

## OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE IN GYPSIES

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**Abstract:** The Gypsy population in Dâmbovița county are craftsmen of tradition and deals with the manufacture of bricks, troughs, wooden spoons, baskets intertwined twigs and besoms and they are also casters of brandy boilers and pipes of iron. The number of these traditional crafts of the Gypsy people has reduced, appearing in the last 10-15 years sanitation workers and metallurgists, registering work-related diseases.

**Cuvinte cheie:** meserii tradiționale, boli profesionale, managementul fenomenului ocupațional

**Rezumat:** Rromii din județul Dâmbovița sunt meseriași de tradiție și se ocupă cu fabricarea cărămizilor, a copărilor, lingurilor din lemn, împletesc coșuri din nuiele, târne și mături, toarnă cazane de țuică și burlane de tablă. Numărul acestor rromi cu meserii tradiționale s-a redus, apărând în ultimii 10-15 ani lucrătorii în salubritate și metalurgiștii care prelucrează metale, muncitori cu bolile profesionale aferente meseriilor.

Occupation is a useful activity, which brings financial benefits in cash and nature, conducted by a person, normally in a social and economic unit, which represents for that person a source of existence. Occupation is specific to active people practicing an activity recognized by the society as useful for himself and his peers. In this sense, the occupation of a person can be represented by the job function exercised by him/her through processing work items or services.

### *Brief History*

Gypsies are mentioned ever since 224 A.D. by the secretaries of the Shah of Persia. They migrate up through Persia in 642 A. D., where, by blending with the local population and through marriages, form the ROM or DOM people. Gypsies are an Indo-European people of Indian origin. Their language is old and very close to Sanskrit.

Since they have not got their own state, they are scattered in both Europe and North and South America, in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Canada, the USA.

Generally, Gypsies are nomads, situation which has created difficulties in their social integration, being pressured by the majority population, regardless of the country of adoption. Because of their way of living in caravans, Gypsies were excluded from benefits and social security and were disadvantaged in education, employment opportunities, health, housing tenure and not finally, from the participation in public life.

Gypsies are a nomadic people without a territory to dream at, without a territory that they could claim, and what makes them so special, is that they get along pretty well with this idea.

Their customs, traditions and their activities draw their origins from family life. Because they have never had a country or a government to establish laws, the core consists of family and descendants. Their traditions are manifested in family

relations, religion, faith, rituals and the administration of justice is through the traditional court called "STABOR".

Their professional level is very low, overall. Modern professions that lead to type wage occupations have declined dramatically over the past 20 years.

Traditional trades such as;

- casters of brandy boilers, kettle;
- sheet metal pipes, sheets;
- weaving baskets and "tarne" (larger baskets);
- besom making, manual production of clay bricks;
- troughs making, wooden spoons and other objects used in the kitchen remained at a low level. New capabilities were formed, few feeble own business, shops selling food which resist only for 2-3 years.

Although half of the Gypsies live in rural areas, they have very little land both for home-grown and garden

The group of Gypsy population under study consists of active population aged 19-65 years old in proportion of 47.99 and inactive population aged 0-19 and over 65 years old, in proportion of 52.01%

Out of the sample of the working population, only 10% have a stable occupation, being employed as sanitation scavengers in Bucharest and Pitești and casters into the mini-foundries.

The rest of the working population in percentage of 37.99 is represented by: health pension pensioners, unemployed, authorized individuals (own company), seasonal workers, people operating without employment records "Moonlighting"), members covered by Law 416 (social welfare).

As regards wealth, this population is above the average regarding the Romanian community of farmers who are in a nearby village of the same town or village. This is due to some unorthodox practices such as begging, usury, stealing cattle or agricultural products. We, therefore, have witnessed for

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decades the institutionalization of a world without laws in a world with laws.

In the sample of the active population of 10%, we have identified two predominant occupations: scavengers/sweepers and casters.

In regard to the first occupations, people working in urban sanitation deals with sweeping streets, sidewalks, parks and other facilities, as well as cleaning and trimming trees

Those who carry out these activities in urban sanitation overburden their osteo-articular and muscular systems.

These workers are liable to many occupational diseases:

- neuropathies of the upper limbs;
- sciatic nerve compression syndrome caused by vicious positions;
- varicose veins or thrombophlebitis of the lower limbs due to prolonged standing;
- bursitis caused by manipulation of gravity;
- epicondylitis due to repetitive movements;
- synovitis caused by micro traumatism;
- tendinitis caused by abuse or trauma to the joints;
- back pain;
- digestive disorders due to shift work;
- neuropsychiatric disorders: irritability, dizziness, headache, depression, decreased attention;
- sleep disorders;

Here, we mention some possible accidents:

- falls from heights;
- bruises, wounds, bites, cuts, bruises, amputations of fingers, multiple injuries.

The work of a caster is to process metals such as aluminum and copper, that is, to manufacture the parts in various moulding processes.

These workers are exposed to chemicals, such as:

- Carbon monoxide;
- Formaldehyde;
- Resin.

And these workers, due to intense physical effort and the work carried out in conditions of prolonged standing, show diseases of the osteoarticular system or muscular system. They also may present a series of pathologies as a result of different exposures and risk factors:

- Silicosis;
- Carbon-monoxide poisoning;
- Raynaud syndrome;
- Contact dermatitis;
- Varicose veins, thrombophlebitis;
- Bursitis, synovitis, tendonitis;
- Arthrosis, peri-arthritis, discopathies, herniated disc, bone fractures;
- HTA;
- Chronic respiratory diseases due to exposure to dust and irritating gases;
- Digestive diseases, exposure to high temperatures, noise, chemical pollutants;
- Back pain;
- Neuropsychiatric disorders, headache, dizziness, irritability, decreased attention, depression, sleep disorders.

*Proposals for the management of the occupational phenomenon for the Gypsy population*

The stimulation of the traditional craftsmanship and the practical application of the product of such an activity in an organized form through contracts with the local city hall which

should have the aim to obtain contracts with various third parties in order to launch the marketing of these products.

Thus, it is also possible to create jobs for the Gypsy population and to acquire benefits in favour of municipalities:

- § Creating projects for the Gypsy communities and European fundraising entering sewer and natural gas;
- § Employing the Gypsies as a priority, as unskilled labour or skilled in professional training at the level of the town or village;
- § Involving Gypsy population priority at CEA in training and retraining courses;
- § Making the discrimination in recruitment and employment of the Gypsy population disappear and promptly notifying of all cases of discrimination bodies responsible;
- § Attracting investors in the Gypsy community through the valorisation of local resources: plants, flowers of local flora, snails, berries, mace, mushrooms, canes, mistletoe or soft wood;
- § Extending the status for disadvantaged unemployed Gypsies, where there are no offers on the labour market;
- § Stimulating the small producers, SMEs, SOEs when framing the Gypsy population by providing concessional loans or incentives to pay taxes or duties related to salaries.

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