



STAR FORTRESS IN KOMÁROM

Keywords: culture, tourism, history, town development

The aim of the project: comprehensive reconstruction and expansion of the formerly neglected Star Fortress and its surrounding in Komárom

Partners:

- Investor: Városliget Zrt.
- Effector consortium: Épkar Zrt., Fertődi Építő Zrt., West Hungária Bau Kft.

Project implementation time: 2016-2021

Budget: 6,5 billion HUF (out of 250 billion HUF expenditure of the whole Liget Budapest Project)

Granted by: Hungary (financed solely from Hungarian national budget)

Priority line/Specific objective: reconstruction of the Star Fortress was carried out in frame of the Liget Budapest Project, Europe's largest cultural development project.

Context: Star Fortress, as element of the Komárom fortress system, was built with defensive purpose in the second half of the 19th century (1850-1871). Because of rapid advancements in the military technology, Star Fortress became obsolete soon and have never been used in its original military function. Instead of defensive purposes, it was used as barrack, ammunition storehouse, emergency housing and vegetable storehouse; as a consequence, its condition worsened very quickly. On the other hand, the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest had a plaster cast collection of 1200 pieces, which was pitched about in different repositories (e.g. in the Roman Hall of the Museum of Fine Art Budapest). In the 18th-19th centuries, plaster casts were unexceptionable art objects of museums around the world, but they lost their importance at the end of the 1920s, as museums started to collect original art works. From the 1970s, it has been started to attach touristic value to plaster casts again, but by that time, plenty pieces of the collection bruised or passed into nothingness; only 600 out of 1200 plaster casts of the Museum of Fine Art Budapest overlived the 20th century, i.e. half of the original collection perished. Between 2016-2019 Star Fortress have been totally renovated and extended, furthermore, it has also gained a brand new function as exhibition place: 300 pieces out of the more than 100 years old plaster cast collection of the Museum of Fine Arts were reconstructed from the same project and found their final home in the Star Fortress, where also a brand new hall was built in order to accommodate large sculptures. Star Fortress with the permanent plaster cast exhibition has been waiting for its visitors since October 2021 in Komárom.

Description: Komárom fortress system was the largest military complex of Central Europe at the end of the 19th century. Star Fortress, as an element of this fortress system forms an essential part of Komárom's historical and cultural heritage, therefore, its saving, reconstruction and adequate usage is of vital importance for the town. With the reconstruction of the Star Fortress, Komárom has acquired a brand new touristic attraction by keeping its historical and cultural heritage, and by using it in an outstanding way. Furthermore, the Roman Hall of the Museum of Fine Art Budapest disengaged in the way that the plaster cast collection has been exhibited in a worthy place. The good practice lies in the win-win situation for all actors, including tourists and Hungarians, who are supposed to travel about 40 thousand km in order to see the original pieces of all art works displayed currently in Star Fortress Komárom. In this way, culture can reach more people including children and adults, who are not all be able to travel to see the original art works. Furthermore, the townscape of Komárom improved with the reconstruction of Star Fortress and its surrounding as well.

Results: The whole historical building of Star Fortress and its surrounding was comprehensively reconstructed and completed with a brand new multifunctional cultural center and modern exhibition space. The restoration happened according to the original state of the fortress, thanks to the blueprints of the building found in the military archives of Vienna. During the reconstruction, 32,000 m³ earth were moved, 1,200 square metres of stone surface were restored, and a total of 115,000 bricks were laid. The result is a „modern fortress”, i.e. a beautifully renovated and enlarged historical building that became the final home of a permanent exhibition of 300 reconstructed plaster casts of the Museum of Fine Art Budapest. Furthermore, the „modern fortress” also meets the requirements of the 21st century with its screening room (auditorium), museum shop and café. The building is eligible for museum pedagogical activities and the courtyard can be used as an open-air theatre as well. Star Fortress became the largest (touristic) attraction of the town Komárom.

Success factors: The reconstruction of Star Fortress after more decades of vicissitudes, as well as its new function is a success story from more aspects. The first success factor was the *idea*, which created a win-win situation; reconstruction of the historical building and worthy placement of the plaster casts including large sculptures, has been solved at the same time. *Partnership and cooperation* can be identified as the second success factor. The renovation of the building was incorporated into the frame of a larger project (Liget Budapest) because of the high level of reconstruction costs, and this required partnership and cooperation of the cities Budapest and Komárom. Restoring and worthy placement of plaster casts, including large sculptures has been realized in partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts. Star Fortress has a good partnership with the town (self government) of Komárom, as well as with the local Tourinform office, as the latter organisation makes an offer of the Star Fortress’ permanent programs for tourists. Star Fortress with its monumental building provides an exclusive place of practice for trainees of the Krúdy Gyula Secondary School Győr, in the fields of graphic artists, guide, receptionist, waiter/waitress, cook professional education. Further possibilities can reside in the following sources, therefore, they can be considered as *potential success factors*:

- there is enough space, the fortress is not crowded
- skilled exhibition guides are employed
- catering can be solved on the spot (taking external entrepreneurs)
- train ticket is free for the visitors of the Komárom Fortresses (including Star Fortress)
- intention of launching new services for both school childrens and adults, e.g. museum pedagogical activities, sculpture drawing, pottery; the renowned architect of the new building (István Mányi) is intended to be involved as a leader of some activities
- visitor segmentation (addressing older age groups and handicapped people as well)

Limiting factors: As Star Fortress lies at the bank of the Danube river, the high level of groundwater embarrassed the reconstruction of the building. Actual problems are related to awareness and accessibility. On the one hand, Komárom, located 100 km from Budapest, became a forgotten town during the socialist area. Neither the town nor the Star Fortress has still not been in the public awareness of people enough, even in Hungary. Furthermore, people do not understand what is „a modern fortress” and also events are still in its infancy. At the international level, the four fortresses together (located near Komárom and Komárno), could be a notable tourist attraction, but two of them are not reconstructed and are not opened for the public at the moment. In case of Star Fortress, the missing English language website encumbers and limits the attraction of foreign tourists. Marketing of the town as well as those of the Star Fortress is suggested to improve. On the other hand, accessibility of Star Fortress in sense of transportation is problematic as well. However, there are free train tickets available for tourists who wants to visit Star Fortress, public transport connection between the train station and the Star Fortress is missing, even the Dotto road train does not stop at Star Fortress. There are no taxis in Komárom, and taxis coming from Revkomárom are not allowed to carry out trips with starting and ending point at the Hungarian side. For tourists arriving by car, road signs referring to the tourist attraction Star Fortress are still imperfect both inside and outside of the town. It is suggested to put more road signs both inside the town and next to the M1 motorway.



Applicability and upscaling: the idea (reconstruction of a historical building, preserving its historical value and its usage for tourism purposes) can be implemented in other areas as well. Grandiosity of the analysed project lies in the created win-win situation (two problems were solved at once), in the established partnership(s) and cooperation(s), as well as in different (rather complementary than competing) profile (usage) of Star Fortress compared to the Monostori Fortress located also in Komárom.

Other Resources

Star Fortress before reconstruction



Source of the photos: <https://ligetbudapest.hu/en/renewed-varosliget/star-fortress-in-komarom>



Horizon 2020

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www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu

Star Fortress after reconstruction



Source of the photos: <https://ligetbudapest.hu/en/renewed-varosliget/star-fortress-in-komarov>



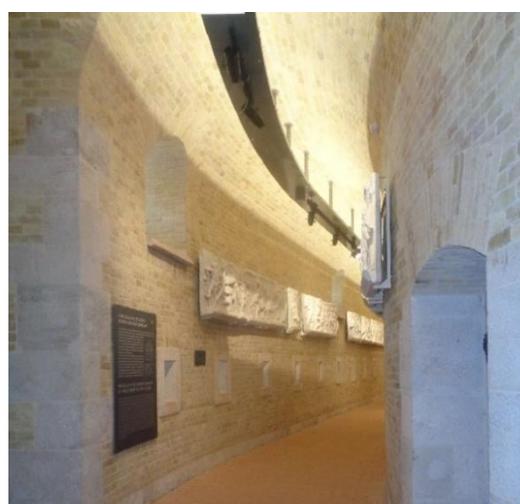
Source: own photo



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The reconstructed Star Fortress as venue of plaster cast exhibition



Source: own photos.

Websites (further information):

<https://ligetbudapest.hu/en/renewed-varosliget/star-fortress-in-komarom>

<http://hyperion.szepmuveszeti.hu/en/komarom/tour/9558>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0xPCAO1aMo>

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