an annual Suiti Folk Festival.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	15,000 per year.	2009 - 2014	An excellent opportunity provided to demonstrate richness of the Suiti cultural heritage.
3.12.	Organize an International Drone Singing Festival once in three years.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; the Ministry of Culture; the State Agency of Intangible Cultural Heritage; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation.	60,000	2010 and 2013	Information on the Suiti community and its intangible cultural heritage disseminated internationally.
4.	Objective: to ensure recovery and restoration of buildings representing historic and cultural value necessary for activities of preservation and popularization of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.				
4.1.	Start restoration of the Alsunga medieval castle to host the Suiti Culture Research Center (to be established).	<i>Suitu Novads</i> Foundation; the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; EU funding.	1,000,000	2010 - 2014	Restoration of the castle started, Archives of the Suiti Cultural Space set up as a depository of Suiti related records, reports, films, etc. constituting part of the Suiti Culture Research Center.
4.2.	Purchase the farm <i>Lienoti</i> , a birthplace of Suiti writer Pēteris Upenieks, and establish there an open-air museum.	The Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation, municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; EU funding.	100,000	2011 - 2014	An open-air museum to demonstrate living conditions and environment of traditional life of Suiti farmers and fishermen created.
4.3.	Restore Basi and Jūrkalne cultural centers as local bases for activities related to the Suiti intangible	Municipalities of Kuldīga and Ventspils; EU funding.	400,000	2009 – 2012	Important centers of Suiti cultural life restored for the acquisition and popularization of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.

	cultural heritage and its preservation in the surrounding area.				
5.	Objective: to ensure long-term sustainability of the Suiti Cultural Space.				
5.1.	Develop a state support program for safeguarding of the Suiti Cultural Space.	The Ministry of Culture in cooperation with other state institutions; the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; the State Culture Capital Foundation; EU funding.	300,000 per year.	2012 - 2014	Stable financial support provided to ensure long-term sustainability of the Suiti Cultural Space.
5.2.	Pave a 7-kilometer section of the road Alsunga – Miltiņi.	The Ministry of Transport; municipalities of Alsunga and Kuldīga; EU funding.	2,000,000	2012 – 2014	A seven-kilometer long road section paved to provide a good connection between a remote part of the Suiti Cultural Space and the rest of the Suiti community.
5.3.	Support restoration of Suiti religious buildings.	EU funding; municipalities of Alsunga, Kuldīga and Ventspils; The Ministry of Culture.	20,000 per year.	2010 - 2014	Restoration of Suiti churches – historically and artistically important buildings - started.

4.c. COMMITMENTS OF STATES AND OF COMMUNITIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED:

The State Culture Capital Foundation has been the chief financial supporter of various public initiatives in the field of culture since 1999. Its main priorities in the field of intangible cultural heritage are: documentation, research, publishing and education. The Foundation provides funding also for projects of Suiti NGOs.

All Suiti folk groups receive small grants from the Ministry of Culture.

In 2004, Latvia ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Ministry of Culture coordinates the fulfillment of obligations resulting from this Convention.

In 2006, J. Vītols Latvian Academy of Music developed a study program in ethnomusicology. Students from this program participate in field research trips to the Suiti community on a regular basis. They have also taken part in publicity activities related to the Suiti cultural heritage. The University of Latvia and Latvian Academy of Culture have also made a number of field research studies in the Suiti Cultural Space.

In 2008, the Government of Latvia approved a concept *On Preservation of Latvian Intangible Cultural Heritage* aimed at establishing a legal and institutional framework for

preservation of the Latvian Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The development of new curricula focusing on local traditions is enhanced at music and art schools of the country. Alsunga Music School is the first one where a new subject - *Traditional music instruments* will be introduced as of September 2009.

Municipalities financially support Suiti folk and dance groups by providing the necessary premises and by covering transportation costs. Some financial support is also provided to Suiti NGOs and activities related to protection of the local intangible cultural heritage.

In 2001, some of the most active members of the Suiti community, together with municipalities, established the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation whose goal is to raise self-awareness of the Suiti community, preserve, protect and further develop the Suiti intangible cultural heritage. Since then, the Foundation together with state, municipalities and other partners have implemented a number of long-term projects. The most important ones are as follows:

- a. International Drone Singing Festivals;
- b. annual one day folk festivals;
- c. summer schools for Suiti schoolchildren;
- d. a weaving workshop in Alsunga;
- e. *kokle* classes for children;
- f. drawing up of this application for submission to UNESCO.

In 2007, the *Suitu Novads* Foundation was established. Its activities are focused on publicity and the mass media in order to raise public profile of the Suiti community and to create an easy-to-access digital library about the Suiti Cultural Space on the Internet (www.suitunovads.lv).

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND CONSENT (CF. CRITERION U.4)

5.a. PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITIES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS:

First discussions about preparation for this nomination started as an NGO activity in 2007. The *Suitu Novads* and Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundations have been jointly involved in the process from the very beginning. Contacts were made with the Kihnu Cultural Space Foundation in Estonia, the Ministry of Culture of Latvia and the Latvian National Commission for UNESCO followed by the first study trip to Kihnu island (inscribed in 2003) in October 2007.

To involve more people into the discussion about pros and cons of nominating the Suiti Cultural Space for the inclusion on the UNESCO Urgent Safeguarding List, a larger study trip with participation of local opinion leaders, representatives of municipalities, as well as the local press was organized in July 2008. The Kihnu and Seto communities in Estonia were visited. This was shortly followed by unanimous positive decisions made by municipal councils of Alsunga (already before the trip), Gudenieki and Jūrkalne.

In order to involve other members of the Suiti community interested in participating in the decision-making process on this issue, the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation organized a special community meeting in Alsunga in August 2008. Representatives of the Ministry of Culture and about 70 people from the community unanimously agreed to initiate the nomination process of the Suiti Cultural Space. In September this decision was followed by a support letter by Ms Helēna Demakova, Minister for Culture of the Republic of Latvia. Starting from this point onwards, preparation of the nomination file and fundraising activities to cover the associated costs were commenced.

In February 2009, the Ethnic Culture Center Suiti Foundation together with the Ministry of Culture organized another community meeting to discuss a four-year program regarding

safeguarding measures of the Suiti Cultural Space. About 60 participants were involved in working groups to make a “things to do” list to be included into the program.

5.b. FREE, PRIOR AND INFORMED CONSENT:

Free, prior and informed consent by the Suiti community was demonstrated during a community meeting in Alsunga on August 17, 2008. All participants of the meeting (around 70 persons) unanimously approved the initiative by show of hands to nominate the Suiti Cultural Space for inclusion on the UNESCO Urgent Safeguarding List.

In order to provide the necessary information to Suiti community members, a study trip to Estonia was organized on July 18 -20, 2008. It was financed by Alsunga municipality thus providing an opportunity for a group of 31 persons to visit the Kihnu Cultural Space (inscribed on the List in 2003) and the Seto area (nominated for inclusion on the Representative List in 2008). Competent representatives from the Ministry of Culture participated in the community meeting of August 17 and provided additional information.

In June and July 2008, all three Suiti municipal councils, comprised by politically elected representatives empowered to act on behalf of the community, also approved this motion unanimously.

5.c. RESPECT FOR CUSTOMARY PRACTICES GOVERNING ACCESS:

Inscription and safeguarding measures have been developed in close cooperation with the Suiti community members and do not contradict any existing customary practices governing access to any aspects of the Suiti intangible cultural heritage.

6. INCLUSION ON AN INVENTORY (CF. CRITERION U.5):

In 2008 the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia adopted a List of Most Important Values of Latvian Culture. Through a careful selection process, thirteen expressions of intangible cultural heritage were included in this list. The Suiti Cultural Space, as a highly remarkable and unique element, is among the selected expressions of intangible cultural heritage.

The intangible cultural heritage section of the List of Most Important Values of Latvian Culture serves currently as the Latvian inventory of intangible cultural heritage as defined in Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention. The List is and will be regularly updated in order to represent the diversity of intangible cultural heritage present in the territory of Latvia.

The Government of Latvia approved on December 23, 2008 the concept On Preservation of Latvian Intangible Cultural Heritage. It envisages the establishment of a separate inventory of intangible cultural heritage. The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia asserts that the Suiti Cultural Space will be included in the separate inventory of intangible cultural heritage, as defined in Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention, when it will be established.

7. DOCUMENTATION

7.a. REQUIRED AND SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION:

According to the stated requirements, the following items have been attached to this nomination:

a. Edited 10-minute video film *Preserving Centuries* presenting the Suiti Cultural Space.

b. Ten recent photographs:

Photo 01 – An old hope chest – an important element of the traditional Suiti wedding.

Photo 02 – Transfer of traditions in the Alsunga weaving workshop.

Photo 03 – This is how the best Suiti bread is still made.
Photo 04 – Such wooden crosses are an integral part of a Suiti landscape.
Photo 05 – Celebration of Meteņi marks the end of a cold and dark winter.
Photo 06 – There can never be too much joy and noise at Midsummer.
Photo 07 – When the young Suiti leave school, they have to choose their future career.
Photo 08 – Will these Suiti children continue the old traditions?
Photo 09 – This small altar of the Gudenieki church may be carried by women only.
Photo 10 – The sea has always played an important role in Suiti life.

7.b. CESSION OF RIGHTS:

Appended.

7.c. LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Internet: www.suitunovads.lv – a Suiti community web site operated by the Suiti *Novads* Foundation.

No information about the Suiti community has been published in English so far. The main sources of information published in Latvian are as follows:

Suitu identitāte. Rakstu krājums Janīnas Kursītes redakcijā. LU akadēmiskais apgāds, Rīga, 2005. 175 lpp.

Balandnieki. Priestera Pētera Upenieka atmiņu zīmējumi. Madris, Rīga, 2005. 760 lpp.

Nasteviča, Dace. *Dziesminiece Veronika Porziņģe*. Preses nams, Rīga, 1999. 312 lpp.

Daugule, Skaidrīte. *Gudenieku tautiskās dziedāšanas tradīcijas*. Preses nams, Rīga, 1994. 14 lpp.

Suitu pūrs. Sastādījis Ervins Vēveris, Latvijas Etnogrāfiskais brīvdabas muzejs. Avots, Rīga, 1991. 160 lpp.

Šperliņš, J. *Senās suitu kāzas un ķekatas*. Prof. P. Šmita redakcijā. Latviešu folkloras krātuve, Rīga, 1937. 161 lpp.

Alšvanga, Siliņš, M. *Latvju raksti*. 1. sējums. Rīga, 1931. 1.-56. lpp.

Kivicka, Elga, Karnups, Adolfs. *Novadu tērpi II daļa, Kuldīga, Ventspils, Alsunga*. Latvijas lauksaimniecības kamera. Jelgavā, 1938. 36 lpp.

Grasmane, Maruta. *Latviešu tautas tērpi, raksti, izšūšana*. Rasa ABC, Rīga, 2002. 290 lpp.

Bremze, Zīle, Rozenberga, Velta, Ziņģīte, Ilze. *Latviešu tautas tērpi, II Kurzeme*. Jāņa sēta, Rīga, 1997. 398 lpp.

Erdmanis, G. *Kurzemes viduslaiku pilis*. Zinātne, Rīga, 1989. 160 lpp.

Grosmāne, Elīta. *Kurzemes baroka tēlniecība*. Jumava, Rīga, 2002. 288. lpp.

8. CONTACT INFORMATION

8.a. SUBMITTING STATE(S) PARTY(IES): Latvia

8.b. CONTACT PERSON FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

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8.c. COMPETENT BODY INVOLVED:

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8.d. CONCERNED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION(S) OR REPRESENTATIVE(S):

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Alsunga municipality

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E-mail: pagasts@alsunga.lv

Alsunga Catholic congregation

Skolas iela 1, Alsunga, LV-3306, LATVIA

Phone: +371 2632 6253

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9. SIGNATURE ON BEHALF OF THE STATE(S) PARTY(IES):

<signed>