

Social Studies Collection "la Caixa"
Volume 21: Immigrant Business People in Spain

Keywords: social study of immigrants in Spain; immigrant entrepreneurial initiatives in Spain; immigrant social mobility patterns in Spain.

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The study analyses the paths followed by immigrant business people and the diversity of their entrepreneurial initiatives. The research links their activities both to the role of the social networks of immigrants themselves and to the conditioning factors of the economic and institutional structures of the host society.

The analysis of the experiences of business people from outside the European Union involved the examination of various kinds of self-employment initiatives; the management strategies and operation of their businesses; the patterns of social mobility that these kinds of entrepreneurial paths entail; the economic and social transformation that occurs; and their links and relationship with their environment.

The results of the research refute the stereotyped perception that this kind of business corresponds to marginal and peripheral practices. Notwithstanding their heterogeneity and variety, these initiatives show how some immigrants start up economic activities that enable them to progress in terms of income and of social status and mobility, contributing at the same time to the creation of employment and wealth in the host society.