



## Startups in Algeria From the conceptual and regulatory framework to the supporting structures and programmes

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### Abstract:

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the environment in which the Algerian Start-ups have been confronted since their creation, together with the main actors and mechanisms made available to these groups. Besides, we have firstly provided definition to the conceptual framework of the Start-up in Algeria in terms of legal and economic regulations with everything pertaining to the labeling and creation of Start-ups. Afterwards, we dared to establish a diagnosis of the environment in which they evolve, throughout analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the main actors and mechanisms dedicated to Start-ups. In virtue of which, we noted the awareness of the Algerian public authorities of the limits of the existing mechanisms dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship in Algeria. As consequence, we advocated the need to adapt the regulatory framework by implementing specific tools for the creation and support of Start-ups, in respect such as incubation and acceleration structures along with the financing formulas and means that are better adapted to the increased needs of Start-ups.

**Key words:** Startups, Incubators, Business plan, Algeria

**JEL Classification Codes:** M13, O32.

## **Introduction:**

In fact, Start-ups have become the key drivers of economic growth and the job creation, and have often shown to be a catalyst for radical innovation, as per evidenced by the global health crisis of COVID19, whereat the Start-ups have continued to play a critical role for economies. Likewise, some innovative Start-ups had quickly and flexibly responded to the pandemic and played a crucial role in being of assistance to many countries to move to fully digital labor, education and health services, and provided innovations in medical goods and services, as was the case in Algeria. Nonetheless, most existing Start-ups have confronted significant challenges, as they are more vulnerable and have faced constraints and obstacles that are mainly pertaining to the environment in which they are operating. Therefore, the importance of building an enabling and favorable environment for the emergence and development of Start-ups has become essential, as per the Algerian government is endeavoring to accomplish.

Based on this observation, the aim of our paper is to provide answer the following question: What is the environment in which Algerian Start-ups have been confronted since their creation, and the main actors and mechanisms made available to these groups, as well?

This problem leads us to raise the questions hereunder:

- What are the characteristics of a Start-up company, and how to become as such in Algeria?
- What are the main actors and mechanisms available to Start-ups in Algeria?
- What are the measures and prospects favorable to the emergence and development of Start-ups in Algeria?

For providing purpose of the necessary answers to the questions posed above, we have structured the study in two distinct axes, together with a section devoted to the results and the discussion. Whereat the first axis is dedicated to the different notions in relation to the Start-up company in Algeria, by addressing first of all the definitions and characteristics pertaining to the Start-up company, and we will lastly focus on the creation and labeling modalities being established for the purpose of getting advantage

from financing thereafter. As for the second axe of our paper, will focus on the analysis and diagnosis of the Algerian environment in which Start-ups are operating, all the way through shedding light on the main actors before the creation of the delegated ministry in charge of the knowledge economy and Start-ups, and then bring to light the new features introduced by this ministry in terms of environment and structures dedicated to Start-ups. In closing, the strengths and weaknesses of this environment will be diagnosed and discussed for the purpose of proffer alternatives that are favorable to the emergence and development of Start-ups in Algeria.

### **First: Conceptual framework of Start-up in Algeria**

In Algeria, more than a few measures have been undertaken by the public authorities to provide definition for the institutional, organizational and regulatory frameworks so as to encourage entrepreneurship and business creation. Certainly, Algeria has become aware, in recent years, of the importance of having innovative Start-ups to create growth and non-oil exports. Likewise, the country is trying to promote a public-private collaboration for the implementation of a configuration adapted to the needs of all stakeholders (Start-ups, investors, supporting and financing structures, training structures and the like).

#### **1. Start-up: Definitions and characteristics**

Etymology-wise, the word "Start-up" is a word borrowed from the English language, known as an Anglicism, composed of two parts:

- **Start:** For the beginning of a new business or activity;
- **Up:** For the acceleration phase of the company.

The Start-up is noticeably much more than a company, it in fact stands for a real state of mind: A team sharing values and united for the purpose of pursuing a common project, so often innovative (Przem, 2016). Besides, and upon consulting several research works on entrepreneurship and the Start-up, mainly the definition provided by (Ries, 2018) seems to us to be the most appropriate, for the reason that as it does not take into account the size or form and even less of the economic sector in which the Start-up is positioned.

Subsequently, (Ries, 2018) has then defined a Start-up as a “human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty” (Ries, 2018, p4) . In the same sense (Larguier, 2021) considers a Start-up, first of all, as “the story of a team driven by the same project, carried by the same values, by the same passions”.

For that reason, creating a Start-up is first and foremost about believing therein (Blank & Dorf, 2012). More to the point, it is about shaping a world where creativity and hard work are valued, whereat making money does not stand for a problem, it is about making mistakes and questioning oneself. Similarly, the term “Start-up”, being borrowed from the English language, does not simply mean “young company that is starting up” or “technological company”, it goes beyond the same. In light of which, the characteristics hereunder illustrate that a Start-up is differentiated from a company by the fact that the Start-up is: (Chevalier, 2017)

- **Temporary:** A Start-up does not intend to stay as such throughout its duration of life.
- **Seeking for a business model:** Indeed, becoming a Start-up means proffering value to customers through a product or service that has never been made out before. Further, the challenge for Start-ups is to find and build a business model that fits the same.
- **Replicable:** This means that a Start-up is looking for a model that, once this works (i.e. generates profit and knows how to attain that), can be completed elsewhere on a larger scale, or by others.
- **Progressive (for an exponential growth):** Having a model whereat the more customers you have, the more profit you make. The first customer costs more than subsequent customers, and so forth. Above and beyond, it refers to this scalability, combined with the fact that the model is replicable, that has allowed Start-ups to grow so quickly in a short period of time, compared to more traditional businesses.

Other characteristics complement to those mentioned above, allowing the distinction between the Start-up and the simple company, as Start-ups are: (Facon, 2021)

- **More risky projects:** First of all, a Start-up creation project is more risky than a traditional project. In addition to the involved risk, the company must alike confront the innovation challenges.
- **Agile structures:** A start-up has undeniably shown to be an agile structure, as it must have the capacity to adapt very quickly to its environment and subsequently to its evolution. In general, such businesses operate in emerging markets whereat definition has yet to be provided to the rules thereof. As a final point, agility is a symbol of a key success factor.
- **A temporary situation:** In reality, the project may fail, and accordingly disappear, or succeed and subsequently become a traditional business when its model is found but stops evolving.
- **A permanent search for profitability:** Definitely, most new Start-up projects have a have high potentials, or even high profitability. At first, the company loses money because it is not in a position to cover its costs. Consequently, the more the company takes an upward curve, the more its profit margin per customer increases as its model is scalable.
- **The business plan of a Start-up (not to be confused with the business model):** The structuring of the project of a business creation by a Start-up is articulated around the business plan, as this the latter allows:
  - ✓ Summarize the project in a few lines;
  - ✓ Define its business model (BMC);
  - ✓ Identify the key success factors;Identify the key skills and build the project team.

## 2. The Start-up in Algeria (legislation and creation procedures)

Start-up is a term that has become part of the political and social economic jargon

over the last five years in Algeria, notably through the establishment of the delegated ministry to the Prime Minister, in charge of the knowledge economy and Start-ups in 2019, within the scope of the economic transition aiming to take the country out of the rent-seeking economy by promoting the entrepreneurial act and the creation of wealth.

As of to date, although the legal texts governing Start-ups are limited, inclusive of the Finance Law of 2020 No.19-14 dated 14th Rabie Ethani 1441, corresponding to the 11th of December 2019, and the Finance Law of 2021 No.20-16 dated 16th Jounada El Oula 1442, corresponding to the 31st of December 2020, a definition of the Start-up term is provided following the synthesis of the texts mentioned above, this as being "a Very Small Digital Company run by Young Graduates whose products or services have an Innovating character"(Brouri, 2021).

As for the stages of Start-up creation, the General Directorate of Scientific Research and Technological Development (DGRSDT), that established a guide in 2020 on the creation process of a Start-up business, as part of the awareness-raising of young researchers and students to entrepreneurship and to the creation of Start-ups. In accordance with the guide in question, the creation of a Start-up business in Algeria involves the stages listed below: (DGRSDT ,2020)

- ✓ The idea (research, proof of concept, protection of the intellectual property);
- ✓ The business plan;
- ✓ The assistance actions: (supporting);
- ✓ The funding;
- ✓ The choice of legal status;
- ✓ The completion of the creation formalities;
- ✓ The Start-up business creation.

### **3. Labeling of the Start-up business: Conditions and advantages**

The creation of a particular status dedicated exclusively to the Start-up business in Algeria symbolizes a choice that has imposed itself over time, as this regulatory framework allows the same to access facilities (fiscal, para-fiscal and other advantages). Indeed, the aim of the labeling is to benefit from facilitations in terms of funding,

taxation and supporting.

The Executive Decree No20-254 published on the 15th of September 2020 in the Official Gazette of the Algerian Republic, pertaining to the creation of a National Labeling Committee under the minister in charge of Start-ups, together with setting the missions, composition and functioning of this entity.

The National Committee is chaired by the Minister in charge of Start-ups or his representative. It is accompanied by eight (08) representatives from different ministries (finance, agriculture, post and telecommunications, higher education, industry, fisheries, digital, renewable energies). Besides, the missions of this Committee are listed below: (GAAN, 2023)

- The attribution of the “Start-up” label in Algeria to young innovative businesses;
- The attribution of the “Innovative projects” label in Algeria to the owners of innovative projects that have yet to create a company;
- The attribution of the “Incubators” label;
- The study of applications submitted after refusing the attribution of the “Start-up”, “Innovative projects” and “Incubators” labels.

## **Second: The main actors and mechanisms dedicated to Start-ups in Algeria**

### **1. Actors set up before 2020**

With the aim of promoting investment and the creation of new companies, predominantly Start-ups in Algeria, the Government has set up aid and support organizations for the project leaders, which we will illustrate under three categories.

#### **1.1. Financing structures:**

As far as the funding mechanisms set up before 2020 are concerned, we will talk about the following structures:

**- The so-called public devices National Microcredit Management Agency “ANGEM” / National Agency for Youth Employment Support “ANSEJ” / National Agency for Support and Development of Entrepreneurship “ANADE” / National**

**Insurance Fund for Unemployment “CNAC”:** created by the Government in the nineties and two thousand, as these devices offer financial services adapted in several formulas, multiple tax benefits in addition to support services at different stages of the project for the holders of such projects meeting the eligibility conditions pertaining to each device.

It is of great importance to note that from the year 2020, the National Agency for Youth Employment Support (ANSEJ), previously under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, is officially put under the supervision of the Ministry of Micro-enterprise, Start-ups and Knowledge Economy, by virtue of an Executive Decree published in the Official Gazette. Likewise, it alike changes its name, which became the National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship (ANADE), thus opting for a new strategy based on the economic aspect.

- **The participatory financing systems “Crowdfunding”:** This new mode of funding is revolutionizing the Start-up sector in Algeria, having proved its worth throughout the world by enabling the project holders in need of funding to take the step of entrepreneurship all the way through conducting their business creation projects. Besides, the Crowdfunding is organized by means of a platform on the Internet, which puts contributors and project owners in contact with each other. In this respect, the first Crowdfunding initiatives in Algeria date back to 2013, which witnessed the creation of two platforms, mainly the TWIZA platform and the CHRIKY platform, whilst the third initiative is the NINVESTI platform in 2019 (Dabah & Al. , 2021, p366).

## 1.2. Incubation and acceleration structures:

In fact, incubators support entrepreneurs who want to create a company or a Start-up, through providing them with an environment conducive to apprenticeship, and a network of support necessary for entrepreneurs in the key stages of launching their projects (Djelti M. et al., 2016, pp 105 – 106). Above and beyond, there exist a variety of incubators in Algeria, whether public or private, planned or active, which support the project holders and Start-ups, alongside providing them with supervision and

accommodation during their Start-up phase (Bekaddour A., 2021, pp 539-543). Nevertheless, these structures are not supposed to provide direct funding to Start-ups, but prepare them for fundraising and the launch of their own activities, along with directing them towards potential funders.

As for accelerators, they symbolize structures that take over from incubators and succeed them through continuing to support the structured Start-ups being at a more advanced stage, by coaching them in intensive way, for the purpose of accelerating their business; as the acceleration programmes last on average from 03 to 06 months. More to the point, we will quote as examples some of the incubators and accelerators operating in the Algerian entrepreneurial sphere, in respect such as ANVREDET, HABA Institute, ANPT, DarTech, CDTA, Incub Me, Cap, FCE Incubator, ESAA Incubator, Business Incubators, mainly mobile operators, University Incubators, as well as Sylabs and The Pivot accelerators, both of which are private initiatives (Hattou, 2019).

### **1.3. Business Angels:**

In addition to their expertise and networks, they provide funds that enable the company to continue its development. However, the invested amounts and the average tickets differ from one Start-up to another, from one ecosystem to another and from one country to another (Jakub Ulc, 2021, p174). In Algeria, the individually operating Business Angels are often active entrepreneurs, but alike successful professionals or traders, or successful entrepreneurs.

## **2. Actors set up after 2020**

Among the highlights of the measures setting the tone of the new strategy in terms of the entrepreneurship and Start-up creation, we note the creation of a Ministry in charge of the Knowledge Economy and Start-ups in early 2020, through the Executive Decree No.20-54 dated 01st Rajab 1441, corresponding to the 25th of February 2020. In pursuance with Article 01 of this decree, the Minister of Micro-enterprise, Start-ups and Knowledge Economy proposes the elements of national policy in the field of Micro-enterprise, Start-ups and the Knowledge Economy. Hence, it ensures its

implementation, in pursuance with the provisions of the prevailing laws and regulations.

### **2.1. The support and development funds for the Start-up ecosystem:**

The publication of Decree No.21-303 dated 22nd Dhou El Hidja 1442, corresponding to 01st of August 2021 in the Official Gazette No.60, fixing the modalities of functioning of the special appropriation account No.302-150 entitled as "Support and development fund of the start-up ecosystem" opened in the archives of the Ministry of Finances, having as principal agent the representative of the Prime Minister in charge of the Knowledge Economy and Start-ups. However, in order to ensure the missions of the support and development fund of the Start-ups ecosystem, the receipts and the expenditure of this fund were fixed by the same decree previously quoted in Article 02.

### **2.2. The Algerian Start-up Fund (ASF) :**

At the National Start-ups Conference "Algeria Disrupt 2020", the Algerian Start-ups Financing Fund was officially launched. Besides, being raised \$7.2 million in its first year, this fund will focus on the most innovative Start-ups in the country (Tech Gist Africa, 2021 ). Likewise, this fund proffers equity funding to promising Start-ups, but unlike previous devices to support innovative companies, as this Fund will not use the funding through credit, which has proven to be limited. More to the point, the financial aid will henceforth be directly provided by investing in the capital of promising companies (Emerging Valley, 2020).

The National Fund for the Start-ups funding has shown to be the result of collaboration between the Ministry of the Knowledge Economy and Start-ups, Sonatrach, the Local Development Bank (BDL), the Popular Credit of Algeria (CPA), the External Bank of Algeria (BEA), the National Bank of Algeria (BNA) and the National Savings and Provident Fund-Bank (Cnep-Banque). With regards to the ceiling of the ASF investment, three levels have been set, which are: Funding up to 02 million, 05 million and up to 20 million dinars. This will depend on the nature of the project, the sector of activity and the need for funding itself (Algérie Presse Service, 2021).

### **2.3. Algeria Venture (A-VENTURE):**

The Executive Decree No.20-356 dated 14th Rabie Ethani 1442, corresponding to the 30th of November 2020, pertaining to the creation of the institution of promotion and management of the Start-ups' support structures and fixing the missions, organization and operation thereof. Besides, it is created under the name of "institution of promotion and management of the Start-ups' support structures", by abbreviation "Algeria Venture", a public institution of industrial and commercial character, designated hereafter the "Institution". Further, the Institution is governed by the rules applicable to the administration in its relations with the Government, seeing that is considered as a trader in its relations with third parties.

Placed under the supervision of the Minister in charge of Start-ups, the latter (or his representative) presides over the board of directors of the Institution which includes 11 representatives of different ministries, the representative of the company Sonatrach, the representative of the Algerian Start-up Fund, and the president of the Scientific Council of the Institution, as well.

The Decree mentioned above provides definition in article 04 thereof the missions incumbent upon this Institution, so the A-Venture is the tool of the public authorities for the implementation of the National Policy for the Promotion and the Management of the Start-ups' Support Structures, in particular through the incubators, the accelerators and the development of the innovation.

### **Third : Results et Discussion**

Upon having reviewed the conceptual and regulatory framework of Start-ups in Algeria, together with the main mechanisms for their funding in the previous sections of our work, we will at this moment analyze the environment in which Start-ups evolve, and the main actors and devices dedicated to Start-ups in Algeria, as well, in order to draw attention to the combinations of Strengths / Weaknesses, Opportunities / Threats.

In fact, the matrix analysis highlights the strong points of all the actors around the Start-up in Algeria, basically in terms of the public authorities' will and the

commitment, which was demonstrated by the installation of a national strategy (2020 – 2024) for the purpose of making a success of the transitions and the passage of a rent-seeking economy at the mercy of the fluctuations of the barrel price, with a more sustainable economy making of the Start-up an engine of economic development. In this respect, this new vision has resulted in the implementation of policies and tools for the purpose of promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and growth of Start-ups. In this perspective, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy and Start-ups has organized, since its inception, several events in relation to all actors around the Start-up, so as to initiate a space for exchange between them and inquire, firstly, their proposals, projects, offers and the various constraints linked to their environment, as well; in order to endeavor, secondly, to formulate proposals of measures aiming at taking care of their concerns.

Nevertheless, these numerous measures and initiatives taken in terms of Start-up creation have not made it possible to attain a large number of Start-ups likely to contribute to strong growth in the national economy, to an improvement in services intended for the population, and to the emergence of a content industry in the new information and communication technologies sector. Further, this sector currently represents only 04% of Gross Domestic Product “GDP”, given that the regional average is 08%, whereas Algeria has the potential to reach 10% of the GDP (Remouche, 2020).

**Table No.01:** Analysis of the main actors and devices dedicated to Start-ups in Algeria

| <b>Strengths</b>   | <b>Weaknesses</b>  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The youthfulness of the population and the increasing level of education;</li><li>- Significant involvement of intellectuals to carry out the set up programmes;</li><li>- Creation of a regulatory framework;</li><li>- Setting-up of a subsidy fund by the Government;</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Bureaucracy and administrative slowness, together with poor digitalization of public administration;</li><li>- Traditional financial system, mainly for the e-payments;</li><li>- Limited Information and Communication Technologies “ICT” infrastructure (fibre optics, internet speed);</li><li>- Lack of quality local cloud service providers;</li><li>- Lack of a laboratory for research and</li></ul> |

| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Organization of several events in favor of Start-ups and entrepreneurship;</li><li>Political will and commitment to promote entrepreneurship.</li></ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- development;</li><li>- Low presence of support structures in the interior and southern regions;</li><li>- Economy based on a rent-seeking model;</li><li>- Absence of risk capitals;</li><li>- Low valorization of students' entrepreneurial activities;</li><li>- Resistance to certain funding for cultural and religious reasons.</li></ul> |
|--|--|
| Opportunities  | Threats  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Virgin market for technological solutions;</li><li>- Low level of automation at the companies' level;</li></ul> <p>Search for solutions to make daily life easier for the citizen.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Entry of foreign companies into the market;</li><li>- Limited effectiveness of cohesion in the economic \ Start-up context;</li></ul> <p>Limited understanding of the Start-up concept.</p>  |

**Source:** Prepared by us on the basis of analysis of various supports pertaining to the paper subject.

Indeed, there remains much to be done in terms of creating a favorable environment for the development of Start-ups in Algeria, despite all the strong points mentioned above, as the development of Start-ups is currently confronting various challenges.

These challenges are both in terms of the availability of Information and Communication Technologies "ICT" supports, notably low internet penetration and its limited speed, together with the non-democratization of electronic payment due to the financial and banking system which is experiencing difficulties to develop in terms of digitalization.

In light of which, these findings demonstrate that Algeria has yet to acquire a real ecosystem favorable to the creation of Start-ups. Moreover, the network of public structures for incubation has shown to be very limited. On the other hand, it is composed of a limited number of actors providing support to the project holders. In fact, there are only 15 incubators out of a total of 634 in Africa, including 34 in Morocco,

27 in Senegal, 90 in Nigeria, 56 in Egypt and 150 in South Africa (Bekaddou A., 2021, p. 544). In virtue of which, the statistics tabulated hereunder illustrate the very timid evolution of the activity of the sixteen operational incubators either in terms of accommodation or business creation during the period from 2014 to the 30th of June 2018.

**Table No.02:** Evolution of the number of hosted projects (2014 to 30th June 2018)

| Year                                | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 30th June 2018 | Total |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|----------------|-------|
| <b>Number of hosted businesses</b>  | 120  | 135  | 158  | 161  | 127            | 701   |
| <b>Number of created businesses</b> | 75   | 84   | 70   | 83   | 50             | 362   |

**Source:** Bekaddou A., 2021, p 544

In terms of funding alike, the existing programmes do not sufficiently meet the funding needs of a Start-up, it is more than necessary to set up a regulatory framework to stimulate the venture capital industry such as “Crowdfunding” and funding by Business Angels, which will make it possible to propose funding mechanisms that are better adapted to the increased needs of Start-ups in Algeria.

The centralization of incubators and accelerators around the capital “Algiers” has shown to be another negative point encountered by young project holders from different cities, particularly those of the interior and southern regions, given the vast surface of the country. In a consequence, it is of great importance to take this point into account and encourage the creation of Regional Economic Councils (ideally in each Province) which would bring together all the actors in the Start-up ecosystem in order to ensure proximity and accessibility for project holders, given the important role of incubation and acceleration structures in supporting and monitoring Start-ups.

### **Conclusion:**

Notwithstanding the efforts made over the last two years, particularly in favor of the creation of a favorable environment for the development of Start-ups, many changes are to be made, in essence to overcome the difficulties and obstacles encountered by the Algerian Start-up. Hence, the first step to be undertaken should be to introduce digitalization and modernization of the funding and banking systems, mainly the democratization of electronic payment through implementing all the necessary logistics. Indeed, Algeria being an emerging country in terms of knowledge and digital economy, has everything to gain by taking better advantage of the positive experiences of countries that have initiated the takeoff of Start-ups, whilst relying on the exchange of good practices with the concerned countries, which have a head start in terms of promoting the environment of Start-ups. Bearing in mind that it has nowadays shown to be essential and primordial for any country to implement an environment that is favorable and conducive to the development of Start-ups, and thus contribute to the development of its economy.

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