

Seto leelo

Seto polyphonic singing tradition

Nomination for inscription on
The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural
Heritage of Humanity

Estonia 2008

A. State Party

The Republic of Estonia

B. Name of element

Seto *leelo*, Seto polyphonic singing tradition

C. Community(ies), group(s) or, if applicable, individual(s) concerned

The bearer of tradition is the Seto community, particularly *leelo* choirs.

The Seto proclaimed themselves a nation in 2002, being descendants of ancient Finno-Ugrians residing southwest of Lake Pskov in Northeastern Europe. Today most of the Seto live in Estonia, but their historical settlement area extended to the present-day Russian Federation. Similarly to Estonian, the Seto language falls into the Balto-Finnic group of the Finno-Ugric language family. Seto traditions have been defined by an agrarian village community and the Russian Orthodox Church. The contemporary Seto carry a two-dimensional Seto-Estonian identity. Their Seto identity becomes manifest in their usage of the Seto language, their skills in and understanding of the traditional singing style, their maintenance of communal and family traditions, and the veneration of their passed ancestors.

D. Brief textual description of the nominated element

Seto *leelo* is a traditional way of singing where music (a specific composite polyphonic-heterophonic melody and timbre of voice) is combined with texts that follow particular poetic rules and structures, being defined by particular occasions and singing situations.

As a cornerstone of contemporary Seto identity *leelo* transmits lifestyle, language and traditions. *Leelo*-singers wearing traditional costumes and the various traditional festivities have a symbolic significance for the community and more widely throughout Estonia. This reveals the significance and vitality of the Seto *leelo* in the present society.

Modernisation, which accompanied social and political changes of the 20th century, affected also the life and singing traditions of the Seto. Singing accompanied all daily activities in a traditional rural community but today many traditional singing situations are disappearing. The Seto wish to reanimate the role of *leelo* in their daily lives, support tradition bearers and particular lifestyles. While family and rural community have largely ceased to act as teachers and coaches of Seto culture, *leelo* choirs have adopted this function. They are essential bearers of the Seto identity and consolidate the community. Sustainability of the community forms in turn the basis of *leelo* tradition. The viability of *leelo* will be ensured through the community's continuous respect and affection for *leelo* and their strong desire to enhance its role in their everyday life.

1. Identification of the element

1.a. Name of element

Seto *leelo*, Seto polyphonic singing tradition

1.b. Other name(s) of the element, if any

Not applicable.

1.c. Identification of the community(ies), group(s) or, if applicable, individual(s) concerned and their location

The bearer of Seto singing tradition is the Seto community, *leelo* choirs in particular. The Seto are a Finno-Ugric people with distinct cultural features. They are Orthodox Christian, similar to their eastern neighbours in Russia, but their language belongs, along with Estonian, to the Balto-Finnic group of the Finno-Ugric language family. Today the most significant, visible and beloved element of Seto culture is their traditional singing, called *leelo*.

Today, the Seto live predominantly in the Republic of Estonia. Their historical settlement area extended to about 1700 km² on the southern and southwestern shores of Lake Peipsi and of Lake Pskov in Northeastern Europe. Today, the Seto region (Setomaa) is divided between Võru and Põlva counties of Estonia, and Pechory administrative district of the Russian Federation. The social and political changes of the 20th century have caused the Seto to move also outside their historic region but they have largely remained in good contact with it. Although most *leelo* choirs are established in Estonia, there are also a few *leelo* choirs in Russia. In 2008, their number amounted to about 20 choirs, with more or less ten singers in each. At festive occasions, other members of the community can freely join in to sing along.

The total number of the Seto in Estonia is estimated around 10 000–13 000, with about 3000–4000 in the historic Seto area. The 2000 census of the Republic of Estonia did not provide a possibility for the Seto to register separately. During the 2003 census of the Russian Federation, 167 people identified themselves as a Seto.

1.d. Geographic location and range of the element

Leelo is an integral element of Seto culture throughout the entire Seto area. *Leelo* choirs are established in Setomaa and in larger Estonian towns where the Seto reside at present. *Leelo* is a cornerstone of Seto identity and can be heard at almost all Seto community events. Both *leelo* choirs and other members of the community sing. In addition choirs introduce *leelo* and Seto traditions to Estonians and foreign visitors. Seto choirs also perform rather frequently abroad, in neighbouring countries, elsewhere in Europe and beyond.

Seto *leelo* is a unique polyphonic local style that has evolved from earlier runo singing traditions of the Balto-Finnic people. Runo song tradition is well established with most of the Balto-Finns living around the Baltic Sea: Estonians, Votians, Izhorians, Karelians and Finns. Specific features of Seto *leelo* include the way of producing voice and singing in parts, which show similarities to Russian singing traditions.

1.e. Domain(s) represented by the element

Oral traditions and expressions, more precisely, traditional songlore and singing culture.

2. Description of the element

Seto *leelo* ('song' in literal translation) denotes a traditional singing style, repertoire and culture of the Seto. Its poetic structure and certain musical features are estimated to date back a millennium. The elements of poetic text and metrics present a local development of an earlier Balto-Finnic singing tradition, the runo song. The practice of singing features an alternation of solo and choral parts: a lead singer performs a verse-line; the choir joins in for the last syllables of the line, and repeats the whole line. Based on their knowledge of traditional poetic formulae, the rules of the poetic and metric system, Seto singers (who have earned the position of lead singers) create new lines and songs in accordance with the particular occasion. They perform also texts learnt from previous great performers, but the skill to compose lyrics is essential for a renowned lead singer.

The amount of melodies used is much more limited and stable, being fixed to particular song genres (dependant on the occasion of singing). As a rule, modern Seto singers do not compose new melodies, but choose from the appropriate traditional tunes.

Although Seto tradition includes also monophonic singing, the distinctive features of Seto *leelo* are the joint performance in multiple voices and the particular timbre produced. The choir repeats or varies the lead singer's lines in two or three voices. Most singers in the choir perform the leading part *torrõ*. Heterophonic deviations from it add a lower accompanying voice, lower *torrõ*. The inevitable component of Seto *leelo* is a higher pitched polyphonic part *killõ*, performed by a singer with a particularly strong and shrill timbre. The lead singer's line is normally performed in a faster tempo, with speech-like modulations, whereas the choral part tends to be slower, more stable and melodious. A tense timbre and powerful projection of voice characterise the *leelo* performed in the open air and at parties.

Leelo featured throughout the lives of the Seto, singing was always present at work, leisure and festive occasions. The rules governing communal lifestyle were transmitted from generation to generation through songs. Singing accompanied rites and customs, songs served also as a medium to comment on or criticize social life and relations. The intertwined secular and religious lives give a remarkable feature to Seto culture. In contrast to their primarily Protestant neighbours in Estonia, the Seto are Russian Orthodox: the cycle of church holidays and lents divides their annual calendar into periods that differ in the amount of singing allowed by religious customs.

Women have been primary bearers and developers of the singing tradition. Singers talented in composing verse-lines and having larger repertoires are usually lead singers, called *sõnoline* (talented with words) or *lauluimä* (mother of song). A monument was unveiled in Obinitsa village in 1986 to commemorate mothers of song. Among the renowned mothers of song and lead singers of today are: Minna Hainsoo, Leida Heliste, Maria Kukka, Anna Kõiv, Anne Linnupuu, Aleksandra Lohk, Maria Noormets, Õie Sarv, Anne Sepamägi, Olga Tiik and Maret Vabarna. Men's singing practices, characterised by similar polyphonic tradition, have been less documented and researched. At present, there exist only two active *leelo* choirs of men.

Until the early 20th century, the term "choir" denoted a fairly spontaneous association of singers from one family or village. The choirs have slowly become institutionalised due to performances outside the Seto community and region. The number of more intimate and spontaneous singing situations decreased and singing was more frequently targeted at

an audience. Due to the constraints of the Soviet period and the general cultural change, Seto *leelo* became “an amateur art” and “traditional culture” when on stage. In an organised choir the singers are not always able to follow a traditional cycle of or setting for particular types of songs. Therefore, the genres that do not depend on particular ritual or temporal contexts have proved more viable. Established choirs tend to adopt repertoires with relatively fixed texts. Consequently the number of singers who can easily improvise verse-lines is decreasing. Nevertheless, the confidence and enjoyment shown by today’s singers, the relevance and poignancy of their lyrics, which their Seto audiences appreciate, renders Seto *leelo* vibrant and powerful also on stage. Its vitality is likewise demonstrated through an intensified discussion and the plurality of views expressed about the current and future state of *leelo*.

The Seto *leelo* tradition is prominently alive in community events. Choirs are primary carriers of the tradition. Also the Seto who have migrated to other regions of Estonia, still sing traditional songs. *Leelo* choirs are the hubs of the Seto community and embody the Seto identity. They unite and bring together women of different ages and transmit traditional knowledge to the younger generations. As Seto gradually ceases to be a household language, children's choirs are essential in creating an environment of spoken Seto.

Most Seto have a two-dimensional Seto-Estonian identity today. Though integrated with the rest of Estonia at the socio-political level, communal traditions, religion and church have a special role for the Seto. Being a Seto is first and foremost identified by speaking the language, following the singing traditions and customs.

In the recent decades, people have again learnt to value spontaneous singing besides organised performances. The *leelo* choirs have become the most efficient transmitters of Seto culture. There is a strong wish to reintroduce Seto *leelo* in everyday practices. Links with the past are essential to singers: the older generation inherited their songs from their mothers and grandmothers, the younger ones learn from older singers and from archival recordings. Traditional costumes and jewellery are also passed down in the family. *Leelo* choirs have retained the tradition to wear these on festive occasions.

Cultural and political activities of the Seto enlivened after Estonia regained independence in 1991. Several new choirs were established. The socio-cultural importance of *leelo* has grown through new and traditional community festivities with singing as their integral part. Village festivities related to religious holidays (*kirmas*), where people dance to traditional instrumental music and sing in Seto are more frequent. In 1977 commenced the *Leelo* Day festivals, which regularly bring together nearly all *leelo* choirs. Since 1994, the Seto Kingdom Day is celebrated every year, having become a powerful manifestation of Seto identity. The activities and structure of this event are based on traditional culture and related to *kirmas*. Spontaneous singing is dominant, avoiding organised concerts, and focusing on a competition where the best composer of *leelo* lyrics is awarded the highly renowned title of the King’s Mother of Song. The Kingdom Day is preceded by the Children’s Day where children get acquainted with their cultural heritage through different activities and events. Their inclusion guarantees the sustainability of Seto culture.

The academic documentation and research of Seto *leelo* has continued through the past 150 years. Archival collections are quite extensive. Several genres of Seto songs are available in various (mostly textual) publications.

Several Estonian composers have used Seto music in their work, and Seto *leelo* has even been arranged in recent pop styles. Although not all of these arrangements have been

approved by the community, they have certainly introduced *leelo* or its elements to younger generations.

3. Contribution to ensuring visibility and awareness and to encouraging dialogue

The Seto community and *leelo* choirs have had a remarkable impact on raising the general public's awareness of the need to value and safeguard the intangible cultural heritage. They show a high respect towards their culture within the community, but are also willing to present it to interested outsiders. The Seto largely define themselves through their culture and language, to which they actively draw political and media attention. In doing so, they increase recognition of the significance of intangible cultural heritage as an integral and valuable part of modern society and enhance awareness of cultural diversity. The Setomaa Cultural Programme administered by the Estonian Ministry of Culture has provided invaluable support to this end, its aim being to preserve linguistic and cultural uniqueness of the Seto and to value the area as a living environment.

The Seto are proud of their singing traditions, which help to transmit the Seto lifestyle, language and customs. *Leelo* is one of the underlying features of identity and the sense of belonging for the Seto community, and forms an integral part of every major communal gathering. Mothers of song frequently compose new lyrics according to the traditional poetic rules to comment on or to celebrate particular occasions. This demonstrates that *leelo* is a living means of communication among the Seto. *Leelo* is part of the diverse and rich cultural heritage that the Seto hold in high regard in their daily life. *Leelo* choirs are vital bearers of Seto identity also outside the Seto region; they bring the community together and provide the necessary scene to practice Seto culture. In presenting and promoting their cultural heritage, through music, customs and traditional handicrafts in different environments, the Seto demonstrate a set of skills and knowledge that is as important today, in terms of community and its unity, as ever before.

The activities of *leelo* choirs and other members of the Seto community certainly secure a greater visibility of the intangible cultural heritage, which is one of the key aims of the Representative List. *Leelo* is a central element of Seto culture and it is introduced to visitors from Estonia and abroad, thus inspiring both the Seto and others to respect their cultural heritage. The concerts of *leelo* choirs outside Estonia have made an impact to broaden the horizons of the Seto women. By learning about other cultures, people become more aware of the special features in their own traditions, and acknowledge the cultural diversity worldwide. Several *leelo* choirs have performed in European countries, Russia, USA and Asia. At the First International Festival of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Chengdu, China, in 2007 the Seto performers who introduced *leelo* songs, dances and handicrafts were awarded the Golden Sun Bird medal.

The Seto efforts in raising awareness of cultural heritage have inspired also other local communities in Estonia to rediscover, value and promote their heritage. The Seto activists work closely together with other communities, including the Kihnu of the Kihnu Cultural Space, proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. Their common task is to safeguard and transmit local heritage cultures, with a larger goal to maintain global cultural diversity. They discuss together the methods and practices for the application of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. They exchange experience in working with different sustainability programmes. The younger generation receives special attention through

joint youth events and seminars. A plan is being prepared with the Ministry of Education and Research for the teaching of cultural heritage in the schools of these areas. The Seto delegation participates at the World Congresses of the Finno-Ugric Peoples and cooperate with other Finno-Ugrians in the domain of culture. The Seto have established co-operational contacts also with the Suit community in the Alsunga District of Latvia, which is a good example of dialogue that respects cultural diversity.

The inscription of Seto *leelo* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity will denote a reverent acknowledgement of the Seto community and *leelo* choirs. This would highlight their long-term activities in pursuing the principles of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and promote the safeguarding of the *leelo* tradition and the entire Seto cultural heritage. Additionally, such appreciation would set the Seto community as a further example to other communities thereby encouraging them to contemplate and value their own heritage.

4. Safeguarding measures

4.a. Current and recent efforts to safeguard the element

Cultural activation of the Seto community has strengthened the *leelo* tradition, expanded its base and enhanced its viability. Several new *leelo* choirs (children's and men's choirs included) have been established since the 1990s. With the view of safeguarding and promoting the interests, language and culture of the Seto, community activists initiated 'the Seto movement', as a result of which were established various organisations to unite those concerned about the future of the region and Seto culture. For example, the Seto Congress, a representative body of the community, includes along with delegates from Seto villages and organisations also representatives of every *leelo* choir. It testifies to the social importance of the tradition. Vitality of *leelo* is safeguarded through people's respect and affection of *leelo* and their strong desire to enhance its role in everyday life.

In 2008, the Assembly of Seto *Leelo* Masters was convened, uniting Seto singers and choirs. The aim is to provide singers with opportunities to discuss issues related to *leelo*, debate the present and future of Seto culture, and to sing together. Active participation with heated discussions at this Assembly give proof that the good maintenance of *leelo* is a priority for the community. Relationships within the Seto community are strengthened through those meetings, while their outcomes have served as a basis for the present application for nomination and for designing the particular safeguarding measures.

Alongside these community activities national and local governments also give essential support. Since the early 1990s, in the newly re-independent Estonia, Setomaa has developed a higher profile at the national level than previously. The region being divided between the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation, the first problems dealt with concerned mainly border, citizenship and property issues.

The Setomaa Regional Programme helped to activate community members. Among other things, they released the *Setomaa* newspaper and continued radio programmes in Seto; also the situation of local museums improved. In 2003, the Setomaa Cultural Programme (SCP), coordinated by the Ministry of Culture of Estonia, was launched to improve the financing for cultural projects. A successful cooperation of ministries, county and local governments and the third sector continues in the framework of SCP for 2006-2009, approved by the Government of the Republic. The size of the programme is 5 million Estonian kroons (320,000 Euros) per year, giving a total of 20 million kroons (1.3 million Euros).

The overall objective of the programme is to safeguard the maintenance of the distinct cultural and linguistic features of the Seto and to value Setomaa as a living environment. Related issues include increasing the number of participants in cultural activities and, in particular, to involve children in their linguistic and cultural heritage. *Leelo* choirs receive funding for their operational costs and are actively applying for project funding to release CDs, arrange and participate in various events, and so on. A large number of the community events where *leelo* is an integral part, have received financing.

The SCP has assisted the preservation and viability of not only *leelo* traditions but also the entire Seto culture. In 2009 a new programme will be devised for 2010-2014. In addition, SCP will become a sub-programme of the Development Plan until 2030 for Sustaining and Valuing Estonian Cultural Heritage.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs launched the Setomaa Development Programme in 2006, with the objective to support the viability of the area through investments in the entrepreneurial environment and human capital. Sustainable development of Setomaa and sustainability of the Seto community indirectly serve as conditions to further expand the basis for maintaining Seto *leelo* traditions.

The Assembly of Seto *Leelo* Masters considers that the common efforts of the community, local governments and the state in giving support to *leelo* need to continue in the future. Bearers and teachers of the Seto singing tradition, Seto events and heritage, the traditional lifestyle and living environment need further assistance. The combination of the previous safeguards the viability of the Seto culture. Inclusion of young people is essential at the community level.

4.b. Safeguarding measures proposed

Please see 4.c.

4.c. Commitments of States and of communities, groups or individuals concerned

Measures planned for the maintenance of the viability of Seto *leelo* are directly related to commitments made by the Seto community, national institutions, local governments and various organisations in the context of drafting the present nomination file. Therefore, items 4.b and 4.c have been arranged and presented below in a comprehensive table. The stated needs and requirements of the Seto community have formed the basis of this plan of safeguarding measures. Public discussions, which have lasted several months, involved representatives of the community and *leelo* choirs, ministries, county and local governments and the Estonian National Commission for UNESCO. During the process of approval of the current document, all these parties confirmed their willingness to carry out the described activities.

The plan of safeguarding measures covers activities, which support Seto *leelo*, the entire Setomaa region, the Seto community and culture. Long-term objectives are

1. to ensure the safeguarding of *leelo* tradition through joint efforts of its bearers, Seto organisations, local governments and the state;
2. to ensure the safeguarding of lifestyles supportive of *leelo* tradition and the community that sustains it;
3. to encourage national and local government authorities to implement legislative, economic and administrative measures to safeguard and strengthen the Seto culture;
4. to appreciate and support people who transmit heritage-related skills and knowledge;

5. to extend teaching of the Seto language and culture, especially in nursery schools and general education schools in Setomaa;
6. to launch regular Seto language TV and radio programmes and to present the Seto culture via Estonian Public Broadcasting;
7. to systematise archival and museum records on Seto culture, enhance research, and make both source materials and research results better available to the Seto community;
8. to protect natural diversity and promote sustainable use of local resources.

Safeguarding measures of Seto *leelo* for 2008-2014

Responsible institution	Objectives	Activities	Sources of financing	Partners
Community level				
<i>Leelo</i> choirs	To bear and transmit the Seto <i>leelo</i> tradition through a wide scale of activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening the role of <i>leelo</i>, the Seto language and other elements of Seto intangible cultural heritage in daily life and interpersonal communication. 2. Increasing the number of people involved, especially children and youth. 3. Regular meetings, extension of the repertoire 4. Participation in the Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters 5. Active promotion of Seto <i>leelo</i> and Seto culture 	Local governments, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, sponsors	Local governments, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, Estonian National Section of CIOFF
Partnership The Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters	To ensure the viability of the traditional practices of Seto <i>leelo</i> and activate the community for the preservation of heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Giving direction and guidance to the development of <i>leelo</i> tradition 2. Training activities 	Local governments, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, sponsors	Local governments, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa
Non-profit organisation Seto Congress Support Society, Seto Congress; Council of Elders of the Seto Congress	To activate the community in the preservation and transmission of heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussions of <i>leelo</i>-related issues at congress sessions. 2. Provision of information and inclusion of the community through congress delegates. 	Ministry of Culture	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters, local governments

Non-profit organisation Seto Youth Society	To involve the youth in Seto cultural activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uniting Seto youths. 2. Arranging Seto cultural events. 3. Working together with young people from other communities in Estonia. 	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, local governments, EU Structural Funds	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, local governments, University of Tartu, communication with other Estonian cultural heritage communities
Non-profit organisations Seto Handicraft Assembly and Handicraft Society Kirivüü	To preserve and develop traditional handicrafts related to <i>leelo</i> traditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening of <i>leelo</i> traditions in combination with handicraft practices. 2. Training, information and consultancy services with regard to making traditional Seto costumes and jewellery. 3. Making traditional Seto costumes and jewellery. 4. Preparation of training materials presenting ways of wearing traditional costumes and jewellery. 	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, EU Structural Funds, Gambling Tax Council	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Seto non-profit organisations, Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union, local governments, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters, Estonian Folk Culture Development and Training Centre
Non-profit organisation Seto College Society	To teach Seto intangible cultural heritage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrangement of training courses and training days: Seto handicraft, <i>leelo</i> and instrumental music. 	Ministry of Culture, Cultural Endowment of Estonia	Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters, Seto Handicraft Assembly, Estonian Traditional Music Centre
Non-profit organisation Taarka Heritage Theatre	To strengthen links between <i>leelo</i> tradition and contemporary culture in performing arts.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of <i>leelo</i> in the original Seto theatre productions. 2. Presentation of Seto culture and history to a wider audience. 	Local governments, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, sponsors	Professional theatres, <i>leelo</i> choirs, local governments

Foundation Seto Culture Fund	To support Seto cultural heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financing of surveys, training events, publications and other projects 2. Supporting community activities in the Seto Community House. 	Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, EU Structural Funds, sponsors	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Research, University of Tartu, Tallinn University, Fenno-Ugria, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa
Non-profit organisation Seto Ethnocultural Society	To preserve Seto culture in Pechory administrative region, Russian Federation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation of <i>leelo</i> tradition in Pechory administrative region, Russian Federation. 2. Giving new impetus to cross-border cooperation of the Seto community. 	Ministry of Culture, EU programmes, sponsors	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, county governments, local governments, Seto Handicraft Assembly, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters
Non-profit organisation Tourism in Setomaa	To present Setomaa and Seto culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of a tourism model in Setomaa which respects and supports Seto heritage. 2. Presentation of <i>leelo</i> as a significant part of Seto culture 	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, EU Structural Funds	Entrepreneurs, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters, <i>leelo</i> choirs
Non-profit organisation Piiriveere Liider (Borderlands LEADER action group)	To facilitate sustainability of cultural heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and development of human environment based on cultural heritage. 	EU Structural Funds	County governments, entrepreneurs, LEADER action groups in Estonia and Europe

Seto congregations of the Estonian Orthodox Church	To value and safeguard community culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presentation of and teaching Seto and Russian Orthodox traditions. 2. Renovation and restoration of churches and <i>tsässon</i> (chapels). 	Seto congregations of the Estonian Orthodox Church, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, EU Structural Funds, donations	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Culture, National Heritage Board, Orthodox Church of Estonia
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Local level

Seto museums: Obinita Seto Museum, Värska Seto Farm Museum, Saatse Museum	To collect, preserve, study and exhibit heritage related to <i>leelo</i> tradition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Better availability of and access to museum collections. 2. Arrangement of seminars, exhibitions and thematic days on Seto traditions. 	Local governments, Ministry of Culture	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy, Estonian Academy of Arts, Estonian Folk Art and Craft Union, Estonian Literary Museum, Estonian National Museum, local governments, museums with Seto artefacts and collections in Pechory administrative region, Russian Federation
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Meremäe, Mikitamäe, Misso and Värskä rural municipalities	To ensure sustainability of Seto culture in Meremäe, Mikitamäe, Misso and Värskä municipalities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of conditions for ensuring the continuity of <i>leelo</i> choirs, Seto cultural societies and events. 2. Recording, storing and publishing <i>leelo</i>-related activities. 3. Ensuring teaching of Seto cultural heritage in schools. 4. Supporting community activities. 5. Maintenance of village chapels, churches and village greens. 	Local governments, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, EU Structural Funds	Museums, village libraries, schools, non-profit organisations, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters, Orthodox Church of Estonia
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Regional level

Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa - Meremäe, Mikitamäe, Värskä and Misso municipalities	To ensure the overall development of Seto municipalities for supporting the cultural heritage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creation of conditions for securing the continuity and development of Seto culture. 2. Supporting the activities of the Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters. 3. Coordination of cooperation within Setomaa and beyond. 	Local municipalities, Cultural Endowment of Estonia, Ministry of Internal Affairs, EU Structural Funds, EU programmes, sponsors	Local and county governments, non-profit organisations, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, museums, schools, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs
Põlva County Government, Võru County Government	To safeguard Seto cultural heritage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning the development of the county with concern to the specific features of Seto culture. 2. Participation in the planning and implementation of cultural programmes. 	Ministry of Internal Affairs, EU Structural Funds	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, local governments

National level

Ministry of Culture	To value the cultural heritage of different communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of the national programme “Setomaa Cultural Programme”. 2. Implementation of the national programme “Language and Culture of South-Estonia”. 3. Implementation of the national programme “Preserving and Development of Places of Worship” in Setomaa village chapels. 4. Preparation and implementation of the “Development Plan until 2030 for Sustaining and Valuing Estonian Cultural Heritage. 	Ministry of Culture	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, local governments, Orthodox Church of Estonia, National Heritage Board
Estonian Folk Culture Development and Training Centre	To ensure the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Administration of the inventory of intangible cultural heritage. 2. Administration of the folk culture database, data analysis and preparation of proposals for further preservation and development activities. 3. Supporting and providing consultancy to the Seto community in issues related to intangible heritage. 4. Administration of the Setomaa Cultural Programme. 	Ministry of Culture	Local governments, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Assembly of Seto <i>Leelo</i> Masters

National museums and research institutions (Estonian Literary Museum, Estonian National Museum, Estonian Open Air Museum, Institute of the Estonian Language, Võru Institute)	To collect, preserve, study and exhibit heritage related to <i>leelo</i> tradition.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrangement, digitalisation and publications of Seto collections. 2. Scientific research into Seto-related issues and publication of research results. 3. Participation in the compilation of a comprehensive collection of information on Setomaa. 	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian Science Foundation	Universities, Setomaa museums, National Archives, Seto community
Estonian Public Broadcasting	To promote and record Seto <i>leelo</i> traditions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Production of regular programmes in the Seto language. 2. Recording of Seto cultural events. 3. Making archival materials on Seto culture available to the public. 	Ministry of Culture, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, local governments	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Culture, <i>leelo</i> choirs, Setomaa museums
Ministry of Internal Affairs	To create opportunities for Setomaa regional development in order to ensure viability of the community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of the Setomaa Development Programme, incl. support to creative industries. 2. Administration of the Setomaa Expert Committee's work. 3. Preparation of procedures for the issuance of free or preferential visas in order to facilitate cross-border communication of the Seto community. 	Ministry of Internal Affairs	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, local governments, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, Põlva County Government, Võru County Government

Ministry of Education and Research	To guarantee the teaching of Seto cultural heritage, incl. <i>leelo</i> .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financing and coordination of teaching the Seto language and cultural heritage in local schools. 2. Supporting the preparation of optional course programmes for teaching cultural heritage in schools; financing teachers' in-service training. 3. Supporting youth initiatives and life-long learning in the field of cultural heritage. 	EU Structural Funds, Ministry of Education and Research	Võru Institute, local governments, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Culture
Universities: University of Tartu, Tallinn University, Estonian Academy of Arts	To facilitate research and knowledge on Seto culture.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lectures, seminars, field work. 2. Publication and presentation of research results. 3. Participation in the preparation of a comprehensive collection of information on Setomaa. 	Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, EU Structural Funds, Estonian Science Foundation	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, museums, Seto community
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications	To establish effective infrastructure in Setomaa supporting sustainable development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement of the road network to facilitate intra-community communication. 2. Development of creative industries. 3. Assuring the conditions required for the enhanced economic performance in the region. 	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, EU Structural Funds, local governments	Estonian Road Administration, Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Seto Congress, Council of Elders, Põlva County Government, Võru County Government, local governments, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Border Area Energy Development, Development Agency of Võru County

Ministry of Foreign Affairs	To create cross-border communication opportunities for the Seto on both sides of the Estonian-Russian border line.	1. Achievement of agreements with the Russian Federation to establish procedures for the issuance of free or preferential visas.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa, Seto Congress, Council of Elders
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5. Community involvement and consent

5.a. Participation of communities, groups and individuals

In 2005, representatives of the Seto community suggested to the Setomaa Expert Committee convened by the Estonian Government, to apply for the inscription of Seto *leelo* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since 2005 the community has been involved in the preparation of the nomination through various organisations and representative bodies.

In spring 2008, during the meeting of the Assembly of Seto *Leelo* Masters the gathered *leelo* choirs and singers focused on the principles of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The following issues were discussed: What is the situation of Seto *leelo* today? Which are its strengths and weaknesses? How to safeguard the continuity of *leelo* traditions? What can the members of the community do to support this aim? What assistance is expected from the state and local governments? The outcomes of these discussions served as a basis for the present application for nomination and the safeguarding measures envisaged. Each *leelo* choir could participate in the application drafting process through their contact persons, and working meetings were held with all choirs.

The Ministry of Culture convened a commission for the preparation of the nomination file. The commission included representatives of the Seto Congress (a representative body of the Seto people), the Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa (covers four municipalities in Estonia and is a singular cross-county border body in the country), and *leelo* choirs, who thus served as a link between the community and the commission and safeguarded community interests. This commission largely determined the content of the nomination file and the safeguarding measures proposed; a significant contribution was made in this process by researchers of Seto origin.

Representatives of other Seto organisations have also been informed about the principles of the Convention and the Representative List at round table meetings. These issues have been jointly discussed with inhabitants of the Kihnu Cultural Space, which was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003. Heritage communities from other Estonian regions also participated at round table meetings on intangible heritage issues.

Representatives of the Seto community are involved in the national commissions with significant importance to the development of Setomaa, such as the Setomaa Expert Committee of the Government of the Republic and the Steering Committee of the Setomaa Cultural Programme of the Ministry of Culture; both committees will play an important role in the execution of the safeguarding measures of the nomination file.

5.b. Free, prior and informed consent

The principles of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage have been frequently presented to the Seto community at meetings, round table sessions, in the local newspaper *Setomaa* and via radio programmes. In 2005, the 8th Seto Congress discussed the submission of an application for the inscription of *leelo* on the Representative List and approved the idea. The Seto community has not only approved of the application for the inscription of *leelo* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity but actually initiated the process and community members have been actively involved in it.

The application is appended with community consent attestations certifying the community's request for the nomination of Seto *leelo* on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and approving the content of this application. Please see Annex 2 for signature copies and Documentation CD 7 for electronic copies.

5.c. Respect for customary practices governing access

Setomaa area has become a major tourist attraction due to its cultural uniqueness. Heritage related events, rural architecture and local handicraft traditions increasingly arouse interest in visitors. Various village museums preserve and exhibit Seto culture. Tourists can taste traditional Seto food, learn Seto dances and listen to *leelo*. When *leelo* choirs perform to such an audience, they cannot always abide to the rules of the traditional cycle of life or seasons, and often render the songs abridged. To compensate these discrepancies, the performers describe their traditions and explain the differences to their audience.

The debates and discussions of the Assembly of Seto *Leelo* Masters report that singers perceive such changes as a threat to *leelo* in its traditional form that they regard highly. On the other hand, in order to balance the limiting stage performance, the Seto more and more recognise the significance of singing within the community, based upon traditional practices. This is the way *leelo* is expected to be transmitted to successive generations. Bearers of heritage are actively debating issues arising as a result of changes in forms of expression. However, the multitude of opinions in this respect demonstrates that *leelo* is not threatened by becoming a standardised souvenir that has lost its traditional function.

Although increased outside interest has had an impact on the traditional environment and lifestyle of the Seto, they skilfully make use of the situation in presenting their heritage and culture to the wider public. Focusing on cultural tourism provides options to avoid the negative and commodifying impacts of tourism. As a result, the Seto aim to raise awareness about their community and cultural heritage among domestic and foreign tourists, which contributes to the cultural diversity of our world.

6. Inclusion on an inventory

In 2003 Estonia prepared a candidature file of the Kihnu Cultural Space for possible proclamation as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. A list of five other forms of cultural expression or cultural spaces which the Member State envisaged to propose in the future for possible proclamation was to be added to the candidature file. Seto *leelo* was the first in Estonia's list and it is now included in the national inventory of intangible cultural heritage of the Republic of Estonia. The inventory is administered by the Estonian Folk Culture Development and Training Centre.

7. Documentation

7.a. Required and supplementary documentation

	Primary materials	Supplementary materials
Photos	10 recent photographs. Please see CD 1	30 photographs. Please see CD 3
Video	Edited video "Seto leelo, Seto polyphonic singing tradition". Duration 10.30. Please see DVD 2	DVD with samples of <i>leelo</i> . Duration 12.53. Please see DVD 4
Audio		CD with audio recordings of <i>leelo</i> . Duration 60 minutes. Please see CD 5
Maps		3 maps showing the geographic location of Setomaa and the location of <i>leelo</i> choirs. Please see CD 6
Books		Honko, Lauri 2003. The Maiden's Death Song & The Great Wedding: Anne Vabarna's oral twin epic written down by A.O. Väisänen. Kuutma, Kristin 2006. Collaborative Representations: Interpreting the Creation of a Sami Ethnography and a Seto Epic. Photo album Setomaa 1995, foreword by Õie Sarv. Photos by Ain Sarv and Kalju Kuusik.
		A separate CD with detailed contents of primary and supplementary materials has been included.

The text of the nomination can also be found on the documentation CD 7.

7.b. Cession of rights or Creative Commons licence

Please see Annex 1.

7.c. List of additional resources

Websites

The Union of Rural Municipalities of Setomaa. URL: <http://www.setomaa.ee>

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9. Signature on behalf of the State Party

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