

# The Legal System for Business Incubators in Algeria

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Received: 11/09/2024

Published: 05/03/2025

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## Abstract:

Business incubators have played a major role in recent years, whether at the academic level through research and study, or at the level of programs and policies governed by governments of countries and considered as a mechanism to contribute to sustainable development. It has become important in improving, economic, political and social development of countries by helping entrepreneurs and owners of innovative projects to overcome difficulties, especially in the launch stage, and to embody intellectual creativity into serious and productive projects. Business incubators also seek to provide the necessary facilities and assistance to establish emerging institutions and accompany them until they are able to continue and expand. All of this is not achieved according to a legal system specific to business incubators.

**Keywords:** Business incubators, Development, Entrepreneurs, emerging institutions

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## Introduction

Incubators are considered one of the most effective and successful systems that have been created in recent decades in accelerating the implementation of economic and technology development programs while providing new job opportunities. They have been used in many countries, including Algeria.

The speed with which economic activity is changing represents a major challenge for Algeria, and it must keep pace with this change in order to catch up with the wheel of development and move away from economic backwardness, especially with the increasing importance of science and technology, which requires removing all obstacles that limit the acceleration of the wheel of growth.

From this point of view, it was necessary to encourage and promote initiatives which have a direct impact on the economy, in particular business incubators which interested decision-makers in Algeria by encouraging them and surrounding them with a legal protection in order to encourage entrepreneurs and young people to enter the world of business and entrepreneurship by supporting them through these incubators in their investment journey.

The issue of business incubators has taken an important place in recent years, whether at the academic level through researches and studies, or at the level of programs and policies established by state governments, as a mechanism to contribute to the sustainable development, because business incubators play an important role in the development of the path of economic and political development. They also aim to provide the necessary facilities and assistance to establish emerging institutions and support them until they are able to continue and develop.

It is one of the most effective and efficient protection systems and systems that many countries around the world use to develop the startup sector because it is designed to support them by providing them with a set of resources and services.

Therefore, the following problem can be posed: how did the legislator organize business incubators so that they can play an effective role in contributing to economic development? To answer this problem, we will rely on the descriptive approach through an analytical method adapted to the subject. In light of this, we have divided the topic into two sections. In the first section we will discuss the

concept of business incubators, while in the second section we will discuss the legal controls for the establishment of business incubators.

### **THE FIRST TOPIC: The Concept of Business Incubators**

There are many concepts for business incubators, but we will adopt one definition for them (First requirement), then define the types of business incubators (Second requirement) and finally their characteristics (Third requirement).

#### **First requirement: Definition of Business Incubators**

The term incubator derives from the basic meaning of “nurturing”, which refers to the development of small businesses in protected environments. Incubators are managed by industry specialists, from government and private organizations, and sometimes by universities which also develop business incubator programs (chrifa b. , 2018; chrifa b. , 2018)

This means creating an institutional arrangement to support newly established business establishments, as well as growing controlled establishments, to help them stay in the market for as long as possible. Many administrative services and facilities can also be provided to them, be it various financial or administrative facilities<sup>1</sup>.

Business incubators are also defined as: “an integrated set of services, facilities, support mechanisms and advice provided for a specific period of time by an existing institution which has its experience and relationships among those wishing start a small business with the aim of reducing the expenses of the start-up phase. » It is also defined as: “an integrated work system which provides all the means from an equipped and appropriate place in which all the capacities necessary for the start of the project are available, and this system is managed by a specialized administration which provides all types of support necessary to increase the success of small projects that join it, and to overcome the difficulties and problems that lead to their failure and inability to fulfill their obligations.<sup>2</sup>

They are also defined as: “An integrated package of services, facilities, support mechanisms and advice, provided for a specific period of time by an existing institution, with its experience and relationships with entrepreneurs who wish to create a start-up with the aim of reducing the costs of the starting phase.<sup>3</sup>

While the **American National Association** for Business Incubators defines them as organizations that aim to assist emerging creative institutions and new entrepreneurs, and to provide them with the means and support (expertise, locations, financial support) necessary to overcome the burdens and the launch

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<sup>1</sup>Amel Hachem, Business incubators and their role in supporting entrepreneurs and economic development, volume 11, number one, second part, 2020, p 259.

<sup>2</sup>Ammar Zouda, Hamza Boukefa, Business incubators as a support system for the survival and advancement of small and medium-sized businesses with reference to Algerian incubators, Journal of financial accounting and administrative studies, Number 02, 2014, p 59.

<sup>3</sup>Al-Hinnawi Mohammed Salah and others, Business Incubators, University House, Alexandria, Egypt, 2001, p. 26.

and establishment stages, and also ensures the marketing and dissemination of the products of these companies.<sup>4</sup>

**The Arab Human Development Report** of 2003 describes them as: "a new type of infrastructure supporting the innovative activities of small and medium-sized enterprises or creative developers with an entrepreneurial spirit and who lack the necessary capabilities to develop and commercialize their research and innovative technologies».<sup>5</sup>

**As for Algerian law**, the incubator was mentioned as a form of institutional incubator, and this through executive decree n°03-78 on the standard status of business incubators, article 2<sup>6</sup> of which stipulates that "theBusiness incubators are public establishments of an industrial and commercial nature which enjoy legal personality and financial independence.In the body of the text, they are called "incubators".Incubators take one of the following forms:

**Incubator:** A support structure that sponsors project owners in the services sector.

What should be noted about the definition contained in the article above is that the legislator has specified the area of competence of business incubators in the service sector.However, after the promulgation of Executive Order No. 20-254, business incubators were defined in Article 21<sup>7</sup> as follows:"any structure affiliated with the public sector or the private sector, or in partnership between the private sector and the public sector, offering support to emerging institutions and innovative project leaders in terms of accommodation, training, advice and financing." In this last definition, we see that the legislator has opened the way for business incubators to support various emerging institutions and innovative projects in all areas. It also did not limit incubators to the form of a public establishment of an industrial and commercial nature or public institution of an

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<sup>4</sup>Ali Saleh, 2010, p. 198

<sup>5</sup>Cherif Mourad, Moussaoui Sarah, The role of business incubators in the development of competitive capabilities of small and medium-sized businesses: realistic experiences, Complex of forums of economic, business and management sciences, The role of business incubators in the development of technological innovation andof the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises in Algeria, December 19, 2017, Mohamed Boudiaf University, M'sila, p. 174.

<sup>6</sup>Executive Decree No. 03-78 of February 25, 2003, containing the standard status of business incubators, Article No. 13, of February 26, 2003.

<sup>7</sup>Executive Decree No. 20-254, op. cit.

administrative<sup>8</sup> nature as indicated in Article 2 of Executive Decree No. 03-78 and Article 02 of Executive Decree No. 03-79 which defines the legal nature of activity centers, small and medium-sized businesses, their functions and their organization. Thus, this helps to reduce the risks of failure of these emerging institutions because the aim is to bring these institutions to the stage of maturity and launch in the market by providing them with all the services, facilities, consultations, financial and cognitive support, and support to realize his innovative ideas on the ground by transforming them into pioneering projects that contribute to achieving the desired economic and social development.

### **Second requirement: Types of Business Incubators**

Business incubators appeared in large numbers around the world despite the short period of their existence, and their compositions differed greatly, since each incubator has its own characteristics that distinguish it from others, so that researchers and those who are interested in studying them differed in defining their types. We mention the most important ones as follows:

**First section:** the types of incubators according to the generations to which they belong, which include the following types:

- 1- First generation incubators: These are incubators that provide support to emerging institutions that rely on knowledge as the basic capital in their products. They are incubators with strong relationships with universities, research and study institutes. They are called technical incubators.
- 2- Second generation incubators: They are called traditional based incubators. They support institutions with agricultural, industrial and food activities, etc., and maintain close links with local groups, such as commercial and industrial teams.
- 3- Third generation incubators: renewal center incubators. They offer support to emerging companies and small businesses, represented by specialized services such as technical courses and consulting services.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Himoum Madjid, a presentation entitled "Business incubators as a mechanism to support emerging enterprises in Algeria", the National Forum on Emerging Enterprises is a Key Actor for Sustainable Development, held on 3/10/2022 AD, Faculty of Law, University of Algiers 1, Algeria. .

<sup>9</sup>Benchikh El Hocine Djaouid, the role of business incubators in accompanying small and medium enterprises.- A case study of the institutional nursery of the state of Biskra -, a memorandum submitted as part of the requirements for obtaining a master's degree (in economic sciences), Faculty of Economic and Commercial

**Second section:** the types of business incubators according to the purpose of their creation and the form of their presence. This type contains the following:

1- Public project incubators - non-technological: These are incubators which support institutions active in the field of production, industry and services and which seek to develop agricultural projects and light engineering industries.

2- Technology incubators and science parks: The latter are known as a development institution that supports and encourages young entrepreneurs with creative ideas, who do not have capital or much experience, and helps them realize their projects and their ideas during the incubation period through an integrated set of different services (technical (consulting, marketing, financial, legal, etc.)), technological incubators are often established in scientific institutions such as universities or institutes. These incubators aim to benefit from scientific research and innovations and transform them into successful projects.

3- International Business Incubators: These are incubators that focus on international cooperation in scientific and commercial fields between institutions from different countries around the world, in order to strengthen their position in global markets.

4- Open incubators: or incubators without walls, which are set up near already existing industrial projects, provide all the services to support the projects surrounding them, and serve as intermediaries between universities and projects.

5-Specialized incubators: these are incubators concerned with specific creative fields which incubate new ideas in the use and application of information technologies.

6-Virtual Incubators: These are those incubators that provide support services via the Internet, with the exception of the provision of real estate. They provide support networks, consulting, marketing, website design, etc., and we are seeing a significant increase in the need for them, especially with the accelerating pace of technological development.<sup>10</sup>

### **Third requirement: Creating a Business Incubator Brand**

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Sciences and Management Sciences, Department of Economic Sciences at the University of Mohamed Khider, Biskra, Algeria 2019/2020, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>Laib Fatima Zohra, Business Incubators as a Mechanism for Enhancing the Capacity of Small and Medium Enterprises to Innovate, pp. 36 and 37.

The Algerian legislator, in application of the aforementioned executive decree 20-254, created a national commission responsible for granting the “emerging institution”, “innovative project” and “business incubator” labels. A business incubator is a brand granted to any public, private or mixed structure between the public and private sectors, so that they become legal entities specialized in the incubation of emerging companies and innovative projects in various fields. This trademark is granted according to precise and organized terms and specific procedures.

The conditions for obtaining the “Business Incubator” brand have been specified in Article 21 and the following articles of the aforementioned Executive Decree No. 20-254, which require any organization wishing to obtain the “Business Incubator” brand » to submit it to the competent national commission<sup>11</sup>, and there is no doubt that the granting of this mark indicates that the institution has reached a certain level of experience, qualification and capabilities which are not available to other institutions that have not obtained the brand.<sup>12</sup> The documents that must be submitted to the commission differ depending on the incubator establishments, whether in the public or private sector. As for the procedures, they remain unified according to the following elements:

**First section: Conditions for granting a business incubator establishment brand:**

Articles 21, 22 and 24 of Executive Decree 20-254 set the conditions for obtaining a business incubator establishment brand, and open the way for applications to structures affiliated with the public sector as well as the private sector. They also specified specific conditions specific to private structures, which are mentioned in article 23 of the aforementioned decree.

**A - Common conditions:** Requests to obtain a business incubator mark are filed with the National Commission, by sending them via the national electronic startup portal (startup.dz). The application file is attached to the following documents<sup>13</sup>:

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<sup>11</sup>Lamin Abdelhamid, Hassain Samia, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>12</sup>Chanouf Badr, Naroura Mohamed, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>13</sup>Lamine Abdelhamid, Hussein, Samia, op. cit., p. 20.

- Provide a detailed list of all equipment that incubators make available to emerging incubating institutions. This equipment represents all movable property and machinery, such as offices, machines, computer hardware, equipment...etc.
- Provide various training and supervision programs offered by the incubator, which may be available at its level or agreed with other establishments, as well as advice and guidance services.
- CVs of users of the business incubator, as well as trainers and supervisors.
- Provide a detailed development plan for the headquarters of the business incubator, which includes its surface area, the real estate that makes it up and everything relating to the development. This involves knowing the infrastructure available to the incubator to ensure its scope and adequacy with the context and requirements for the incubation of emerging businesses.
- The need to have employees in the incubator with the required qualifications and/or sufficient professional experience in the field of supporting emerging institutions.

**B - Special Conditions: Conditions related to special structures and which are as follows<sup>14</sup>:**

- A copy of the trade register and tax and statistical identification cards.
- A copy of the company's statutes, a natural person therefore does not have to create a business incubator.
- Certificate of affiliation with the National Social Security Fund (CNAS) attached to a list of employees.
- Certificate of affiliation with the National Social Insurance Fund for non-salaried workers (CASNOS).
- A copy of the financial statements for the current year.

**Second section: Procedures for granting a business incubator label**

The National Commission is responsible for studying applications submitted via the national electronic portal for emerging companies, accompanied by the documents specified in accordance with the legal texts mentioned above. All

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<sup>14</sup>Article 23 of the aforementioned Executive Decree 20-254.

applications will receive a response within a maximum of 30 days from the date of submission of the application. Any delay in the presentation of part of the required documents will result in the suspension of the procedure, provided that the National Commission informs the applicant, who must present the missing documents within 15 days from the date of its notification, otherwise his application will be rejected<sup>15</sup>. If the commission accepts the application, it grants its holder a “business incubator label” for a period of five years, renewable according to the same terms<sup>16</sup>. The commission publishes the decision via the national electronic portal<sup>17</sup>, in order to give more transparency to the national card of this brand and enshrine the citizen's right to access information with ease<sup>18</sup>.

If the commission rejects the application, it must justify the reason for the rejection and notify the candidate of the commission's decision via the electronic portal. The latter may reconsider the decision on the basis of a complaint with the necessary documents to justify the request for reconsideration, and it will be answered definitively via the electronic portal within a period not exceeding 30 days from the date of filing of his application<sup>19</sup>.

What is striking in the question of the request for reconsideration of the rejection decision is that the legislator gave the same commission the power to examine the request and the power to rule on it, since it This is an appeal against the rejection decision. In this way, the committee is both an opponent and an arbiter, which contradicts all logic. In addition, the provisions of this executive decree only give the rejected applicant the possibility of filing an administrative complaint before the national commission that made this decision, and do not speak of their right of appeal to administrative justice, given that the commission is a public body placed under the authority of the delegated ministry responsible for emerging businesses, it is therefore a central administrative authority whose decisions are subject to the control of the Council of State as the first and last governing body<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>Article 26 of the aforementioned Executive Decree 20-254.

<sup>16</sup>Article 27 of the aforementioned Executive Decree 20-254.

<sup>17</sup>Article 28 of the aforementioned Executive Decree 20-254.

<sup>18</sup>Chenouf Badr, Naroura Mohamed, previous reference, p. 162.

<sup>19</sup>Article 27, Paragraph 02 of the aforementioned Executive Decree 20-254.

<sup>20</sup>Chenouf Badr, Naroura Mohamed, previous reference, p. 162.

## **THE SECOND TOPIC: Legal controls for establishing and operating business incubators**

Business incubators are subject to a regulated legal system with regard to establishing or organizing their work, especially after the issuance of Executive Decree 20-254 dated 09/15/2020, which created the “business incubator” label, as indicated above, but in order for it to become so, it must go through the stages of construction (First requirement:), and on the other hand, it must address the services it provides to project owners (second requirement).

### **First requirement :Stages for creating business incubators**

Business incubators go through three stages:

**1- The creation and construction phase:** At the beginning, the working mechanism is carried out by the founders, then an economic feasibility study is carried out with the appointment of the creation team and the members of the institution, and the capital is determined.

**2- Development phase:** During this stage, the establishment accepts projects in order to provide them with services and equipment in order to have a vision in society and the capacity to attract customers and ensure the circulation of financing resources. This does not prevent it from continuing to evaluate its work to develop and evaluate its performance and the extent of its impact on his structure, all in order to enter the maturity stage.

**3- The maturity stage of the incubator:** The general intention of the incubator is to enter the full maturity stage in a working environment so that it can rely on itself to obtain financing and provide integrated services, whether financial, technical, administrative, legal<sup>21</sup>... on a permanent basis in order to measure its impact on the economy and grant subsidies to promising companies that contribute to the growth and development of this economy.

It is not enough for business incubators to follow the construction steps to be able to carry out their work, but a set of factors must be taken into account in order to ensure the success of their work. These factors are:

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<sup>21</sup>Ola Abbas, Mohamed Al-Sallami, Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises, first edition, Egypt, University Learning House, 2015, p. 159.

- Offer a suitable working environment that favors the development of small projects because these projects will last longer and for a reasonable duration in the incubator.
- Determine the main objective that incubators seek to achieve, whether it is to make a profit or to serve the community in terms of helping to create jobs and eliminate unemployment.
- Work to establish the conditions that small and medium-sized projects that operate incubators must meet to welcome them and determine their type.
- Determine the type of services that the incubator will provide to businesses, whether technical, administrative or financial<sup>22</sup>.
- Focus on providing the necessary financing to entrepreneurs, because the financing obstacle constitutes the major barrier to the translation of their ideas into projects being implemented.

### **Second requirement: Tasks of business incubators**

The mission of the business incubator is to incubate projects between the start-up phase and the growth phase of business establishments, as well as to support new entrepreneurs and help them launch emerging businesses (start-up). Thus, the business incubator strives to provide entrepreneurs with the tools necessary for the success of the project, and the following diagram presents the services provided by the business incubator to the entrepreneur with the aim of: Launching his project:

Business incubators seek to provide a range of services to help launch new projects as following<sup>23</sup>:

- A. Secretarial services:** These are all services related to supporting the joint secretariat, such as receiving and organizing various correspondences via telephone, fax, and email, printing texts, photocopying documents, saving files...etc.
- B. Basic facilities and services:** Business incubators build factories in densely populated spaces of entire buildings with flexible terms and

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<sup>22</sup>Ola Abbas, Mohamed Al-Sallami, *ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>23</sup>Boulechaour Cherifa., The role of business incubators in supporting and developing startups: a case study of Algeria, *Al-Bashaer Economic Journal*, Issue 02, Volume 04, 2018, p. 424.

reasonable prices. Customers may be too far from the incubator to participate on site, so you receive help and advice electronically. This model is suitable for entrepreneurs who need the guidance of an incubator, but not for those who still need offices and warehouses.

- C. Search for solutions:** find appropriate solutions to the technical, financial, administrative and legal problems facing the project.
- D. Provide financing and a way to reach financiers:** Not everyone is able to obtain the financial resources necessary to embark on a new activity or business until it becomes profitable. Incubation programs help provide funding and mobilize financial resources and venture capital, usually through a network of external service providers.
- E. Cooperation between various institutions:** Incubators aim to support cooperation and coordination with various specialized institutions, as they frequently cooperate with universities, research and scientific institutes and technology parks and, in some cases, they strive to bring connecting new business owners with others who are in a position to invest in the future of the business (reinforcing the concept of cooperation between projects).
- F. Education and access to knowledge:** assistance with research, advice and initial training, as well as assistance with the development and marketing of products. Business incubators work to fill the gap and compensate for the existing lack resulting from everyone's inability to spend the time and money necessary to study and obtain a university degree in business administration and incubator programs help to fill this gap by providing initial training to entrepreneurs.
- G. Creating a brand:** Business incubators are also seen as a space to launch businesses, increase success rates, encourage distinguished ideas, ensure the sustainability of incubated institutions and create their own brand.
- H. Program Management:** The process of monitoring the system used to achieve desired results or activities. Program management according to business incubators leverages project management and its inherent processes to effectively manage a group of overlapping projects in a structured and organized manner in order to achieve certain clearly defined goals and objectives, which serve as strategic requirements<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup>Trevor Young, translated by Bahaa Chahine, Project Management, first edition, Arab Nile Group, Egypt, 2005, p. 29.

## **CONCLUSION**

It should be noted that Algeria's interest in the creation of business incubators is slow to manifest and remains very limited. This has made its role as a support tool and development factor for emerging institutions absent. The latter suffer greatly from the high failure rate, because even though the number of businesses in Algeria is growing continuously, they suffer from the problem of sustainability, which can be overcome if the role of business incubators is activated in the local economy, so that these incubators have a more important development role in various economic sectors.

Business incubators represent one of the global trends in small business development, which the Algerian authorities have taken seriously, despite the delay in controlling them. This is due to several reasons, including:

- Lack of awareness of the role that business incubators play in stimulating investments.
- The rentier policy that was followed when oil revenues were the only source of income.
- Consider large institutions as the only ones to generate added value.

Thus, through our previous study, we conclude that the legal system governing business incubators is not autonomous, because it participates in other mechanisms linked to the field of support for entrepreneurs, and this is what has led to an overlap between their roles and the roles of some other organizations supporting small and medium-sized businesses, which has prevented them from achieving their objectives, as mentioned previously.

In addition to the limited effectiveness of business incubators due to copying international experiences without adapting them to the reality of the national economy. Through the above, the following suggestions can be made:

- The need to update the legal texts relating to business incubators and to create certain flexibility in their application so that they do not constitute an obstacle for entrepreneurs.
- Determine the true objectives of creating business incubators, taking into account market trends and the requirements of overall economic development.

- Raise awareness among investors and businessmen to take the initiative to invest in the field of business incubators.
- Evaluate the current reality of business incubators and seek to remedy the gaps.
- Establish a partnership between Algerian business incubators and successful and pioneering foreign business incubators to benefit from their experiences on the one hand, and train executives and managers of national incubators on the other hand.

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