



## Professions

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Characteristic features of traditional Roma professions are high proportions of flexibility and independence. In contrast to dependent wage workers they sell services and trade to the majority population. Contact with the *Gadže* is limited to purely economic interest. This independence is guaranteed by carrying out the professions together in economic communities .

Irrespective of whether the group leads a settled or nomadic life, in a traditional Roma community all members have the same occupation – provided that the conditions allow it. Comparable with the Indian caste society there is a relation between the group and the profession. Also those groups who have been forced to assimilate try to maintain these structures to a smaller extent.

The relevance of the traditional professions for the ethnic identity of the respective group is further emphasised by the fact that many Roma groups name themselves after their main occupation:

- *Kalderaš* (coppersmith)
- *Lovara* (horse trader)
- *Ursari* (bear trainer)
- *Lingurari* (spoon carver)
- *Aurari* (goldsmith)
- *Čurara* (riddle maker)
- *Sepečides* (basket-maker)
- *Kovača* (black-smiths)
- *Lautari* (musician)
- *Balajara* (trough maker)
- *Bugurdzje* (drill maker)

## Classification

The traditional professions of the Roma and Sinti may be classified in three main categories:

- Craft professions (e.g. coppersmith : *Kalderaš*; spoon carver: *Lingurari*)
- Trading professions (e.g. trading with horses : *Lovara*)
- Pleasure time and entertainment professions (e.g. bear-trainer: *Ursari*; musician: e.g. *Lautari*; *Sinti*; showman: e.g. *Sinti*)

Economic forms such as begging, or professions in the field of agriculture like farmer or day-labourer, are not included in the three main groups. As regards begging, it is to be mentioned that in some groups still living traditionally, like the *Kalderaš*, begging is considered as a separate profession which is carried out in particular by women. It is not necessary that the family live in a socially poor condition in order to go begging.

Begging is not considered as degrading and is situated on the same level as the traditional craft professions. It is to be taken into account, however, that in the course of history many Roma and Sinti groups have been forced to go begging. The present social and economic developments in Eastern Europe dictate, for many Roma groups, that begging is the only possible way to guarantee survival.



In contrast to western, eastern and central European Roma and Sinti groups the different Roma groups in the southern Balkan area do consider agricultural occupations as traditional professions, and attach to them a high standing. In central Europe, on the other hand, Roma and Sinti were not allowed to purchase agricultural land for centuries, in many regions.



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