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Exploring our cultural heritage

Hungary

House of Jewish Excellence

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Co-funded by the
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This guide has been developed within the framework of the project "REBELAH - Religion, beliefs, and laicity in cultural heritage to foster social inclusion in adult trainings" (Project n° 2020-1-ES01-KA204-082412). This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. This publication is licensed Creative Commons.

DESCRIPTION

Based in the town of Balatonfüred, the House of Jewish Excellence tells the story of more than a hundred Jewish scientists, doctors and mathematicians. It also functions as a cultural centre, hosting concerts and workshops.

The former Saint Margaret Church was erected in 1247 and served different sacral functions (chapel, church and vicarage) in the next centuries. In 1855 it was sold by the Calvinistic congregation (who outgrew the building) to the Jewish community and it was repurposed as a synagogue which functioned till 1944. Only 15 people survived the Holocaust out of the 156 participants of the Jewish community, and only 3 people returned to Balatonfüred. Later the building also served as a bus garage, a shipyard warehouse, and even as a medieval-themed restaurant over the last few years. It was turned into a cultural center in 2018.



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The House of Jewish Excellence houses the interactive exhibition titled “From Einstein to the Present Day – Jews in the Forefront of Technology”. Visitors get acquainted with the life and work of the selected scientists - there are 132 Jewish scientist in the exhibition to choose from - with the help of digital interactive panels.

The original building is the refurbished church area, which provides a space for various events from concerts to markets showcasing local producers.



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Martinkó József on the reconstruction of a synagogue and new cultural center in Balatonfüreden

“Museums, monuments and memorials resemble the tragedy of the Holocaust all over the world. Besides there are significantly less creation and projects that - instead of the destruction and trauma - focuses on the cultural and scientific heritage, art and music of the Jewish people. So the European and Hungarian Jews are not depicted as death or persecuted but existing in the past and present.”

“The former synagogue and garden grandiose calmness and the freshness of the new building part result in an exciting duality”.

Source: <https://www.octogon.hu/files/12/143-lapszam-octogon.pdf>

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Bán Dávid in Boldness and tradition

“This new cultural center is suppletory in a way, since this region used to lack an appropriate space to organise cultural events, and enable locals to get together in the colder months”

Source: <http://epiteszforum.hu/mereszseg-es-hagyomany>

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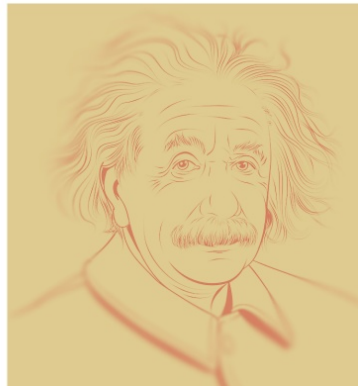
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PERSONAL COMMENTS ON THE EXHIBITION

"I was very amazed, that the inventor of Waze – that we use all the time – is also part of this exhibition"



"It is a lot of fun using these big interactive screens and learning about these geniuses through games as well (quiz and puzzles)"

AND ON THE BUILDING:

"It does not look like a synagogue, it looks very modest"

"The new grey building added looks a bit dark and sad"

"You cannot tell from the outside what is inside the building"

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Abandoned synagogues?

In the countryside of Hungary, the majority of the synagogues remained without a community after the Second World War, so these buildings were either repurposed or demolished. Many of them became concert halls due to their great acoustics (e.g. in Eger), or were transformed to libraries (in Szigetvár) or other cultural spaces (e.g. the House of Technology in Kecskemét).

For professional protection and innovative rehabilitation, the building gained the ICOMOS Award in 2019. ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is a global non-governmental organization associated with UNESCO. Its mission is to promote the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of monuments, building complexes and sites.



Wanna know more about the
Jewish House of Excellence?
Visit the website, also in
English:

[https://
www.zsidokivalosagok.hu/
en/fooldal-en/](https://www.zsidokivalosagok.hu/en/fooldal-en/)

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