

## **Legislative measures of the Russian State Russia relating to regulation of entrepreneurial activity between the mid-18th and early 20th centuries**

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### **Abstract**

This article deals with the laws created by the Russian government in the sphere of the legal regulation of business activity by the rising merchant class, which was characterised by its social status as much as entrepreneurship. Due to the reforms of Peter I and Catherine II, merchants, businessmen and industrialists were brought out of the burgher community and formed into a special group of taxpayers, liable to pay tributes to the treasury directly depending on the value of their capital. Consequently merchants, as well as commoners and guild members, were relieved of various state duties, especially such serious duties as military service. Consistent state support of entrepreneurial activity at the legislative level significantly strengthened the merchantry and encouraged its prominent representatives to conduct diverse business activities. As a result, by the middle of the 19th century the merchantry had become not only the most economically active segment of the population involved in commercial activities, but also the most privileged estate (social group) after the nobility and clergy. This study of the socio-legal status of the Russian merchantry of the mid-18th-early 20th centuries concludes that the merchantry was a special class with the inherent attributes of a closed estate corporation. Due to its relatively high socio-legal status and economic strength, the merchantry played an extremely significant role in the post-reform Russian society.

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### **Keywords**

Charity, Commercial grade, Entrepreneurial activity, Legislation, Merchants, Russia, Trading activity