

International Highlights on Kaunas Fortress

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Baltic Fortress Route will be developed

For the first time the participants of the international project "Culture and Tourism Routes of Baltic Fortresses" will get together in Kaunas.

The conference "Baltic Fortress Route" that will take place on November 28-30, will focus on the discussion of the sight seeing, cultural and tourist route linking the German, Polish and Lithuanian fortresses. Kaunas opted for the participation in the project of the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B "Baltic Culture and Tourism-Route Fortresses". The project aims to regenerate the fortresses from the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries, and adapt them to cultural needs.

"During the first stage we have to carry out the fort stocktaking and look around to our possessions. This must be done by all the project parties. There are now twenty five of them, but we are open to new ones as well.

Kaunas alone cannot achieve anything, - it is a joint team efforts by all the project partners", - said Rimvydas Strazdas, the chief specialist from the Division of Development Programme Management of the Municipality.

Possible future partners from Liepāja, Daugavpils, Klaipēda, Kiev, Saint Petersburg, Helsinki were invited to the conference.

The mobile exhibition on fortresses and their history was considered and expected to visit Kaunas, as well.

Allocated funding for the project

The current project, for which over 2,4 million euros were allocated, will be implemented until the year 2006. Kaunas' share of this project is financed by 150 thousand euros.

"This received funding is rather symbolical. Assets will be used for implementation of the test project in one of the forts.

Currently, the paint-ball club "Legion" is functioning there. We expect it to contribute to the Fort development", - said R.Strazdas.

After the successful implementation of the INTERREG project, it will be easier to seek for the direct financing from the EU Structural Funds.

So far the EU Structural Funds did not finance the regeneration and renovation of fortresses. But, as R.Strazdas told, from 2007 the budget item for military conversion, i.e. adaptation of military objects for civil needs, should be introduced.

Suitable for cultural needs

Following the edict of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Kaunas was converted into the first class military fortress. City was encircled with the central, star-like positioned ring of defence fortifications, forts and batteries.

At the moment the Forts 1, 2 and 4 are empty; the Fort 3 is rented to the automobilists.

Lithuanian Army has plans to open the museum of martial technique in the Fort 6, and the Fort 7 hosts warehouses of the National Defence Voluntary Service.

Fort eight is underground thus not legally registered as a construction. Fort nine hosts the museum.

Several years ago, the Action-Occupation "Pulse in Fort" was encouraged by the architect Audrys Karalius at the Fort 1. It aimed on focusing the attention of public and authorities to the unique fort system of Kaunas fortress, its current condition, and to inducing the artists, businessmen and other people to break new grounds of opportunities offered by forts.

The first and fourth Forts suit best for the cultural and artistic needs.