

Report

on the development of the Jewish Exhibition Hall in Balassagyarmat in 2021

On behalf of Kertész István Foundation – which has been cultivating the long-standing Jewish heritage of Balassagyarmat in a nationally and even internationally recognized way since 1922 – we disclose the following information:

In 2021, our non-profit, non-governmental organization managed to develop the Exhibition Hall at Hunyadi Street 24, both infrastructurally and from a professional museological point of view. The implementation was facilitated by a tender of the European Union, the Hungarian Government and the Municipality of the town Balassagyarmat.

Among other things, we managed to create a new, proper entrance for handicapped visitors at the back of the building, as well as a restroom that can be used specifically by handicapped individuals. The exhibition (open since 2000) in the former prayer hall of the former house of prayer has been expanded with new pieces. The new visual elements and contents related to the holocaust, in particular, recall the actual reality of that inhuman, horrible world even more strongly. Of course, the visuals are completed with professional texts in Hungarian and English, and, if required, a personal guided tour accompanied by a historian, after the end of the pandemic. Thanks to the investments, we have managed to introduce heating to some of the rooms in the building complex. As a result, these rooms can be utilized in winter and in summer alike, allowing for the organization of cultural events, culture-historical lectures, interactive pedagogical and andragogical tutoring on the history of religions, providing touristic information, and even serving as a venue for specific religious occasions.

We consider it a particularly important improvement that it has become possible for local and regional primary and secondary school students to participate in irregular history lessons during wintertime, within the confines of a project planned together with educational institutions. We have been practicing this activity continuously since 2000. We believe it is also important that young people who know less and less about the era in question acquire real knowledge and even feelings about this period. In order to achieve this, we have also implemented educational infrastructural development, through which we can enrich our interactive pedagogical and andragogical work with documentary projections. The LED monitor is mounted on a wall close to the Torah-holder cabinet of the prayer room, on a large, stylish, custom-made wooden stand that symbolizes a large menorah.

We would very much like to be able to place large photos (burned onto metal plates) in a part of the outer courtyard outside the building, which could capture the effects of the holocaust on people, and convey the feeling of liberation from “hell on earth”. This way, the impact on the leaving visitors could be further increased.

Attached I am sending some photos demonstrating our exhibition’s development to date, as well as some additional photos we are planning to display on the way out from the exhibition, as a sort of “send-off” message for the leaving visitors.

We hereby ask all those who have the means to support our non-profit heritage protection work.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

The board of trustees of Kertész István Foundation