

In 1620, Gabriel Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania, was proclaimed King of Hungary at the Diet of Confederates in Banská Bystrica (in the Bethlen's house in Dolná Street). In 1648, Jesuits came to the town and in the period 1695–1715 they built St Francis Xavier's Church which was a copy of the Church of the Gesu in Rome. After the great fire of 1761, the town acquired a Baroque look through extensive reconstruction work. In 1776 the town became the seat of a bishop and at the end of the 18th century also the seat of the Zvolen County.

With gradual mine depletion and growing competition on global markets, mining declined over time and craft industries became increasingly important. The last mines were closed in 1878 and only a copper works survived longer.

The town expanded outwards in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, first with art nouveau architecture to the east of the centre and later with art deco architecture to its south. These two areas serve as a valuable frame for the town's medieval core.

During the Slovak National Uprising (1944), Banská Bystrica became the political, military and administrative centre for the anti-fascist resistance in Slovakia. On a site close to the town fortifications, a Memorial of the Slovak National Uprising was opened in 1969, and still stands as one of the finest examples of 1960s architecture. Today, the town is an important cultural and administrative centre.

St Francis Xavier's Church



## Coin details

<i>Denomination:</i> 20 euro
<i>Material:</i> Ag 925/1000, Cu 75/1000
<i>Weight:</i> 33,63 g
<i>Diameter:</i> 40 mm
<i>Edge: relief inscription:</i> "NAJKRAJŠIE HISTORICKÉ MESTÁ" ("Most beautiful historic towns")
<i>Issuing volume:</i> up to a maximum of 11,000 coins (comprising brilliant uncirculated quality and proof coins)
<i>Designer:</i> Michal Gavula
<i>Engraver:</i> Dalibor Schmidt
<i>Producer:</i> Kremnica Mint

The obverse side of the coin shows the Renaissance front façade of Benický's House in the background with the Holy Cross Church built out of the Scribes' Bastion which is part of the defensive system of the Banská Bystrica town castle. In the lower part of the coin, completing the composition is an ornamental element. The national coat of arms of the Slovak Republic is positioned on the left side of the coin. Along its lower edge is a circular inscription of the country designation "SLOVENSKO" and the year 2016. In the upper-right part of the coin there is the denomination "20 EURO" and in the lower-right part is the mintmark of the Kremnica Mint.

The reverse side of the coin depicts the most outstanding architectural monuments of Banská Bystrica – the Parish Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary, the Clock Tower, the tower of the barbican, and St Francis Xavier's Church, with the Baroque Marian column in the foreground. The composition is completed by the oldest known seal of Banská Bystrica, which represents the mining tradition of the town, and by an ornamental element along the edge. Also along the edge are the words "PAMIATKOVÁ REZERVÁCIA BANSKÁ BYSTRICA" ("Historical Preservation Area of Banská Bystrica"). In the lower-right part are the stylised letters "MG", the initials of the coin's designer Michal Gavula.

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Photo: the town of Banská Bystrica, Miroslav Zlevský, Marek Novotnak, Progress Promotion, Wikimedia Commos

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# Historical Preservation Area of Banská Bystrica

Silver Collector Coin





**The Historical Preservation Area in Banská Bystrica, a town with a famous mining history, was established in 1955 as one of the first in Slovakia due to the town's exceptional historical qualities. The town centre has a number of unique monuments reflecting the riches of its history, which is closely associated with the mining, copper extraction and manufacturing industries for which the town became known around the world.**

Banská Bystrica, at present the principal town of central Slovakia, lies in the Zvolen basin under the Urpín Hill in the valley of the River Hron. The original Slavic settlement, destroyed during the Tartar invasions, was resettled in the 13th century by several families from Saxony who established the economic, administrative and craft basis for the mining industry. In 1255 King Béla IV recognised the town's growing importance by granting it a charter as a 'royal free town' with many privileges. Banská Bystrica thus became one of the leading mining towns in Slovakia.

In 1380 the town joined the Union of mining towns of central Slovakia and silver and copper mining remained the main source of the town's wealth until the mid-16th century. Mining was operated by the citizens



*The original charter of the town of Banská Bystrica issued by its founder, Béla IV*

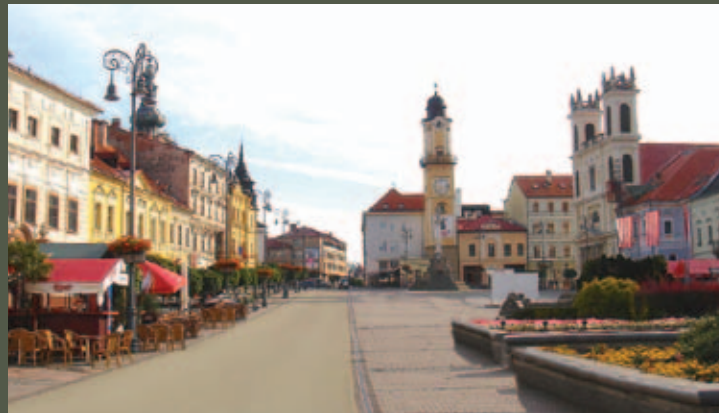
of the town, who gradually united into mining companies. To provide for the heavy capital demands of deeper mining, mine drainage and separating silver from copper, the Thurzo-Fugger company was established in 1495 as a joint venture of the banking and merchant family of Fugger of Augsburg and the Thurzo family of Levoča and Cracow. The result was that the mining and processing of Banská Bystrica's copper was concentrated in a world-renowned copper-processing company which was amongst the largest and most modern of its day. It employed over a thousand workers and the company had its seat in the house of its co-owner Ján Thurzo, which is still known as Thurzo's House.

Much of the wealth generated by the mines in the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries was invested in a construction boom in the town. The most significant works of this period include the complete renovation of the Parish Church of the Assumption of Virgin Mary, the construction of the King Matthias' house (today known as Matthias' House), and the joining together of municipal and ecclesiastical buildings on the hilltop to form the fortified complex of the Town Castle (the Holy Cross Church, the Town Hall, walls, the gated entrance barbican and the town garrison building). A number of other public buildings for town administration and commerce date from the same period, for example the new Town Hall, the clock tower (often called the leaning tower due to its current deviation of 68 cm), the weights office and the rich municipal masonry houses which were built especially after the great fire of 1500. In the 16th century, the town's fortifications had to be strengthened to defend against raids by the Ottomans, though it took until the early 17th century to complete the defensive system. The mining industry continued to thrive in the 17th century as is evident from the Renaissance-style alterations made to houses on the main square, such as Benický's House by an Italian master-builder, Jakub di Pauli.

*Thurzo's House*



*Historic town square*



*Benický's House*



*Miners and their coat of arms above the doorway of Benický's House*

