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How the culture of a country explains the social status of entrepreneurs¹

Cómo la cultura de un país explica las diferencias en el estatus social de los emprendedores

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, public policy-makers have devoted significant efforts to promoting new ventures. Entrepreneurship is considered one of the drivers of economic development because it creates jobs, intensifies competition and introduces innovations into the market that improve the welfare of the population (Acs *et al.*, 2008). For this reason, it is usually accepted that entrepreneurial activity is key to the well-being of society, which increases entrepreneurs' social status (Aldrich and Yang, 2012).

However, this status is not the same across countries and, in some contexts, their image is much better than in others (Etzioni, 1987), as we can see if we compare the Anglo-Saxon context with the European one. In the United States, people like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos are widely admired and are taken as role models (Bosma *et al.*, 2010) while, in Europe, successful entrepreneurs do not always have a good image. This situation is especially pronounced in countries like Spain, where a part of the society sharply criticizes the most famous entrepreneurs.

Public policy-makers have noticed this issue and established different measures to support entrepreneurship. We can mention, within the Spanish framework, the Law 14/2013 to promote entrepreneurship and its internationalization or the European Commission's Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. The latter document establishes that it is necessary to improve the social



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the benefits of entrepreneurial activity on economic development, entrepreneurs do not have a good social status in all societies. While in some countries they are highly respected (Anglo-Saxon context), in others, their image is not so positive (European context). In this paper, we highlight these differences using a sample from the GEM project and explain the social status of entrepreneurs using the cultural profile of countries, which is measured with the Schwartz database. Our results show that some cultural profiles favor entrepreneurs' social status.

RESUMEN DEL ARTÍCULO

A pesar de los beneficios que se atribuyen al emprendimiento para el desarrollo económico de una sociedad, los emprendedores no siempre gozan de un estatus social positivo. Mientras que en algunos contextos son muy admirados (mundo anglosajón), en otros su imagen no resulta tan positiva (muchos países europeos). A lo largo de este trabajo, gracias a una muestra del proyecto GEM, se ponen de manifiesto estas diferencias. Además, tratamos de explicarlas a partir del perfil cultural de los países utilizando la base de datos Schwartz. Nuestros resultados muestran que determinados perfiles culturales favorecen el estatus social de los emprendedores.

status of entrepreneurs in the European context. Sociological literature has shown how the social status of a profession influences people's preferences for this occupation (Bisin and Verdier, 1998; Van Praag, 2009). For this reason, if the government wants to take measures to improve the rate of new ventures, it is essential to understand the determinants of social status.

One way of explaining the differences in the social status of entrepreneurs is to employ the cultural profile of countries. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as the collective way of thinking that distinguishes the members of one country from others while Dheer (2017) proposes that culture is a way of thinking that includes

“values, assumptions, beliefs, practices, symbols and interpretative frameworks”. All these elements characterize a given culture. In this paper, we are going to explain the social status of entrepreneurs using these elements that may lead to different perceptions of entrepreneurs and give them a better or worse status.

One way of explaining the differences in the social status of entrepreneurs is to employ the cultural profile of countries.

To measure the social status of entrepreneurs, we use data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), an international project that gives us information about entrepreneurial activity in a wide range of countries. To proxy the cultural profile of countries, we employ data collected by Shalom Schwartz, an American social psychologist who

leads a project that measures the culture of more than 50 countries. This database has been widely used in international studies (for instance, Liñán and Fernández-Serrano, 2014). The outcome of the Schwartz project is seven cultural dimensions that give us a picture of the cultural profile of a country, showing the most valued and penalized behaviors.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers an international comparison of the social status of entrepreneurs using the GEM project. Section 3 presents the cultural dimensions of Schwartz and relates them with the social status. Section 4 shows the empirical analysis of the relationship between culture and status. Finally, Section 5 discusses the main implications of our work.

2. GEM AND THE SOCIAL STATUS OF ENTREPRENEURS

Previous research on the status of professions, including entrepreneurial status, has only covered one or a few countries

(Malach-Pines *et al.*, 2005; Parker and Van Praag, 2010). There are no studies that include a greater number of countries because it is difficult to obtain international data about this issue.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), an international monitor that covers a wide range of countries, began in 1999. Its main purpose is to fill the lack of international data on entrepreneurial activity and on other topics related to new ventures. This project has four main objectives: (1) to measure the gap in entrepreneurial activity among countries, (2) to analyze why some countries have more entrepreneurial activity than others, (3) to identify public policies that can improve the quantity and quality of entrepreneurial activity and (4) to analyze the relationship between entrepreneurship and economic growth. Covering these four objectives, the GEM project offers a more detailed picture of entrepreneurial activity through a survey that includes many countries all over the world.

The GEM project could be useful in the analysis of entrepreneurial status because its survey includes two relevant items. Respondents are asked whether they agree with the following sentences: (1) in my country, those successful at starting a new business have a high level of status and respect and (2) in my country, you will often see stories in the media about successful new businesses. Using these two items, it is possible to know the social consideration of entrepreneurs in a given geographical context. We will use a sample of 709,392 individuals from 83 countries who answered the GEM survey between 2010 and 2014.

With these two items, we assess whether those interviewed believe that entrepreneurs have a good social status in their country. We consider that their opinion about the social status is positive if they answer yes to the two previous questions. From their answers, we obtain the percentage of people in a country who think that the social status of entrepreneurs is positive. The greater this percentage, the higher the social image of entrepreneurs. In the following paragraphs, we present these percentages using, first, an aggregate approach, dividing countries by their degree of development and by geographical area, and, second, a more fine-grained analysis, showing this percentage for each of the countries of our sample.

Concerning the aggregate approach, previous literature has argued that the level of new ventures differs greatly across countries with different levels of economic development (Acs *et al.*, 2008;

KEY WORDS

Entrepreneurship,
Social status, Culture,
GEM, Schwartz.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Emprendimiento,
Estatus social, Cultura,
GEM, Schwartz.

Fuentelsaz *et al.*, 2015; Dheer, 2017), so it seems reasonable to assume that the social status of entrepreneurs may be different. For this reason, in accordance with the level of development established by the Global Competitiveness Report, we divide the sample into three groups (Fuentelsaz *et al.*, 2018). The first group, called *factor-driven economies*, includes countries that compete through low cost efficiencies in the production of commodities or low value-added products. This is a context with few job opportunities, leading to a higher rate of necessity entrepreneurship. For this reason, it is a stage with many small businesses, which compete in the agricultural or manufacturing sectors. The second group, called *efficiency-driven economies*, is characterized by an increase in the efficiency of the production process and by a better-educated workforce. Employing scale and scope economies, ventures are bigger, improving the productivity of the economy. Finally, the third group, the *innovation-driven economies*, is made up of developed countries, where there is a lower weight of industry and a greater weight of services, so the ventures are smaller. Greater competition, the increasing degree of uncertainty and the sophistication of consumer tastes favor the emergence of new, small ventures, which are more flexible and adjust better to these circumstances. **Table 1** presents the results of the social status of entrepreneurs following this classification.

Table 1. The social status of entrepreneurs by degree of development

DEGREE OF DEVELOPMENT	GOOD SOCIAL STATUS
Factor-driven economies	57%
Efficiency-driven economies	50%
Innovation-driven economies	38%
Average of the sample	46%

Source: Own elaboration using GEM data

In the factor-driven economies (less developed countries), 57% of people consider that entrepreneurs have a good social status. This percentage decreases as the level of development increases. In the efficiency-driven economies (medium developed countries), the percentage of people that give a good social status to entrepreneurs is 50% and, in innovation-driven economies (more developed

countries), only 38% do so. Therefore, the higher the development of the country, the lower the social status of entrepreneurs.

Table 2 divides the sample by geographical area. With this division, it is possible to see some differences between areas with the same degree of development. The United States and the European Union are both in the group of innovative economies but the social status of entrepreneurs is very different (56% and 35%). Within Europe, the differences are also important because European Union countries have a substantially smaller average than the other countries of Europe (35% against 43%). As global results, we see that the Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest score (65%), followed by North America (56%). In an intermediate position, we find geographical areas like Latin America and the Caribbean (54%), Asia and Oceania (54%) and the Middle East and North Africa (52%). The European Union is the region with the worst social status of entrepreneurs (only 35% consider that they have a good social status). Taking these figures into account, the European Commission stresses that the improvement of the social status of entrepreneurs should be a priority. It should be highlighted that Europe is the region with the lowest rate of entrepreneurship (Fuentelsaz *et al.*, 2015).

Table 2. The social status of entrepreneurs by geographical area

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	GOOD SOCIAL STATUS
Sub-Saharan Africa	65%
North America	56%
Asia and Oceania	54%
Latin America and the Caribbean	54%
Middle East and North Africa	52%
Europe non-European Union	43%
European Union	35%
Average of the sample	46%

Source: Own elaboration using GEM data

Table 3 gives us a more accurate picture of the variability of social status because it shows the percentage of each country. First, if we focus on the countries with the highest social status, we can

Table 3. The social status of entrepreneurs by countries

North America		East Europe		Latin Am. and Caribbean	
United States	59%	Romania	47%	Brazil	75%
Canada	53%	Russia	42%	Jamaica	72%
North Europe		Slovakia	41%	Peru	65%
Finland	61%	Latvia	36%	Ecuador	59%
Ireland	53%	Lithuania	30%	Venezuela	54%
Norway	49%	Estonia	30%	Colombia	53%
Sweden	47%	Hungary	27%	Suriname	53%
United Kingdom	43%	Middle East		Trinidad & Tobago	52%
Iceland	42%	Saudi Arabia	75%	Costa Rica	51%
Central Europe		Qatar	69%	Bolivia	48%
Netherlands	42%	Iran	52%	Panama	47%
Germany	41%	Georgia	50%	El Salvador	46%
Switzerland	39%	Turkey	46%	Guatemala	45%
Poland	35%	Pakistan	44%	Chile	45%
France	31%	Israel	41%	Argentina	43%
Luxembourg	31%	North Africa		Barbados	42%
Belgium	29%	Tunisia	60%	Mexico	34%
South Europe		Egypt	60%	Belize	23%
Portugal	43%	Algeria	42%	Asia	
Italy	34%	Libya	34%	Vietnam	68%
Spain	30%	Sub-Saharan Africa		Thailand	68%
Greece	27%	Uganda	79%	Kazakhstan	65%
The Balkans		Ghana	77%	China	60%
Montenegro	54%	Ethiopia	69%	Singapore	52%
Kosovo	47%	Namibia	66%	Bangladesh	49%
Macedonia	47%	Angola	65%	South Korea	47%
Slovenia	42%	South Africa	60%	India	46%
Bosnia and Herz.	33%	Zambia	58%	Japan	33%
Croatia	21%	Nigeria	57%	Oceania	
				Philippines	70%
				Indonesia	68%
				Australia	50%
				Malaysia	42%
				Vanuatu	25%

Source: Own elaboration using GEM data

mention many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (such as Uganda, Ghana and Ethiopia), some countries of the Middle East (such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar) and, within the developed countries, Finland and the United States. In contrast, of the countries with the lowest social status, we can emphasize that the majority of them are European Union countries (Croatia, France, Greece, Belgium and Spain, among others), along with some other countries such as Vanuatu, Belize, Mexico and Japan. This data is consistent with the pattern previously explained in which the highest social status of entrepreneurs was in developing countries and the European Union had the lowest level of the entire sample.

Among the developed countries (which have an average of 38%), the average good social status of the European Union is 35%, that of the rest of Europe is 43% and that of North America is 56%. Inside Europe, the countries with the highest scores are the Nordic ones (highlighting Finland with 61%), followed by the countries of the British Isles. Central Europe is in the middle of the European sample, some countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands (41% and 42%, respectively) being above the mean (35%), and others, like the French-speaking countries (France, Belgium and Luxembourg) clearly below the mean (around 30%). Southern Europe countries, such as Italy, Greece and Spain, are among the countries with the lowest level of social status of entrepreneurs (Portugal is an outlier of this area with 43%). The countries of East Europe are also around the mean of European countries, with the exception of the Baltic countries (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia), which are lower (30-36%). Concerning the countries of the Balkans, it is difficult to classify them as a group because they do not show a single pattern (ranging from Montenegro with 54% to Croatia with 21%). Finally, Russia stands out because, although it was one of the symbols of communism, it is above the European mean.



3. CULTURE AND THE SOCIAL STATUS OF ENTREPRENEURS

Our research takes into account the cultural profile of the countries with the purpose of explaining the differences in the social status of entrepreneurs. As we have explained, culture is the “collective way of thinking that distinguishes the members of one group of people from another” (Hofstede, 1980). Previous research in social sciences has shown that the role of culture is key to explaining the

behavior of individuals because it determines which behaviors are highly valued and which are penalized. The human being is a social animal who tends to take decisions that are well considered by others in their context (Bisin and Verdier, 1998). For this reason, the culture that surrounds them is able to canalize their behaviors and opinions.

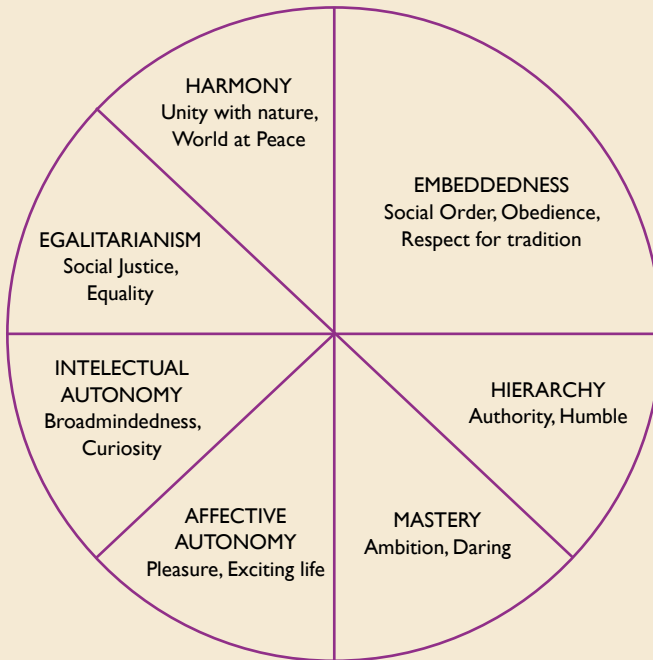
Depending on the values and beliefs of a society, the role of entrepreneurs will be perceived differently and, consequently, their social status will also be different. In some cultures, the role that entrepreneurs play is essential to the common welfare while, in others, it is not (Fisher *et al.*, 2017). One of the challenges of adopting a cultural perspective is to measure it because it is a concept that is hard to quantify. Previous literature has made several attempts to measure it. Each of them tries to divide the culture of a country into different dimensions. The main databases to measure culture are Hofstede, GLOBE, World Values Survey and Schwartz. Previous research has highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of each of them. However, Liñan and Fernández-Serrano (2014), among others, stress the methodological strengths of the Schwartz database (1999, 2004), arguing that the different dimensions are better integrated. For this reason, we will use this one in our analysis.

At an aggregated level, Schwartz (1999) identifies seven dimensions of cultural value: embeddedness, affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy, hierarchy, egalitarianism, mastery and harmony. Schwartz (1999) explains that, instead of analyzing these dimensions individually, it is more appropriate and accurate to analyze them as an integral system. This is shown in **Figure 1**. The structure reflects the dimensions that are compatible (adjacent in the circle) or incompatible (on the opposite side of the circle). For instance, societies that promote individual responsibility and decision-making based on personal judgments have, on average, high values in the dimensions of egalitarianism and intellectual autonomy. This is frequent in west European countries. Likewise, high levels of embeddedness and hierarchy appear simultaneously in other societies, such as those of Southeast Asia, where social roles and responsibilities are as important as personal desires and dreams.

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Figure 1. The dimensions of cultural value



Source: Schwartz (2004)



The seven dimensions of cultural value can be grouped into three bipolar dimensions: embeddedness versus autonomy, hierarchy versus egalitarianism, and mastery versus harmony. As we can see in the previous figure, the linked dimensions appear on the other side of the circle because societies with a high score in one of them have a low score in the opposite dimension (Schwartz, 2004).

Embeddedness versus autonomy is a dimension that covers the troubled relationship between the individual and the group. A society with a high level of embeddedness considers that individuals are part of a society from birth and that they have to follow its rules (Schwartz, 1999). Independent individuals who do not follow the rules and traditions are looked on with suspicious. Individual interests are aligned with collective interests in countries with a high level of embeddedness. On the other hand, autonomy refers to a context where individuals are autonomous because they have their own ideas, feelings and skills. This dimension is, in turn, divided in two: intellectual autonomy, which refers to individual opinions, and affective autonomy, which refers to individuals looking for their own happiness outside the group.

If we connect the dimension of autonomy with the social status of entrepreneurs, we can highlight that entrepreneurship has traditionally been characterized as an individualistic option (Taylor and Wilson, 2012) because entrepreneurs are independent and autonomous people (Mueller and Thomas). Therefore, it is expected that they will have a better social status in this type of context. However, a context with a high score in the dimension of embeddedness is one with greater levels of trust and richer in social capital, which improves economic exchanges among economic agents (Bae *et al.*, 2014). Contrary to the common view, entrepreneurship requires the capacity to cooperate with different agents, such as partners, workers, suppliers, customers and lenders. Therefore, there are reasons for thinking that this cultural dimension can affect the social status of entrepreneurs in either direction.

The dimension *Hierarchy versus egalitarianism* explains how people address the inequalities of a society and to what extent less powerful people accept them. In a hierarchical society, the unequal distribution of power and resources is legitimized and nobody calls this fact into question. It is a context in which the rules have to be respected beyond the opinion that people have about them. By contrast, in an egalitarian society, individuals fight for a more equitable distribution of power and ask for an explanation of such inequalities (Schwartz, 1999). On the one hand, we may imagine that entrepreneurs are more highly valued in an egalitarian context because they are people who challenge authority (Liñan and Fernández-Serrano, 2014), do not like to maintain the current status quo and want to forge their own path. On the other hand, a hierarchical society favors the current established order, which might improve the social status of established entrepreneurs.

Finally, the dimension *Mastery versus harmony* helps regulate people's treatment of natural and human resources. It solves the problems of the relations between people, and between people and nature. Cultures oriented to mastery look for personal benefits through the exploitation of resources. However, in the harmony dimension, the main objective is that individuals should live harmoniously in society and respect natural resources (Schwartz, 1999). Entrepreneurship has been related to competitiveness and individual rewards, so it may be thought that entrepreneurs will have a better status in a more competitive environment (Taylor and



Wilson, 2012). However, we can also emphasize other aspects of entrepreneurship, for instance, cooperation with other economic agents and the solution of social and environmental problems. These arguments can lead to the opposite conclusion in which a more entrepreneurial society addresses these problems more effectively (Horish *et al.*, 2017).

4. WHICH CULTURAL FACTORS PROMOTE THE SOCIAL STATUS OF ENTREPRENEURS?

Our empirical analysis uses a sample of 480,326 individuals from 58 countries who participated in the GEM project between 2010 and 2014. This sample is smaller than the one used in Section 2 because the Schwartz database, which helps us to measure the cultural profile of countries, is only available for 58 of the 83 countries previously used.

GEM includes two items that help us to measure people's opinions about the social status of entrepreneurs. People are asked whether, in their country, successful entrepreneurs have a high status and respect and whether the media support this opinion. As we have explained, we consider that an individual gives a positive social status to entrepreneurs if he answers yes to both questions.

The individuals of our sample are nested within countries and our dependent variable is a dummy variable (good social status or bad), so we estimate a logistic multilevel regression³. In the estimations, we include the three cultural dimensions previously mentioned: *embeddedness vs autonomy*, *hierarchy vs egalitarianism*, and *mastery vs harmony*. A high value in each of the dimensions indicates that the first of them predominates over the second. To complete our analysis, we include a set of control variables that may influence our dependent variable. Some of them are at individual level (entrepreneur, gender, age, to have a job) household incomes, previous entrepreneur, ties with entrepreneurs), because previous research has argued that personnel characteristics may influence the opinion of a person about entrepreneurial status. Other control variables are at country level (degree of development, PIB growth and unemployment rate). **Table 4** presents the correlation matrix while **Table 5** presents the results of our estimations.



Table 4. **Correlation matrix**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Social status	1													
2. Entrepreneur	0.05	1												
3. Gender	0.00	0.06	1											
4. Age	-0.02	-0.08	-0.02	1										
5. Work	0.01	0.17	0.19	0.00	1									
6. Household incomes	-0.03	0.06	0.09	-0.02	0.21	1								
7. Previous entrepreneur	0.02	0.09	0.02	-0.01	0.00	-0.01	1							
8. Ties with entrepreneurs	0.05	0.20	0.08	-0.11	0.13	0.11	0.08	1						
9. Degree of development	-0.14	-0.15	-0.01	0.17	0.06	0.05	-0.10	-0.11	1					
10. PIB growth	0.15	0.12	0.01	-0.10	0.03	-0.01	0.06	0.10	-0.53	1				
11. Unemployment rate	-0.14	-0.09	0.00	0.06	-0.12	0.03	-0.03	-0.06	0.27	-0.51	1			
12. Embeddedness vs autonomy	0.14	0.15	0.01	-0.16	-0.06	-0.05	0.10	0.12	-0.86	0.51	-0.25	1		
13. Hierarchy vs egalitarianism	0.15	0.11	0.02	-0.12	-0.01	-0.05	0.06	0.07	-0.67	0.59	-0.44	0.69	1	
14. Mastery vs harmony	0.15	0.09	0.00	-0.09	0.02	-0.01	0.05	0.04	-0.38	0.46	-0.38	0.48	0.73	1

Source: Own elaboration using GEM data

Concerning control variables, at individual level, we can see how entrepreneurs and people who know other entrepreneurs have a better image of them. The same is true for older people. However, people with a paid job and with higher household incomes have a worse image of entrepreneurs. As for the control variables at country level, as we highlighted in Section 2, people in developing countries give a lower social status to entrepreneurs than people in developed countries. Finally, we have included two variables that measure the economic cycle (PIB growth and unemployment rate) and its influence in the social status of entrepreneurs. The conclusion is evident: the better the economic context, the better the image of entrepreneurs.

With respect to the cultural variables, the three results are significant. The result of the first dimension (*embeddedness vs autonomy*) is that societies with greater levels of embeddedness give a higher social status to entrepreneurs, the arguments that entrepreneurship implies cooperation with other economic agents and they play a key role in the welfare of the society, having a big weight. The second dimension (*hierarchy vs egalitarianism*) positively influences the status of entrepreneurs, which means that hierarchical societies with a stable status-quo have a better image of entrepreneurs. Finally, the third dimension (*mastery vs harmony*) also has a positive influence so, in countries that are more competitive, entrepreneurs have a higher social status.

Table 5. Results for the social status of entrepreneurs

SOCIAL STATUS OF ENTREPRENEURS	
Control variables at individual level	
Entrepreneur	0.075***
Gender	0.005
Age	0.003***
Work	-0.022**
Ties with entrepreneurs	-0.050***
Previous entrepreneur	-0.019
Knowing entrepreneurs	0.095***
Control variables at country level	
Degree of development	-0.30**
PIB growth	0.009*
Unemployment rate	-0.124***

Cultural variables	
Embeddedness vs autonomy	0.357***
Hierarchy vs egalitarianism	0.377***
Mastery vs harmony	0.572**

*p<0.10; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

5. WHAT LESSONS CAN WE LEARN?

This research has two objectives. First, we offer an international comparison of the social status of entrepreneurs, highlighting that there are important variations among countries. Second, we explain these differences with the cultural profile of countries using the Schwartz (1999) database.

Our results show that, despite the social contribution of entrepreneurs, their social status is deficient in many countries. Generally speaking, as the degree of development of countries improves, their social status diminishes. However, there are important differences between countries that are at the same stage of development. For example, the United States is one of the countries with the highest social status of entrepreneurs in the world while the European Union is the group of countries where the social status of entrepreneurs is the worst. Nevertheless, within the European Union the differences are also substantial.

The analysis of the social status of entrepreneurs has important consequences because the social status of any profession influences people’s decisions to take it up or not (Weiss and Fershtman, 1998; Parker and Van Praag, 2010). Consequently, it is a factor that may explain why entrepreneurial activity varies so much across countries. Beyond the economic rewards from their entrepreneurial project, entrepreneurs (like all professionals) receive a psychological reward from society that depends on the social status of their profession. If public authorities are interested in improving the entrepreneurship rate, it is crucial to increase the social status of entrepreneurs. With this objective in mind, the first step is to understand the determinants of entrepreneurial status and, then, to design policies aimed at improving this situation.

This research has employed a cultural approach using the dimensions of Schwartz (1999) to measure the culture of countries. These seven dimensions, from an aggregate point of view, proxy

the cultural profile of a country. In this paper, we have defined each of them, we have argued how they are related to the social status of entrepreneurs and, finally, using GEM data, we have obtained interesting results.

Our results go beyond the Anglo-Saxon conception of entrepreneurship, namely, that entrepreneurship is an individual phenomenon in which entrepreneurs have individual rewards and compete against their competitors (Mueller and Thomas, 2001). However, we have seen that the social status of entrepreneurs is higher in societies with a greater level of embeddedness in which individual behavior is more restricted by social rules. Such a society does not allow people to be independent, as they are in the conventional approach to entrepreneurship. We can conclude that the entrepreneurship phenomenon is wider than the Anglo-Saxon conception. For instance, entrepreneurs have to cooperate with many people to create their ventures, something that it is favored in societies with a higher level of embeddedness (Schwartz, 1999). Another interesting result is the one that positively relates entrepreneurial status to hierarchical societies. Despite the fact that entrepreneurs fight against the current order, our results show that they have a better status in hierarchical societies in which there is a well-established social order. This result suggests that most individuals still look on entrepreneurs as people linked to the establishment. The last result of our analysis highlights that competitive countries value entrepreneurs more highly (the mastery dimension). This result is consistent with the traditional approach to entrepreneurship (Taylor and Wilson, 2012) in which new ventures make their way competing against established ventures.

The culture of a country is difficult to change in the short term (Mickiewicz *et al.*, 2016; Dheer, 2017), so the influence of policy makers on it is very restricted. Despite this, public policy makers should work to create a more entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurial status is deeply rooted in a society, so it is difficult to establish measures to change it. However, it is possible to take some steps to highlight the positive contribution of entrepreneurs to society (Aldrich and Yang, 2012). In this line, the European Commission, in its Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020, stresses the importance of improving the social status of entrepreneurs. Despite the difficulties, public authorities must continue designing these kind of actions.



The introduction of specific courses in the educational system about this issue is one of the measures that can be taken. Young people will thus be aware of the importance of entrepreneurship and they will see it as something natural and positive. This is especially important in university studies, where students need to understand that, despite its complexity, the creation of a venture is possible and could have a positive impact both on the entrepreneurs themselves and on society as a whole.

Furthermore, the roles of the media and social agents are also key to this process. It is necessary to design coordinated measures to advance in the desired direction. One starting point is to explain the function of entrepreneurs in an economy and their positive role in wealth creation and employment generation. This will allow a country to improve the social status of entrepreneurs, which will positively influence entrepreneurial activity levels in the future.

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NOTES

1. **Acknowledgment:** We acknowledge financial support from the Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness and FEDER (projects ECO2014-53904-R and ECO2017-85451-R), the Regional Government of Aragón and FEDER (project S09) and Generés Research Group.
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3. Given the characteristics of *Universia Business Review* and its less technical approach, we do not explain the econometric details of the models. They can be obtained from the authors on request.

