

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

Our Ref. GB/AS/EG/1658/IR

Charenton-le-Pont, 20 December 2021

His Excellency Mr Indulis Abelis
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of the Republic of
Latvia to UNESCO and OECD
6, Villa Said
75116 PARIS

World Heritage List 2022

Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland (Latvia) – Interim report and additional information request

Dear Ambassador,

As prescribed by the revised *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* and its Annex 6, the Advisory Bodies have been requested to submit a short interim report for each nomination by 31 January 2022. We are therefore pleased to provide you with the relevant information outlining issues related to the evaluation process.

The ICOMOS technical evaluation mission to “Kuldīga / Goldingen in Courland” was carried out by Ms. Kirsti Kovanen (Finland) from 18 to 22 August 2021. The mission expert highly appreciated the availabilities and support provided by the experts in your country for the organization and implementation of the mission.

On 24 September 2021, a letter was sent by ICOMOS to request further information regarding the criteria, history and development of the nominated property, and comparative analysis. Please convey our thanks to all the officials and experts for the additional information you provided on 29 October 2021 and for their continued cooperation in this process.

At the end of November 2021, the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel evaluated the cultural and mixed properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List in 2022. The additional information provided by the State Party, together with mission and desk review reports were carefully examined by the Panel members. This process will conclude in March 2022.

We thank you for the availability of your Delegation to the meeting held on 26 November 2021 with some representatives of the ICOMOS Panel. The exchanges during this meeting were of great help for the third part of the ICOMOS Panel meeting. During the last part of the meeting, the Panel has identified areas where it considers that further information is needed.

Therefore, we would be pleased if the State Party could consider the following points:

Justification for inscription

While recognizing the potential of the nominated property, the ICOMOS Panel debated extensively on the way in which the proposed justification for inscription has been framed and the ICOMOS Panel's reflection on the proposed formulation is still ongoing.

The ICOMOS Panel appreciated the additional information sent on 29 October 2021 and the clarifications provided on the development of "a new architectural language in the town" were well noted. However, ICOMOS would appreciate a more detailed description about the overall built fabric of Kuldīga and its development over time. In addition, the ICOMOS Panel found that it would be very helpful to understand in an easier way, preferably via a series of maps, how the urban structure (and in particular the plot layout) of the nominated property evolved, from the settlement in the 13th century to the present day. The ICOMOS Panel acknowledged that a series of maps related to this question were included in the nomination dossier but it felt that it would be really helpful if the State Party could expand that information to include the development after the end of the 18th century, presented in an easy to read manner.

In addition, ICOMOS would also appreciate if the State Party could submit maps identifying the historic wooden buildings located within the nominated property.

Comparative analysis

The ICOMOS Panel would like to convey its appreciation for the expanded comparative analysis provided by the State Party on 29 October 2021, and notes the limitations expressed by the State Party to respond to ICOMOS' request because of the current sanitary conditions and the short period of time to do so. Therefore, ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could undertake further research to complement the information already provided, in order to reinforce the expanded comparative analysis.

Boundaries of the nominated property

Based on the information received from the technical evaluation mission, the ICOMOS Panel noted that the ruins of the ducal castle/residence area are partly within the boundary of the nominated property and partly in the buffer zone. ICOMOS would be pleased if the State Party could give consideration to revise the boundary of the nominated property in order to include all the archaeological remains of the ducal residence.

In addition, the ICOMOS Panel noted that the boundary related to the area of the river valley landscape could also be expanded to include a larger part of the scenery of the river and would be pleased if the State Party could consider this revision as well.

It was also noted that the boundaries of the nominated property and the buffer zone do not exactly match those of the national designation of urban construction monument and its individual protection zone. Information included in the nomination dossier stated that "[d]uring the course of preparing the nomination file a draft amendment to the individual protection zone has been prepared, in order to align it with the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone" (page 227).

ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could consider the revision of the boundaries of the urban construction monument and its individual protection zone so that they coincide with the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone to facilitate their management; and to address the concerns expressed above by ICOMOS, regarding the ducal residence area and the river valley landscape.

Therefore, ICOMOS would appreciate it if the State Party could initiate the necessary process to take measures to address its concerns regarding the delimitation of the nominated property and the buffer zone and would appreciate receiving information on the progress made in this regard and timetable for its full implementation.

Management plan

It is noted that the management plan included in the nomination dossier is still a draft. ICOMOS would appreciate an update regarding the current status of this plan and would be grateful if its final version could be included as part of the response to this interim report. In addition, ICOMOS would also like to know how the management plan will be integrated or will relate to the local plan for the old town of Kuldīga in Venta Valley, that is also being developed. ICOMOS would likewise appreciate receiving information about this local plan.

Risk management

The nomination dossier includes several references to multiple fires throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, which destroyed significant numbers of the town's wooden buildings. A number of references to past floods are also included in the dossier. ICOMOS notes that fires and floods continue to be among the main factors affecting the nominated property today; therefore, it considers that further consideration on how to integrate risk management within the overall management system is needed. ICOMOS would welcome detailed information on the measures being taken in this regard, and would like to know, in particular, if such measures take climate change into consideration.

Visitor management

The ICOMOS Panel noted that visitor numbers have grown considerably over the years and that accommodations available on site include mainly apartments and holiday homes. If the nominated property was to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, it could potentially lead to an increase in the number of visitors and result in more residential buildings used as touristic accommodations. The ICOMOS Panel considered that this is a matter of concern, since the nomination dossier mentions statistics that indicate a gradual decrease in the number of inhabitants in Kuldīga. (page 215). Therefore, ICOMOS would appreciate if the State Party could provide information on measures undertaken to respond to these issues and on visitor management in general.

Watch tower

The ICOMOS Panel discussed the possible construction of the new watch tower, and if it could have potential visual impacts on the townscape of Kuldīga. Therefore, ICOMOS would like to know if a Heritage Impact Assessment was undertaken or is planned to be.

We look forward to your responses to these points, which will be of great help in our evaluation process.

We would be grateful if you could provide **ICOMOS** and the **World Heritage Centre** with the above information **by 28 February 2022 at the latest**, the deadline set out in paragraph 148 of the *Operational Guidelines* for supplementary information on nominations to be received. Please note that any information submitted after this date will not be considered by ICOMOS in its evaluation for the World Heritage Committee. It should be noted, however, that while ICOMOS will carefully consider any supplementary information submitted, it cannot properly evaluate a completely revised nomination or large amounts of new information submitted at the last minute. So we would be grateful if the State Party could keep its response concise and respond only to the above requests.

We thank you for your support of the World Heritage Convention and the evaluation process.

Yours faithfully,



Gwenaëlle Bourdin
Director
ICOMOS Evaluation Unit

Copy to National Heritage Board of Latvia
 Kuldīga Municipality
 UNESCO World Heritage Centre