



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

Original: English

CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Fifth session
Nairobi, Kenya
November 2010

NOMINATION FILE NO. 00402
FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE REPRESENTATIVE LIST
OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN 2010

<p>A. STATE(S) PARTY(IES)</p> <p><i>For multi-national nominations, States Parties should be listed in the order on which they have mutually agreed.</i></p>
<p>Belgium</p>
<p>B. NAME OF THE ELEMENT</p>
<p>B.1. Name of the element in English or French</p> <p><i>This is the official name of the element that will appear in published material about the Representative List. It should be concise. Please do not exceed 200 characters, including spaces and punctuation. The name should be transcribed in Latin Unicode characters (Basic Latin, Latin-1 Supplement, Latin Extended-A or Latin Extended Additional).</i></p>
<p>Aalst Carnival</p>
<p>B.2. Name of the element in the language and script of the community concerned, if applicable</p> <p><i>This is the official name of the element in the vernacular language corresponding to the official name in English or French (point B.1.). It should be concise. Please do not exceed 200 characters in Unicode (Latin or others), including spaces and punctuation.</i></p>
<p>Aalst Carnival</p>

B.3. Other name(s) of the element, if any

In addition to the official name(s) of the element (B.1.) please mention alternate name(s), if any, by which the element is known, in Unicode characters (Latin or others).

Vastenavond
Vastelauve(n)d,
Oilsjt Carnaval
(all synonyms of Carnival in Dutch or the local dialect)

C. CHARACTERISTIC OF THE ELEMENT

C.1. Identification of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned

According to the 2003 Convention, intangible heritage can only be identified with reference to communities, groups or individuals that recognize it as part of their cultural heritage. Thus it is important to identify clearly one or several communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned with the nominated element. The information provided should allow the Committee to identify the communities, groups or individuals concerned with an element, and should be mutually coherent with the information in sections 1 to 5 below.

Community : inhabitants of the city and of the wider region of Aalst, in Belgium (50°56' N 04° 02'E)

multiple carnival groups, organizations and individual Carnivalists, such as:

- 'Documentatiecentrum voor Aalst Karnaval' (private heritage centre concerning Aalst Carnaval), contact Antoine Van der Heyden Naarstigheidsstraat 65 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 70 21 49, info@dak.be)
- 'Prinsengarde' and 'Prinsencaemere' (two clubs of former Carnival 'princes'), contact Paul Kinoo (Verastenstraat 14, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 478 82 21 80) and Karel De Nayer (H. Hartlaan 51, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 474 98 90 18)
- 'Carnavalist tot in de kist vzw' (an association giving all kinds of advice to Carnivalists), contact Filip Vijverman (Pontweg 120, 9310 Aalst, 00 32 473 64 10 67, info@carnavalisttotindekist.be)
- Losse groepen (non official groups of carnavalists), contact Jan Louies (Arbeidsstraat 13, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 78 70 06,)
- Honourary Prince Carnival ('Emperor'), contact Kamiel Sergant (Moorselbaan 115, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 477 79 89 88, mia.sergant@telenet.be)
- city administration and multiple civil servants, such as: City Council, contact Christoph D'Haese (Grote Markt 3, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 21 10, christoph.dhaese@aalst.be)
- Public Relations department, contact Philippe Renders (Keizersplein 21 bus b, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 22 40, philippe.renders@aalst.be)
- the festival committee, contact Bernadette Fortuin (Grote Markt 3, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 22 30, bernadette.fortuin@aalst.be)
- the city museum, contact Luc Geeroms (Oude Vismarkt 13, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 23 47, luc.geeroms@aalst.be)
- the city archive, contact Michel Igual-Pacheco (Oude Vismarkt 1, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 23 11, michel.igual@aalst.be)
- tourism officials, contact Koen Liebaut (Grote Markt, Belfort, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 22 70, koen.liebaut@aalst.be)
- police, contact Denis Bergmans (Bleekveldstraat 29, 9300 Aalst, 00 53 73 27 40, denis.bergmans@aalst.be)

- fire department, contact Jacques Baudewijn (Vrijheidstraat 55, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 26 30, jacques.baudewijn@aalst.be)

- Red Cross, contact Danny Smekens (Vereeckenstraat 65, 9308 Hofstade, 00 32 477 48 48 06, danny.smekens@pandora.be)

public transport:

- NMBS (railway), contact Mark Van der Hoeven (Station – Statieplein 65, 9300 Aalst)

- De Lijn (busses), contact Van Ootegem (Brusselse steenweg 361, 9050 Gentbrugge)

local, regional and national media channels, such as:

- AVP (Aalsterse Video Producties), contact Freddy Herssens (Rozendreef 105, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 475 58 29 72, info@avpaalst.be)

C.2. Geographic location and range of the element and location of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned

This section should identify the range of distribution of the element, indicating if possible the geographic locations in which it is centred. If related elements are practiced in neighbouring areas, please so indicate.

Geographic location: Aalst. (50°56' N 04° 02'E)

Range: the parade on Carnival Sunday has both national and international fame. The main themes and the most surprising floats, carts or costumes make the national news (television, newspapers,) in Belgium (in particular Flanders) every year. The Carnival is considered as a humorous diagnosis of and comments on what is going on in society, both, locally, nationally and internationally. Thousands of people from other regions in Belgium come to join the three-day celebration.

C.3. Domain(s) represented by the element

Identify concisely the domain(s) of intangible cultural heritage manifested by the element, which might include one or more of the domains identified in Article 2.2 of the Convention. (This information will be used primarily for visibility, if the element is inscribed.)

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a means for intangible cultural heritage (songs and the local dialect play a crucial role)

- Social traditions, rituals and festivities

D. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ELEMENT

The brief description of the element will be particularly helpful in allowing the Committee to know at a glance what element is being proposed for inscription, and, in the event of inscription, will be used for purposes of visibility. It should be a summary of the description provided in point 1 below but is not an introduction to that longer description.

Carnival is the most important intangible heritage of Aalst. It gives the city its own identity and image in the wider region and even beyond. The oldest written evidence of Carnival in Aalst dates from 1432. Effigies of giants and Bayard, the horse from the Charlemagne legends, were and still are paraded through the streets together with a procession of locals giving their take on last year's local and (inter)national events. These public masquerades evolved into a firm tradition. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century Carnival seemed on its retreat in Flanders. Not so in Aalst, where the street festival has been organized by a festival committee since 1923. Ever since a procession has paraded through the streets of the old city centre.

'Aalst Carnival', which lasts 3 days, is an inextricable part of the identity of the city and its

inhabitants. All social classes find each other in a humouristic, mocking and exuberant feast. Aalst is (probably) the most famous, vibrant and paradigmatical example of Carnival in Flanders. It's a tradition with firm roots in the past, yet very much alive and still evolving.

1. IDENTIFICATION AND DEFINITION OF THE ELEMENT (CF. CRITERION R.1)

This is the key section of the nomination to satisfy criterion R.1: “The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention”. A clear and complete explanation is essential to demonstrate that the nominated element meets the Convention’s definition of intangible heritage. This section should address all the significant features of the element as it exists at present, and should include:

- a. an explanation of its social and cultural functions and meanings today, within and for its community,*
- b. the characteristics of the bearers and practitioners of the element,*
- c. any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities towards the element,*
- d. the current modes of transmission of the knowledge and skills related to the element.*

The Committee should receive sufficient information to determine:

- a. that the element is among the “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills — as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith —”;*
- b. “that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize [it] as part of their cultural heritage”;*
- c. that it is being “transmitted from generation to generation, [and] is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history”;*
- d. that it provides communities and groups involved with “a sense of identity and continuity”; and*
- e. that it is not incompatible with “existing international human rights instruments as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development”.*

Overly technical descriptions should be avoided and submitting States should keep in mind that this section must explain the element to readers who have no prior knowledge or direct experience of it. Nomination files need not address in detail the history of the element, or its origin or antiquity.

Carnival is the most important example of intangible cultural heritage of Aalst. It provides the city and its inhabitants with a strong sense of identity and continuity and annually builds a very distinctive image in the wider region and beyond. Aalst Carnival is an integral part of the city's intangible cultural heritage in which everything and everybody is mocked in a friendly humouristic and respectful way. Most mocked, in fact, are the people of Aalst, giving them an opportunity to indulge in self-irony.

The oldest written evidence of Carnival in Aalst dates from 1432. Effigies of giants and Bayard, the horse from the Charlemagne legends, were and still are paraded through the streets together with a procession of locals parodying or giving hilarious comments on last year's local and (inter)national events.

These yearly public masquerades evolved into a firm tradition of this street festival. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century Carnival seemed to decline rapidly in Flanders. Not so in Aalst, where the street festival not only survived but flourished. It has been organized by a festival committee since 1923. Since this reorganisation, a colourful Carnival procession parades annually through the streets of the old city centre.

Other typical elements are the use of the local dialect and the proliferation of Carnival songs (between 1960 and 2008 more than 3.000 songs have been written and many of them recorded).

For a whole year thousands of volunteers and dozens of carnival associations prepare for the 3 days of Carnival. In a special Carnival hall of the city, costumes and floats are made from scratch. The different groups compete with the beauty and originality of their creations and selections of prize-winners are made. The individual non-registered Carnivalists and so-called loose groups ('losse groepen': small and temporary groups of Carnivalists) spice up the parade as they are able to give their mocking interpretation of and comments on very recent local and

(inter)national events. This spirit of carnival and the historical, technical and practical knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation, and constantly recreated by communities and groups.

Every year since 1953 the chosen Prince Carnival receives the key to the city of Aalst. He symbolically becomes mayor of the city and Carnival for a short period of (festive) time. He receives this key the day before the Sunday parade during a ceremony where local politicians are publically ridiculed by the Prince and other well-known Carnivalists. On Sunday the Prince, the effigies of the giants, the 'Ros Ballatum' (a local mock version of Bayard) and the 'Gilles d'Aalst' lead a kilometres' long parade of feasting Carnivalists. Up to 100.000 people come to the streets of Aalst to watch.

On Monday the 'Gilles d'Aalst' (supposedly) chase 'the ghosts of winter' with a special broom dance on the Grote Markt (central market place). During the following 'Ajuinworp' (the throwing of the Onion) thousands of participants gather and try to get their hands on the Golden Onion. In the afternoon the procession parades a second time through the streets of Aalst. That evening the jury decides and announces which groups receive prize money. The day ends in another celebration in the vicinity of the Grote Markt. A sea of people sing, dance and party the night away.

On Shrove Tuesday thousands of 'Voil Jeanetten' (the dialect name of groups of men crossdressed as women) parade through the city centre. 'Voil Jeanetten' is yet another typical element of the history of Aalst Carnaval. Nineteenth-century factory workers (in the 19th century Aalst was an industrial city with very strong inequality and exploitation) too poor to buy a costume used old clothes of their wives to dress-up. Local newspapers mockingly dubbed them as 'voil jeanetten'. His, or better 'her', attributes are a corset, a birdcage with a dried herring, a pram, a lampshade and a broken umbrella. On Tuesday night the Carnival effigy is burned on the Grote Markt signaling the end of Carnival. The burning does not mean the end. The die hard Carnivalists of Aalst shout in their native dialect that they will continue the feast for yet another night. For many a Carnavalist this is a very emotional moment.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO ENSURING VISIBILITY AND AWARENESS AND TO ENCOURAGING DIALOGUE (CF. CRITERION R.2)

The nomination should demonstrate (Criterion R.2) that "Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity".

Please explain how the element's inscription on the Representative List will contribute to ensuring visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and will raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of its importance. This section need not address how inscription will bring greater visibility to the element, but how its inscription will contribute to the visibility of intangible cultural heritage more broadly. Explain how inscription will promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity, and will promote mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals.

Not to exceed 1,000 words.

The phenomenon of Carnival in and outside Europe is a well-known and colourful example of intangible cultural heritage. As a result of article 31 and the transfer of items proclaimed "masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" to the Representative list, interesting Carnivals in Oruro (Bolivia), Barranquilla (Columbia) and Binche (Belgium) will already be on the list of article 16 of the 2003 convention from 2009 onwards. Aalst Carnival will be an interesting new and alternative contribution and addition to the representative character of this list, in particular in the repertoire of different types of parades, to illustrate the diversity of functions and forms of carnival on the planet. Aalst Carnival is a very vibrant form, rough at the edges and not sterile at all, characterised by a participation of very diverse groups in urban society.

It is an excellent illustration of how intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment,

in casu in a highly mediatised society, dealing with issues, remarkable personalities and sensitivities in national and international public opinion or in local or national politics. Precisely this combination of an intergenerational tradition on the one hand and immediate responses and humorous appropriation of recent events makes it into an interesting barometer of evolutions in society, the cutting edge between past and present. Collective laughter and fun with a slightly subversive message in an age-old format: that is what it is all about. Being able to mock local and (inter)national politicians and events is fundamental in a democracy. It puts things into perspective but also contributes to discussion and the forming of ideas. It is celebrating the freedom of speech to the fullest.

The inscription of this Carnival will contribute to raise awareness of the heritage dimension of Carnival among the citizens. It is one of the means by which a lot of Carnivalists will be made aware of the significance (on a meta level) and importance of their traditions and festivities. It will be quite an interesting experiment to document how the UNESCO nomination and the representative list will be dealt with in the parade itself and to monitor the evolution of these discourses and representations in the next years. How can we better generate a deep understanding of developments and aspects of living in the world than by experiencing and learning about instances of the 'world (temporarily) turned upside down' in different nations. Liminality (a concept developed by the anthropologist Victor Turner, building on the oeuvre of folklorist Arnold van Gennep) is the main ingredient of Carnival, in particular in Aalst. Liminal communication is an excellent way of generating and communicating deep insights, funny status and order reversals and to learn interesting lessons about power, hierarchy, continuity and change. This symbolic and communicative form of intangible heritage will provide interesting comments and reflections on safeguarding practices, inventories and listings and hence contribute to stimulate dialogue. It will also contribute to a wide debate between experts, researchers and practitioners about safeguarding a protean cultural phenomenon.

Crucial for Aalst Carnival is the extraordinary role for identity construction in and of a medium-sized city of almost 80.000 inhabitants. Not only in the few days before Lent but throughout the year, preparing for Carnival is a top priority of many people in Aalst, creating new songs and new floats, preparing new jokes and masks, Until now that energy has focused mainly on the local population. Thanks to the UNESCO inscription on the list, representatives of Aalst will be empowered to link actively with big carnivals in other parts of the globe. Precisely connecting similar phenomena of the world turned upside down and of outspoken expressions of celebrating local identity, will yield interesting programmes and projects. It will be fascinating to rapidly start conversations and exchanges between different carnivals on the representative list. This will also be the case – more seriously- between heritage specialists documenting and studying carnival. New forms of exchanges, communications and publications, focusing on issues of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage are expected to be produced. The inscription will give a boost for the development of heritage education tools, focusing on Carnival in a comparative perspective.

3. SAFEGUARDING MEASURES (CF. CRITERION R.3)

Items 3.a. to 3.c. request the elaboration of a coherent set of safeguarding measures as called for in Criterion R.3: "Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element". Such measures should reflect the broadest possible participation of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned, both in their formulation and in their implementation.

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

Please describe the current and recent efforts of the concerned communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals to ensure the viability of the element. Describe efforts of the concerned State(s) Party(ies) to safeguard the element, taking note of external or internal constraints, such as limited resources.

The most important and effective measure taken in recent years to safeguard Aalst Carnival is the fact that it has been inscribed as an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of Aalst in

the cultural policy document of the city for the period 2008-2013. This ensures continuing commitment by local officials.

Many aspects of Aalst Carnival are archived by the city archive, thus not only preserving them for the future but also making them available for study. Having this material at hand enables researchers to prepare studies, articles etc. which in turn ensures visibility and awareness and encourages dialogue. Archived materials range from official posters, pennants, medals and mocking pamphlets, documents of the committee which organizes the event, photographs... In the future these photographs will be made available on the internet.

A separate carnival module was opened in the city museum't Gasthuys in 2002. This was cooperation between the museum staff, a professional stylist and the carnivalists themselves. This permanent exhibition shows the visitors the history of Aalst Carnival as well as the present-day festivities. Smaller, temporary exhibitions about specific elements of carnival have been organised as well. These aim at specific target groups like senior citizens, children, disabled people... While preparing an exhibition about 80 carnival parades, a call for help was launched in local newspapers and on websites. A lot of people responded enthusiastically and thanks to them many unknown pictures and films were gathered and used in the exhibition.

The efforts made by the city administration to safeguard Aalst Carnival do not only apply to exhibitions and the archiving of the cultural heritage. Awareness and visibility is also achieved by publishing books or magazines. In 1975 the city archivist helped to write a book about the history of Aalst Carnival. In the magazine 'Waar is de tijd, 1000 jaar Aalst', a serial about the history of Aalst, a whole issue was dedicated to carnival (see supplementary documentation).

In the months prior to carnival guided tours for schools are organised. Another initiative is 'The day of the child' during the carnival fair.

Every year people can enter a competition to design the official carnival poster. On the city's official website no less than 13 links can be found to other local carnival websites. (www.aalst.be).

In 2007 the annual congress organised by 'Heemkunde Vlaanderen vzw', an officially recognized cultural heritage organisation for Flanders and Brussels (that also applied for accreditation by the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 convention), was entitled 'De wereld op zijn kop. Van vastenavond tot carnaval'. (The world upside down. From 'vastenavond' to carnival) This congress – which took place in Aalst – was entirely dedicated to carnival.

The 'Documentatiecentrum voor Aalst Karnaval' (a private heritage centre concerning Aalst Carnaval) publishes books and CDs about carnival and through their website (www.dak.be) visitors are informed about carnival.

The publication of dictionaries about the local dialect is also very important in safeguarding Aalst Carnival as the local dialect is an inextricable part of carnival in Aalst.

3.b. Safeguarding measures proposed

For the Representative List, the safeguarding measures are those that may help to solidify the element's current viability and to ensure that its viability is not jeopardized in the future, especially as an unintended result of inscription and the resulting visibility and public attention.

Identify and describe the various safeguarding measures that are elaborated that may, if implemented, protect and promote the element, and provide brief information concerning, for example, their priority, scope, approaches, timetables, responsible persons or bodies, and costs..

- In the short run, the cultural policy document of the city for the period 2008-2013 will be implemented. This ensures continuing care and commitment by local officials for the element. A SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the element whilst preparing the cultural policy document led to the following conclusions and projects

- Due to the transient and fleeting character of Aalst Carnival the city archive of Aalst will step up its efforts to document and archive all aspects of the element. This can be done by making sure carnivalists are made aware of the importance of documents, song lyrics, leaflets and other materials they produce, by asking them to donate them to the city archive.

- The story of Aalst Carnival as a feast and form of intangible cultural heritage will be an integral part of the story told in the city museum't Gasthuys. The existing carnival exposition will be completely remodelled in 2010-'11 with the help of volunteers with a carnival background.

- Humour and satire will be the main thought in special 'Link-expositions' which will be organized. The Dutch photographer Paul van der Stap will exhibit his carnival-photo's in 2010 in the city museum of Aalst.

- Carnivalists must be made aware themselves of the importance of their traditions and of their feast as a form of intangible cultural heritage. They will be invited to participate in heritage programmes and projects and hence form an active and integral part of the city's heritage policies. To achieve this, the city will work closely with 'Heemkunde Vlaanderen vzw', an NGO proposed for accreditation to UNESCO. The programme will include the development of special heritage education toolkits for primary and secondary schools.

In order to monitor the effects of the inscription, Aalst will set up a special safeguarding committee. It will consist of representatives of the different communities, groups and individuals concerned and heritage experts. In the first years, the focus will be on the effects of tourism and outside attention. This workgroup will also collaborate with heritage organisations on the national level to organize reflection moments and set up heritage education projects. An international workshop and a publication focusing on safeguarding carnival will be realized in the course of the next five years by FARO, Flemish interface for cultural heritage, in collaboration with partners both in Aalst and on the national level. The possibility of setting up an exchange platform about carnival on an international scale will be actively pursued.

In order to make qualitative information available, a special brochure about the history and structure of Aalst Carnival will be published in four languages. A new and substantial publication in French or English about the meaning and effects of carnival in the city of Aalst will be published within five years after the inscription. This will include an assessment of the effects of the inscription and of the safeguarding measures.

Furthermore, the city will continue to safeguard carnival by facilitating the preparation, providing security measures for increased influx of participants and making sure the history of carnival is systematically documented.

3.c. Commitment of communities, groups or individuals concerned

The feasibility of safeguarding depends in large part on the aspirations and commitment of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned. This section should provide evidence that the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned have the will and commitment to safeguard the element if conditions are favourable. The best evidence will often be an explanation of their involvement in past and ongoing safeguarding measures and of their participation in the formulation and implementation of future safeguarding measures, rather than simple pledges or affirmations of their support or commitment.

The commitment of the carnival groups, the inhabitants and the city to celebrate Aalst Carnival is clear. Carnival groups, loose groups, individuals and the municipal service invest a lot of time, energy and money in preparing and celebrating carnival. As the cultural policy plan 2008-2013 of the city and the safeguarding measures proposed clearly illustrate, groups and individuals in the community of Aalst are committed to safeguard their carnival.

3.d. Commitment of State(s) Party(ies)

The feasibility of safeguarding also depends on the support and cooperation of the concerned State(s) Party(ies). This section should provide evidence that the State Party concerned has the commitment to support the safeguarding effort by creating favourable conditions for its implementation and should describe how the State Party has previously and will in the future demonstrate such commitment. Declarations or pledges of support are less informative than explanations and demonstrations.

The Government of the Flemish community safeguards intangible cultural heritage according to article 2 of the 2003 convention. Nominations for the inventory of intangible cultural heritage Flanders are evaluated and reviewed yearly by a commission on the basis of the following criteria:

- the current and recent efforts to safeguard the event
- additional safeguarding measures proposed
- the participation of communities, groups and individuals
- the cooperation with a competent organisation active in the field of cultural heritage

The Flemish Arts and Heritage Agency, responsible for the inventory, develops a detailed procedure to combine the yearly update with an active follow-up of the safeguarding criteria.

4. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT IN THE NOMINATION PROCESS (CF. CRITERION R.4)

This section asks the submitting State Party to establish that the nomination satisfies Criterion R.4: 'The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent'.

4.a. Participation of communities, groups and individuals in the nomination process

Describe how and in what ways the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned have participated actively in the nomination process at all stages, as required by Criterion R.4. States Parties are further encouraged to prepare nominations with the participation of a wide variety of other concerned parties, including where appropriate local and regional governments, neighbouring communities, NGOs, research institutes, centres of expertise and other interested parties. The participation of communities in the practice and transmission of the element should be addressed in point 1 above, and their participation in safeguarding should be addressed in point 3; here the submitting State should describe the widest possible participation of communities in the nomination process.

Aalst Carnival has been inscribed as an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of the city of Aalst in the cultural policy document of the city for the period 2008-2013. This document was signed by the city council on the 18th of December 2007. The city council is the highest form of local government and represents the citizens of Aalst. Moreover, before the cultural policy document was accepted by the city council, a draft was made public. This enabled the citizens of Aalst to comment on, contribute to and give advice about the proposed policy document. This was done via several study groups on the 6th of October 2007.

As shown by the letters of endorsement (see 5.b.) inscribing Aalst Carnival on the representative list of intangible cultural heritage is supported by a wide group of concerned communities and individuals. All the major representative organisations of carnivalists have signed a letter of endorsement and therefore fully support this candidacy.

4.b. Free, prior and informed consent to the nomination

The free, prior and informed consent to the nomination of the element from the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned may be demonstrated through written or recorded concurrence, or through other means, according to the legal regimens of the State Party and the infinite variety of communities and groups concerned. The Committee will welcome a broad range of demonstrations or attestations of community consent in preference to standard or uniform declarations..

Please attach supporting evidence demonstrating such consent and indicate below what evidence you are providing and what form it takes.

See enclosed letters of endorsement by :

- Karel Baert, former archivist of the city archive Aalst, member of the commission monuments and landscapes, author of "Aalst Carnaval"
- Denis Bergmans, chief of police of the Local Police Aalst
- Dylan Casaer, alderman of cultural affairs of the city of Aalst
- Karel De Naeyer, president of Prinsencaemere vzw
- Fons Dierickx, president of Heemkunde Vlaanderen vzw
- Bernadette Fortuin, secretary festival committee
- Luc Geeroms, director of the city museum Aalst
- Freddy Herssens, representative of Aalsterse Video Productises vzw
- Michel Igual-Pacheco, archivist of the city archive Aalst
- Paul Kinoo, secretary of carnival group De Popollekes
- Koen Liebaut, tourism official Aalst
- Jan Louies, representative of the loose groups
- Philippe Renders, director of the Public Relations department of the city of Aalst
- Nicole Ringoir, chairwoman of the festival committee
- Kamiel Sergant, honorary Prince Carnival ('Emperor')
- Ilse Uyttersprot, mayor of the city of Aalst
- Antoine Van der Heyden, president of the Documentatiecentrum voor Aalst Karnaval vzw
- Reginald Van Hecke, vice-secretary of the city council of Aalst
- Filip Vijverman, vice-president of Carnavalist tot in de kist vzw

4.c. Respect for customary practices governing access

Access to certain specific aspects of intangible cultural heritage is sometimes restricted by customary practices governing, for example, its transmission or performance or maintaining the secrecy of certain knowledge. Please indicate if such practices exist and, if they do, demonstrate that inscription of the element and implementation of the safeguarding measures would fully respect such customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage (cf. Article 13 of the Convention). Describe any specific measures that might need to be taken to ensure such respect.

Everybody can participate in Aalst Carnival. It is not governed by any practice of access.

An implicit restriction of keeping the themes and subjects of the performances and floats a (public) secret before the parade goes out is usually respected, in particular by the press. In any case, celebrating Carnival is as open as possible.

5. INCLUSION OF THE ELEMENT IN AN INVENTORY (CF. CRITERION R.5)

This section is where the State Party establishes that the nomination satisfies Criterion R.5: “The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies) as defined in Articles 11 and 12”.

Identify the inventory in which the element has been included and the office, agency, organization or body responsible for maintaining that inventory. Demonstrate that the inventory has been drawn up in conformity with Articles 11 and 12, in particular Article 11(b) that stipulates that intangible cultural heritage shall be identified and defined “with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations” and Article 12 requiring that inventories be regularly updated.

The nominated element's inclusion in an inventory should not in any way imply or require that the inventory(ies) should have been completed prior to nomination. Rather, a submitting State Party may be in the process of completing or updating one or more inventories, but has already duly included the nominated element on an inventory-in-progress.

'Aalst Carnival' is duly included since 2008 in the official inventory of intangible cultural heritage of Flanders/Belgium (published on <http://www.kunstenerfgoed.be> > erfgoed > immaterieel cultureel erfgoed > inventaris Vlaanderen > register). The Arts and Heritage agency of the Flemish Ministry for Culture is responsible for maintaining the inventory (Arenbergstraat 9, 1000 Brussels, Belgium). The official inventory is kept by the Arts and Heritage agency and can be consulted at the offices in Brussels.

In conformity with articles 11 and 12 of the Convention, the following procedure has been developed. Communities can submit proposals regarding the item of intangible cultural heritage they want to be included in the inventory. There is an official call via the media and via several websites. These submissions (in Dutch) have to point out the extent of the community and safeguarding actions for which the requesting community has to co-operate with an official heritage institution that is recognised/funded within the scope of Flemish Decree on Cultural Heritage (2008). These submissions are advised by a departmental commission, composed by Flemish and Dutch experts in order to examine the applications and to give advice to the Flemish minister responsible for culture. After the ministerial decision the (new) items that are included on the inventory are communicated by official press communication and by means of websites.

The communities that submitted the elements that are included in the inventory are to report on a yearly basis on the safeguarding activities that have been undertaken. These reports are examined by the aforementioned departmental commission.

Hence the nomination satisfies criterion R.5.

DOCUMENTATION
a. Required and supplementary documentation
Required documentation provided.
b. Cession of rights including registry of items
Required cession of rights provided.
c. List of additional resources
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CONTACT INFORMATION
A. Contact person for correspondence
<p>Flemish Government, Department of Culture, Division Art and Heritage. Att: Mrs. Marina Laureys, Head of Division Address: Kunsten en Erfgoed - Afdeling Erfgoed Arenbergstraat 9 1000 Brussel</p> <p>Telephone number: 00 32 2 553 68 68 Fax number: 00 32 2 553 69 69 e-mail: marina.laureys@cjsm.vlaanderen.be website: http://www.kunstenenerfgoed.be</p>
B. Competent body involved
<p>City Museum Aalst 't Gasthuys - Stedelijk Museum Aalst, Oude Vismarkt 13 B-9300 AALST – BELGIUM contact luc.geeroms@aalst.be, +32 53 732347</p>
C. Concerned community organization(s) or representative(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the festival committee, contact Bernadette Fortuin (Grote Markt 3, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 22 30, bernadette.fortuin@aalst.be) - the city archive, contact Michel Igual-Pacheco (Oude Vismarkt 1, 9300 Aalst, 00 32 53 73 23 11, michel.igual@aalst.be) - FARO. Vlaams Steunpunt voor Cultureel Erfgoed, contact Marc Jacobs, director (Priemstrat 51, B-1000 Brussel, 00 32 2 213 10 60, marc.jacobs@faronet.be)

SIGNATURE ON BEHALF OF THE STATE PARTY

Name: Marina Laureys

Title: Head of the agency Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media, Arts and Heritage

Date: 25 August 2009

Signature: <signed>