

Crafts, professions of excellence

METAL CRAFTS AND GUNSMITH

Related professional – Jerzy Wałga **Workshop: Jerzy Wałga - gunsmithing**

A gunsmith is involved in the production, modernization, modification, repair, renovation and preparation for use of firearms and ammunition, as well as carrying out research and carrying out expert opinions on weapons and ammunition. It is an extracurricular profession, it can be practiced with apprentice and master qualifications. Gunsmithing in Poland appeared in the 15th century. Initially, this profession was part of the locksmith and locksmith's guilds. From the 16th century, separate guilds of gunsmiths were created. The largest centers of gunsmithing in Poland were such cities as Gdańsk, Kraków and Wrocław. Nowadays, due to legal regulations in Poland, in order to perform the profession of a gunsmith it is not enough to have only qualifications related to acquiring skills - it is also required to have a firearms licence.



(Traditional gun "Cieszynka" made by Jerzy Wałga, Photo Olga Michalska)

What are the skills and expertise of professionals in this profession?

A person undertaking work in the profession of a gunsmith should be in good health: good hearing, good eyesight (vision defects may be corrected with glasses), color recognition, good sense of touch and good physical fitness. Working in the profession of a gunsmith in terms of energy expenditure is a medium-heavy job. There is also a mental burden associated with, for example, analyzing, problem-solving and decision-making.

An employee in the profession of a gunsmith should have social competences necessary for the proper and effective performance of professional tasks. In particular, the gunsmith is ready to accept full legal, civil and especially criminal liability towards himself and people from the environment, and above all towards the principal and owner of the entrusted weapons, ammunition and accessories.



(Jerzy Watga in his workshop connected with Museum of Crafts, Photo Olga Michalska)

What materials are used in this craft? Are they local materials

In his profession, a gunsmith mainly uses various types of metals and their alloys, often noble metals. In addition to metals, various types of sophisticated, hard and often exotic wood are used. Walnut also works very well. For the production of hunting weapons, where beauty is a desirable feature, expensive and the best quality materials are used.

In his professional activity, the gunsmith uses, among others:

- screwdrivers, punches, scrapers, files, chisels, etc.,
- various types of hammers (copper, wooden, rubber, metal, etc.),
- caliper, micrometer,
- drawing instruments, marking tools,
- a set of files and rasps,
- lathe,
- drill,
- milling machine,
- grinder.

Due to the large variety of weapons and their various designs, unusual instruments or tools appear in the plants, including those made by the gunsmith himself.



(Tools and materials used in gunsmithing, Photo Olga Michalska)

What markets are related to this profession?

The main market affected by the profession of gunsmith is the arms market. It is a market that requires a very high level of social responsibility from the practitioner, and the illegal arms market poses a great threat to this profession. A person employed in the profession of a gunsmith may also expand his professional competences in related professions: mechanic technician, mold maker, foundry maker, locksmith, miller, turner.

Where to learn this profession in Europe?

Currently, in Poland, candidates for work in the profession of a gunsmith are trained in the system of apprenticeship in the craft. Competences useful for the profession of a gunsmith can also be obtained by undertaking:

- education in a trade school, a related profession of a locksmith,
- training as part of the qualifying vocational course MG.20



(Tools used for engraving and marquetry, Photo Olga Michalska)

