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***ALŽYRO NACIONALINĖS AUKŠTOSIOS AGRONOMIJOS  
MOKYKLOS - ECOLE NATIONALE SUPÉRIEURE  
AGRONOMIQUE D'ALGER  
VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS***

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***INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF  
NATIONAL HIGHER SCHOOL OF AGRONOMY OF  
ALGIERS - ECOLE NATIONALE SUPÉRIEURE  
AGRONOMIQUE D'ALGER***

Grupės vadovas: Panel chairperson:	Prof. Dr. Stephane Lauwick
Vertinimo sekretorė: Review secretary:	Ms. Isabelle De Keyzer
Grupės nariai (kategorija): Panel members (category):	Ms. Nora Skaburskienė (academic) Mr. Arnoldas Solovjovas (student)
SKVC vertinimo koordinatore Review coordinator at SKVC:	Ms. Jolanta Revaitienė

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I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of National Higher School of Agronomy of Algiers - École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique d'Alger.

*Prof. Dr. Stephane Lauwick*

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.
2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the international expert Panel (hereinafter – Panel), information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) about higher education system in the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.
3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149 and included the following members: Prof. Dr. Stephane Lauwick (chairman), Ms. Isabelle De Keyzer (secretary), Ms. Nora Skaburskienė (academic) and Mr. Arnoldas Solovjovas (student).
4. As a result of external review, **National Higher School of Agronomy of Algiers, original name *Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique d'Alger*** (ENSA, the School) is evaluated positively in three evaluation areas: Strategic Management, Academic studies and Lifelong Learning, Research and Development and (or) Art Activities in four scale ratings.
5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment*
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	<i>Satisfactory</i>
ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING	<i>Good</i>
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND (OR) ART ACTIVITIES	<i>Good</i>

\* **Very good:** the area is developed systematically and implemented effectively;

**Good:** the area substantially meets the requirements, there are no significant shortcomings;

**Satisfactory:** area meets the minimum requirements, there are shortcomings, which must be eliminated and the higher education institution is capable of doing it.

**Non-satisfactory:** there are significant shortcomings and because of them the institution is not able to operate any more.

6. In each of these areas, the Panel encountered a School that was keen to question itself, aware of the major challenges facing higher education and research and already on the way to meeting them. Some of the interviewees were discouraged by the lack of speed in the implementation of the quality process. On the other hand, the Panel met people who were very involved and attached to their School, teachers who were very concerned about their students and researchers who were passionate about their work. The Panel considers that this environment is very

favourable to the development of this still very recent quality approach in a School well established in its environment for over 100 years.

7. **11** examples of good practices were underlined; **31** recommendations are suggested.

## II. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. Background of the review process

8. This evaluation was carried out in the framework of an ERASMUS+ "capacity building" research project entitled: Internal Quality Assurance System for Agriculture and Biosystem Engineering related to HEI of Algeria - QUALS, carried out jointly by the École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique d'Alger (hereafter referred to as ENSA), the École Nationale Supérieure d'Hydraulique de Blida (ENSH) and the École Nationale Supérieure de Biotechnologie de Constantine (ENSB), the Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) of Lithuania and the Estonian State University of Life Sciences (EMU). This project was coordinated by SKVC.
9. The external review of ENSA, which is the final step of this project, was being carried out on a pilot basis in Algeria. Observers from the other two Algerian Schools involved in the project were therefore able to attend most of the meetings with representatives of the various stakeholders except the meeting with the students. The Ministry of Higher Education did not commission this evaluation. It did, however, express an interest in knowing the results in the context of the implementation of a new Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The establishment of this new Agency was announced during the external review by the representative of the unit responsible for establishing a culture of quality evaluation within the Ministry of Higher Education (CIAQES) without, however, being able to indicate its implementation date.
10. Notwithstanding this preliminary remark, the external review of ENSA was conducted in accordance with the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review of Foreign Higher Education Institutions approved by the Director of SKVC on 20 of February 2015 Order No. V-7 (hereinafter – the Methodology).
11. According to the Methodology the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert Panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert Panel visit to the higher education institution; the preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.
12. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with annexes. The Panel also requested for additional material, such as a more extensive organisational structure.
13. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings. The Panel visited the School on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022, where it had meetings with internal and external stakeholders: the Director, Vice-

Directors, Self-Assessment Group, Representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Board of Directors, Scientific Council, ENSA representatives, responsible for quality, Students, Teaching and Research staff, Administrative staff, managers for infrastructure and IT, Graduates and Social Partners.

14. The Panel was able to assess the School within the Algerian Higher Education system: the institution was reviewed in its context. The Panel provided recommendations it felt ENSA could implement. The Panel met with representatives from the Ministry who expressed the will to go further in the path to implement The Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) standards for setting up a quality assurance system. This is viewed positively by the Panel as the possibility for ENSA and other Higher Education institutions to meet future challenges and be successful. Subsequently, the Panel met both in-person and virtually to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The Panel generally found internal actors and external stakeholders very involved and attached to the School and found that its environment is very favourable to the ongoing development of a quality culture.
15. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.
16. In line with the Procedure, the external review focused on three areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Strategic Management, Academic Studies and Life-long Learning, Research and Development and (or) Art Activities**. The Procedure approved by SKVC includes the assessment of the School's impact on regional and national development but it was accepted by the Panel and actors of the evaluation that this specific area would not be assessed. However, aspects related to the School's impact on national and regional development were touched upon and are included in the three other areas of assessment.
17. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas on a scale of four ratings: **very good, good, satisfactory** or **non-satisfactory**. Recommendations and Good Practices are witnesses to the positive impression the Panel got from their visit and definitely allow the School to evaluate itself, be confident and move forward.
18. In line with the Methodology, the review report prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to submit comments on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.
19. The Panel received ENSA comments on factual errors and considered them. As a result 5 minor changes were made to the report.
20. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalises it. The report is then considered to be final and presented to the Higher Education Institution under review.
21. SKVC announces the external review report on its website. The higher education institution respectively announces the external review report on its website and maintains it until the next external review.

## 2.2. Background information about the institution

22. The School of Agriculture of Algiers was created in 1905. In January 2009, it officially became the *École Nationale Supérieure Agronomique d'Alger* – the National Higher School of Agronomy of Algiers. ENSA ensures, by law, the mission of higher education, scientific research and technological development in the various fields relating to agronomy and the food industry (Art.2. DE - n°08-219).
23. The training at ENSA is based on a general education provided during 3 years of common core courses followed by 2 years of specialised education (15 specialisations) organised within 10 departments. The common course includes a 2-year preparatory course. After this 5-year training programme, students are awarded the title of engineer as well as the master's degree (when they have followed a supplementary 200-hour course). Here is the list of departments:
- a. Department of Botany: Plant Protection/Phytopathology, Plant-Pathogen Interactions;
  - b. Department of Rural Economics: Agribusiness Management and Agricultural and Rural Economics;
  - c. Department of Forestry: Forestry and Nature Conservation;
  - d. Department of Rural Engineering: Agricultural Hydraulics and Agricultural Machinery and Equipment;
  - e. Department of Soil Science: Soil Science;
  - f. Department of Food Technology: Food Industry Technology and Food and Human Nutrition;
  - g. Department of Zoology: Animal Production;
  - h. Department of Crop Production : Crop Production;
  - i. Department of Agricultural and Forestry Zoology: Plant Protection and Agricultural and Forestry Entomology;
  - j. Department of preparatory classes.
24. A competitive examination is organised after the first two preparatory years. The third year is made of a large number of modules aiming at giving an overview of the fields relating to agronomy and the food industry thus helping the student to choose his/her specialisation.
25. After the third year, students are assigned to a specialisation according to their average grade in the core curriculum. Some specialisations are much more popular than others. On rare occasions students may decide not to continue their studies if they do not have access to the specialisation of their choice because of their score.
26. In September 2022, 250 new students were registered in the first year. About 1.200 students are yearly spread over the 5 years of training.
27. This training of engineers and masters in agronomic sciences is provided by 148 teachers-researchers and 272 technical and support staff.
28. Since 1962, ENSA has trained over 9000 engineers.
29. The School also trains doctors in agricultural sciences, with the number of doctoral students limited to 15 annually. They are trained within 10 specialised research laboratories recognised by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS). Even though the SER shows a decrease, PhD studies remain very attractive: in 2020-21 there were 171 applicants.



30. The research projects have to fall within 4 national research programmes defined by the MESRS: food, health, water and energy security.
31. In Algeria, as the degrees awarded are state diplomas, the School is required to comply with a set of decrees implemented by the MESRS that define the content and organisation of teaching and research.
32. The Board of Directors (BoD) is the highest authority in the School. It approves the School development plan. It takes all decisions concerning the management of infrastructure and the abolition or creation of new departments or laboratories. It is responsible for examining, evaluating and then voting on and allocating the budget. Recruitment needs are expressed in the human resources management plan which it has to approve. The chairman of the BoD is appointed by the MESRS. The current chairman also holds the position of rector of another Algerian university.

The BoD includes:

- the representative of the Minister in charge of water resources;
  - the representative of the Minister in charge of land use planning, development and tourism;
  - the representative of the Minister in charge of agriculture;
  - the representative of the Minister in charge of health;
  - the representative of the Minister in charge of small and medium-sized enterprises;
  - the representative of the Minister in charge of fisheries;
  - the elected members of each body: teachers, staff and students.
33. The Director of the School is appointed by the MESRS. He/she chairs the School's Scientific Council. In the last 3 years, the School has experienced two changes of Director. The current director has been in office for 6 months (since February 2022). The length of his mandate is not defined.
  34. Teachers are free to organise their pedagogy and to define the content of their teaching and ENSA responsible for course assignment. Programme evaluation is compulsory every 5 years.
  35. Study programme modifications or creations are prepared by the School via pedagogical committees (one per year of study), departmental scientific committees (one per department) and finally approved by the School's Scientific Council.
  36. Any change in the content of a programme (modules) and its organisation (within the 10 semesters of study) must be approved by the National Educational Commission settled by the MESRS. Two representatives of ENSA sit on this national commission.
  37. For example, in 2015, ENSA proposed to reduce the share of lectures to one third in favour of practical training (field placements, practical training and seminars) in the third year of study. Usually, the training is made up of 50% lectures and 50% practical sessions. This proposal was approved by the MESRS and implemented.
  38. Another example is the new master's degree on "Smart Agriculture" which has been prepared by ENSA's authorities was still waiting for the approval of the MESRS in early September. The approval was delivered a few days later which allowed ENSA to open the programme and register students for the academic Year 2022-2023.



39. The teaching staff is represented in all consulting and governing bodies. Students are only represented in the BoD and in the pedagogical committees.
40. Since 2016, pre-confirmation training (pedagogy, distance learning) for new teachers has been mandatory. This training of trainers is held within the School.
41. ENSA initiated its reflexions on quality more than 10 years ago. In an original decision in Algeria, it chose to develop a system that is informed by European tools, notably the ESG As such, this experience has positioned the School as a pioneer nationally and prepares it for the current trend within the MESRS that will eventually result in the creation of a Quality Assurance departement. It has also provided ENSA with increased visibility for its internationalisation and its ability to apply for international funding. The present Erasmus+ funded pilot study stands as a direct result of ENSA's work on quality.

### III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

#### 3.1. Strategic Management

*Strategic Management* area is analysed in accordance with the following criteria, set up in the Methodology.

##### 1.1. Strategic plan's fitness for purpose, publicity, guarantees for its implementation

*1.1.1. alignment of the strategic plan with the higher education institution's mission, the strategic documents of the national policy on research and studies, the principles of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;*

*1.1.2. validity and interoperability of the strategic plan components (analysis of the existing situation, strategic directions, purposes, objectives, implementation measures, resources, projected outcomes);*

*1.1.3. reasonableness and comprehensiveness of the quantitative and qualitative indicators of the strategic plan implementation;*

*1.1.4. relevance of the procedures for monitoring the strategic plan implementation;*

*1.1.5. adequacy of the information on the strategic plan implementation made available to the founders, stakeholders, the academic community and the public at large.*

42. The Panel had access to a description of ENSA's strategy presented in Part II of a document dated 2019 entitled "*Projet d'établissement*" that was included in the annexes of the SER. This is in line with the principles of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area as well as the Algerian quality reference system. The description of ENSA's strategy is organised in 3 chapters:

- a. ENSA's values namely ethics, deontology and merit, creativity and excellence.
- b. The mission or overall goal of the institution summarised as "the promotion of useful and quality training and research to actively participate in meeting the challenge of food security in our country."



- c. The Strategic Vision with specific goals to achieve, actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the specific goals and relevant indicators meant to assess the improvement achieved. Specific Goals are described as follows :
- i. “Promote a climate of trust, serenity, equal opportunity and security to strengthen the spirit of pride and belonging to the School through equal opportunity for all.
  - ii. Training useful to meet the requirements of the socio-economic development of the country, through the adaptation of programs to the needs of the economic sector by integrating disciplines such as: food safety, metrology, quality, sustainable development, adaptation of crops to climate change, controlling the use of pesticides, entrepreneurship, marketing, etc.
  - iii. Undertake useful research that works on issues raised by the agriculture, water, environment and health sectors. Research must be restructured at ENSA to provide appropriate solutions to production constraints. Technological innovation through applied research must be the driving force behind the development of modern agriculture that must meet the country's needs.”
43. However, the SER indicates that ENSA does not have a strategic plan. It is explained there that Algerian HEIs operate under a heavily centralised system of management and the obligation to align with national laws. According to the SER, these constraints reduce the School's autonomy in decision making and limit its impact on its environment.
44. The Panel considers and has even observed (see points 37 & 38) that ENSA can, in this specific environment, find its own space to implement its own strategy. In this respect, a change of attitude and message could be beneficial to ENSA community. The new director has experience as an academic at School and has the necessary knowledge to rule the School. The ENSA management team showed support to him. He is strongly encouraged to highlight the glass half full rather than the glass half empty.
45. The Panel is aware that successive changes of management have made it difficult to devise and implement a long, medium and sometimes even short-term strategy. That’s why it is recommended that the current director submits as soon as possible a 5-year strategic plan for the School to the consideration and discussion by the academic community and approval by the Board of Directors. This will ensure that, regardless of the length of the current director's term, the School can implement the strategy it has approved.
46. The preparation of this kind of document is time consuming but there is no need to start from scratch. The existing document (*Projet d'établissement*) is a very good starting point. It is based on clear values. It expresses the overall mission of the School and breaks it down into clear specific objectives, implementation actions and indicators. It also includes a draft agenda.
47. The School is invited to revise this document by focusing on the goals it has the capacity and resources to achieve and the indicators it can measure. The Panel is confident that the management will be able to rally the academic community around realistic objectives.
48. There is no doubt about the strong commitment of students and alumni to their School. This is a major asset. The School is invited to consult regularly with all stakeholders, current students,

- alumni as well as external social partners on strategic issues so that all can take ownership and support the School's strategy.
49. The strategic plan should be published on the School's intranet or internet site so that everyone can refer to it.
50. The previous director prepared a development plan in October 2021 which has already been partly implemented. The Panel is convinced that the new management will quickly take this plan in hand and update it so that the urgent remaining actions can be implemented. While updating this plan, it should also be made more obvious that the School has developed an action plan that implements the strategy.
51. The School has produced a long list of several hundred indicators, which were provided to the Panel as annexes to the SER, in French, but there is no evidence that it is able to monitor all of them. It is important for the management to focus on indicators that are measurable and directly related to the priority objectives.
52. During its visit, the Panel met staff who were very competent and concerned with the quality approach (hereafter referred to as the QA team), despite the fact that most of them were recruited on a voluntary basis, only one person being assigned part time to QA. The Panel also met with the Library team who showed a great professionalism, within the allocated means, in the setting up, development and management of ENSA's information system. They were able to describe precisely their role as operators of the School's data collection and showed a good grasp of the importance of data in the QA process. They also exhibited great technical competence. The Panel feels that the involvement of the QA and the Library's staff will be essential in the choice of the relevant indicators as well as in the implementation of a systematic monitoring process.
53. The Panel also recommend that the QA team were asked to present an annual monitoring report on the key indicators in a format prepared together with the information system team and discussed in advance with the management so that it is best suited to the needs of the decision-making process. Such a monitoring report should be presented to all stakeholders and published on the School's website.

## *1.2. Management effectiveness*

*1.2.1. effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system for higher education studies (including policies on quality assurance, conformity of the qualifications to the national and European Qualifications Framework, enhancement of the quality of study programmes and student performance, improvement of the teaching staff competence, guarantees of support to students, organisation of data collection and published information);*

*1.2.2 appropriateness of the changes in the organisational structure to the implementation needs of studies, research and experimental (social, cultural) development and/or art activities;*

*1.2.3. process management – decision-taking effectiveness, distribution of responsibilities and accountabilities, allocation of resources, stakeholders (partner) involvement; orientation to strategic goals and outcomes;*

*1.2.4. management of human resources (analysis of needs, alignment with the implementation of the strategic plan, improvement of qualifications, involvement of the staff in the decision-taking process);*

- 1.2.5. *management of change (process optimisation) – analysis of process quality, prerequisites for improvement, risk analysis;*
- 1.2.5. *infrastructure (learning resources) management;*
- 1.2.6. *rationality of the use of the institution's funds for the attainment of its purposes;*
- 1.2.7. *procedures to ensure adherence to academic ethics.*

54. A national quality assurance reference framework was made available to Algerian higher education institutions in 2016 by the Commission for the Implementation of a Quality Assurance System in the Higher Education and Scientific Research Sector (CIAQES) created in 2010 within the MESRS. In this framework, a quality assurance manager was designated at ENSA in 2013 and a first self-assessment exercise undertaken between 2017 and 2019. The quality of that SER testifies to the seriousness and commitment with which ENSA has embarked on this process although the work was done on a voluntary basis.
55. The Panel noted that two SERs were produced by the School, the latest (dated 2022) being available in English and the first one (Document *Rapport final de l'auto-évaluation 14 November 2019*) in French only). That first version refers thoroughly to the School's regulations and to Algerian legislation. It also addresses a wider range of quality issues and thus gives a clearer picture of the School, its potential and its challenges. The Panel recommends that any new SER be built from both SERs thus taking advantage of the wider view provided by the 2018 SER as well as the more recent figures of the 2022 report. Generally, the Panel advises the QA team not to increase its workload but take advantage of and work from the already considerable body of QA documents available.
56. It was also confirmed by a representative of the MESRS that the involvement of the School in the capacity building project in quality assurance QUALS put the School at the forefront of the approach within Algerian higher education.
57. Even if the QA team has expressed a certain discouragement, they as a group were efficient in interacting with the Panel, showing excellent mastery of the School's and the Ministry's procedures and providing clear answers to the Panel's questions. The link between the management who decides on the running of the School and the QA team is probably not strong enough yet, but the results are there: the School as a whole shows excellent knowledge of its procedures and, importantly in the context of Algerian Higher Education, of the Ministry's own procedures. Indeed, the Panel found that, while respecting the Algerian context, the School was able to position its QA system using many elements of the ESGs. To maintain enthusiasm within the QA team it would be useful for the management to meet them more regularly, to take the measure of the team's workload and to take time to give feedback. The head of the QA team should be invited at the meetings of the management board on a regular basis. The MESRS is also considering how to better situate the monitoring of quality in the organisation chart.
58. The tasks of the decision-making bodies are clearly defined (in document *Procédure de gouvernance 09/09/2020*, in French) and the teaching staff is well represented. The School is fully aware of the MESRS's procedures: not only the director but also the members of the decision-making bodies and the staff. The School therefore is fully able to integrate them into its decision-making process as well as temporarily bending a rule should a case of force majeure jeopardise the quality of the training.

59. The School has to review its curricula every five years. It would be useful to archive the course programme evaluation reports and share them with all stakeholders, including the students.
60. The School has set up a programme of training the trainers. It would be useful to monitor how many teachers use it. In addition, the formalisation of a system of exchange of good practice (through regular informal meetings for instance) could be set up to ensure dissemination among teachers.
61. The massification of education is a phenomenon that also affects Algeria and has an impact on the organisation of teaching mainly in the preparatory years. In the upper years, unlike universities, Schools (orig. *grandes écoles*) can regulate access via their competitive examination which is not challenged by the MESRS. Teachers, supported in this by the management, must calmly adapt their teaching methods to accommodate more students in the preparatory programme. This approach must be accompanied by the director of studies to avoid discouragement.
62. Some teachers, on a voluntary basis, ask their students to evaluate their teaching. The implementation of a systematic evaluation of courses by students in the form of anonymous surveys could be useful for all teachers. This practice should be accompanied by the director of studies so that it achieves its goal of improving teaching and does not stigmatise or discourage teachers. To take it even further, students should also be given feedback on the changes introduced after analysis of survey results. This would encourage students to fill in questionnaires and be more involved in quality matters. The participation of students in more management bodies of the School, even as invited members, will also enable them to support this monitoring.
63. The School has an in-house clinic (general practitioner, dentist and psychologist) where students are medically monitored during their studies. This is definitely a good practice to be highlighted.
64. The third year of study is difficult for students because it is overloaded. The Panel has heard the debate. Proposals have been made: simplify the modular structure, work in a more transversal way. It is now a question of extending and officialising the debate within the pedagogical committees and scientific commissions and finally taking action with the MESRS once a joint decision has been reached.
65. In the course of its interviews, the Panel heard questions arising about the number of research laboratories: Is this number still appropriate? Shouldn't some of them be merged to promote a more multidisciplinary approach to the School's research and to allow the funding of state-of-the-art equipment? Teachers have a culture of debate which can sometimes seem to slow down the decision-making process. The Panel understands that debates are constant in academia. The current management team seems to have all the listening and leadership skills to guide the School towards the right decisions. It is now a question of taking action. And the Panel recommend to include the MESRS in the debates to ensure a positive follow-up.
66. The School's 2021 development plan includes an ongoing infrastructure renovation plan. The infrastructure is expensive to maintain but ENSA has found its own strategy: conserving the buildings and protecting the architectural and environmental quality. The School could have



- asked the MESRS to finance a few cheap barracks, but it did not: it made choices and took responsibility for them, which is considered by the Panel as ENSA's strength.
67. Although the information system is now up to date, it would be useful to extend Wi-Fi access throughout the whole campus.
68. Students are represented and have a voice in the BoD and the pedagogical committees. It might be useful to encourage them to organise their representation in those bodies in a more structured way. The existence of a training module on the students' participatory approach when it has no legal obligation to involve them in its decision making processes (in the departmental councils or in the School's Scientific Council), indicates that ENSA has fully understood the role students can take in its quality environment. The Panel further recommends to invite students to nominate guests-representatives in these bodies also. This issue could be addressed by the new vice-director of students affairs to be nominated soon.
69. Students are involved in 4 clubs on a voluntary basis to organise their social life. The independence of these clubs is very valuable. The clubs receive a small operating budget. The provision of such a support and the involvement of teachers in the club's activities is a very good practice.
70. The National Association of Agronomists has premises at ENSA, which testifies to its good relations with the School. Alumni who are now working in the public and private sectors are very proud of their School and during the meeting with the Panel expressed their will to become more involved. For the time being these relationships rely on personal links with some teachers only.
71. It might be useful to formalise the collaboration between ENSA and the social partners in an Advisory Board. This board could be involved in the School's major debates in order for it to be perfectly in line with the needs of society.
72. As they are considered real partners, alumni in the private sector could even be willing to finance specific projects (equipment, international scholarships for students, life long learning (hereinafter – LLL) programmes).
73. The Panel was informed of a recent ministerial decision forcing a large number of teachers to retire. This will deprive the School of vital forces. The QA team had done its work and alerted successive directors of the danger such loss of teaching and research competences would pose to its operation. ENSA 2021 development plan listed measures in order to respond to the upcoming retirement of those teachers, such as the reorganisation of the 10 departments into 4 or 5. The human resource management plan developed and validated by the BoD every year will certainly take those proposals into account.
74. The strengthening of the practical training of technical staff is envisaged in the 2021 development plan.
75. The School has a nursery open to the children of teachers and students. This is an undeniable advantage compared to other universities' environments.
76. All the teachers met by the Panel are alumni of the School, which gives them a great sense of involvement and belonging. Some of them continue their involvement even beyond retirement:



this is one of the strengths of the ENSA. However, it is conceivable that an opening up to some part-time teachers from other Schools or countries could bring in new ideas.

77. The annual budget allocation is highly regulated by the Ministry. The move to a three-year budget in January 2023 will undoubtedly allow for better forecasting and more ambitious projects, although this will require even more rigorous management. Within these rules, the School can decide how to allocate its resources and even in some cases make transfers if they are absolutely necessary. A matter of concern is the fact that the state funding has decreased with COVID-19 and has not returned to the previous level. The management will undoubtedly make all needed efforts in order to address this situation. The temporary transfer of land to third parties in exchange for equipment carried out last year is a good practice that could be repeated.
78. The QA team has expressed the need for a specific budget line related to quality assurance. While this is not envisaged by the MESRS, it is certainly possible for the School to make provisions for QA within each of the current headings for the specific expenditure indispensable to its quality control.
79. A Charter of Ethics and Deontology exists. The Panel was given the opportunity to read it: cf. document *Charte éthique et déontologie ENSA* (in French). It was written by the Ministry and applies to all Higher Education Institutions, all categories of staff and students but the School invites students to download the Charter from its internet site (in French). There is also a dispute committee at ENSA which manages deviations from the Charter of Ethics and the Rules of Procedure.
80. Concerning students with disabilities, the Panel was able to put the question of the support they receive from the School to the staff in charge of Student Affairs. Although it was indicated that no student with specific needs had enrolled (other than those already supported by the School's medical unit), there is every reason to believe that the School would do everything possible to accommodate such students properly, even if the infrastructure is not yet necessarily adapted. Clearer information on this subject on the website could encourage these students to enroll.
81. **In summary**, the Panel has no major reason to worry about the ability of the new management team together with staff, students and other stakeholders to keep this more than a century old School at the forefront of the Algerian scene. Its openness and desire to question itself and confront international standards put ENSA in a good position to occupy a leading position in its field in Africa.
82. **Judgement:** the area is assessed satisfactory, it meets the minimum requirements, there are shortcomings, which must be eliminated and the higher education institution is capable of doing it.
83. **Recommendations for the area:**
- To implement a leadership that communicates on the positive aspects in terms of external and internal challenges ENSA faces.
  - For the management, to submit as soon as possible a 5-year strategic plan to the consideration and discussion by the academic community and approval by the Board of Directors. This plan should be focused on the goals the School has the capacity and resources to achieve and the indicators it can measure.

- To consult regularly with all stakeholders, current students, alumni as well as external social partners on strategic issues so that all can take ownership and support the School's strategy.
- To publish the strategic plan on the School's intranet or internet site so that everyone can refer to it.
- To make it more obvious that the School has developed an action plan that implements the strategy.
- To involve the QA and the Library's staff in the choice of the relevant indicators as well as in the implementation of a systematic monitoring process.
- For the management, to meet QA team regularly, to take the measure of the team's workload and to take time to give feedback
- To archive the course programme evaluation reports and share them with all stakeholders, including the students.
- To monitor how many teachers use the training of trainers programme.
- To formalise a system of exchange of good training practice (through regular informal meetings for instance) in order to ensure dissemination among teachers.
- To adapt teaching methods to accommodate more students in the preparatory programme. This approach should be accompanied by the director of studies to avoid discouragement.
- To implement a systematic evaluation of courses by students in the form of anonymous surveys.
- To include the MESRS in the debates about the number of laboratories.
- To extend Wi-Fi access throughout the whole campus.
- To encourage students to organise their representation in the management bodies in a more structured way.
- To invite students to nominate guests-representatives in the governing bodies.
- To formalise the collaboration between ENSA and the social partners in an Advisory Board.
- To open up the study programmes to some part-time teachers from other Schools or countries in order to bring in new ideas.
- To budget an amount within each of the current budget headings for specific expenditure indispensable for quality control.
- To provide clear information on the website on the way students with disabilities are supported.

#### 84. **Good practice examples:**

- The School has an in-house clinic (general practitioner, dentist and psychologist) where students are medically monitored during their studies.





- A training module on the participatory approach is proposed to the students and helps their involvement in the School's governing bodies.
- The student's clubs are a successful practice. They have an independent status, their own budget and include various stakeholders, such as teachers in their activities.
- A nursery is open to the children of teachers and students
- The temporary transfer of land to third parties in exchange for equipment has allowed the School to diversify its sources of income.

### 3.2. Academic Studies and Life-long Learning

*Academic Studies and Life-long Learning* area is analysed in accordance with the following criteria, set up in the Methodology.

#### 2.1. *The suitability of the conditions for studies and for life-long learning :*

*2.1.1. alignment of the qualifications awarded under the study programmes (including joint programmes) and in the course of life-long learning with the institution's mission and strategic documents, also with the needs of the national economy and social and cultural development;*

*2.1.2. variety of life-long learning forms and conditions;*

*2.1.3. the system of monitoring the employment and career of graduates and its contribution to the improvement of the studies;*

*2.1.4. cooperation with the institution's academic, social and business partners and their impact on the life-long studies and learning provided by the higher education institution (including the development of new and the improvement of old study programmes).*

85. The School offers a clear and complete range of study specialisations that meet its missions and the needs of the public service. The quality of the training received at ENSA is highlighted by the social partners and considered even better than in the other Algerian HEI.
86. During the meetings with stakeholders, social partners and the alumni, the Panel was pointedly told about the partners' readiness to discuss and even support possible updates of the study programmes. Examples given were providing more site visits, placements, delivering entrepreneurial competences to students. Closer consultation with representatives of the economic and social world, possibly through an ad hoc committee, could make it possible to achieve a better match with the needs of today's society.
87. The Panel was informed that some specialisations were more popular than others among students. Social partners, both from the public and private sectors, regretted that students did not always choose the specialties that were in greatest demand in the labour market, thus showing the need for better career counselling. An information campaign for students in consultation with the alumni involved in the specialisations of lower attractiveness could perhaps broaden the students' range of interests.
88. The process that led to the creation of the Master in Smart Agriculture is certainly an example of good practice: Algerian and European rules had to be respected in the framework of this Erasmus funded project. A new module in entrepreneurship and innovation was created

following a survey of the needs of the economic sector. Two evaluators from ENSA and international experts examined the project which was validated by the School's Scientific Council before being submitted to the MESRS.

89. The increase of the practical training seems to be an expectation of both students and alumni. It has already been done in the 3rd year through the introduction of an immersion internship: this new organisation should be monitored very closely to ensure that it achieves its objective. The School has expressed its intention to pursue this dynamic in some specialisations where the practical part of the training seems too low. The Panel encourages ENSA to evaluate first the impact and perhaps adjust the measure taken in the 3rd year before launching the following step.
90. The School organises LLL programmes on request, mainly from the ministries for the continuing education of their civil servants. A more proactive attitude in the provision of short term training modules would certainly stimulate and concretise the links between teachers and the world of work. A vice-director of Life-long Learning could be appointed if the School wishes to launch this dynamic. The quality of the information system and the presence of the national network of agronomists on the campus are undoubtedly two major assets for the successful completion of an LLL project.
91. A survey on the follow-up of the career of alumni has been carried out at least once. This follow-up is not easy because once they graduate, alumni disperse in this very large country or even abroad and it is not easy to maintain the link. The support of the national network of agronomists is invaluable for the School to keep in touch with its alumni.
92. Some of the alumni met by the Panel noted a lack of career guidance within the School. The graduates remain in touch with the teachers in order to get their guidelines and contacts for their careers. But the teachers' workload doesn't always allow them to respond to graduate requests immediately. If possible, the recruitment of a career consultant could help. However the Panel noted the creation of a training programme in Innovation - Entrepreneurship (*Formation ingénieurs entreprendre* (FEI)) set up in 2018 via a transfer of skills from France to Algeria. The incubator created within ENSA allows young alumni to test their ideas to create their own company.
93. Some social partners regretted ENSA's relative reluctance to embrace new fields of study such as sustainable development. They are willing to help the School to open up to innovative applied study and research topics and even provide training for teachers on some topics. The Panel has noticed that one such project on urban agriculture is right now on the table.

## *2.2. The alignment of the conditions for studies and for life-long learning with the provisions to date of the EHEA and the EU documents relating to higher education*

*2.2.1. alignment of the strategic documents relating to studies and life-long learning with the provisions of the European Higher Education Area and the EU documents relating to higher education;*

*2.2.2. dynamics of the international (incoming and outgoing) mobility of teaching staff and students and its impact on the activities of the higher education institution;*

*2.2.3. recognition pursuant to the Lisbon Recognition Convention of the qualifications, periods of studies abroad, non-formal competences.*

94. Algeria has decided to adopt the Bologna system of qualifications, BMD. ENSA's priority is to comply with the texts regulating higher education in Algeria, which it does perfectly. ENSA has therefore adopted the new bachelor/master degree programme while continuing to deliver the title of engineer as previously indicated.
95. The quality of teaching is at the heart of the School's DNA. The teaching load of the teacher-researchers is 60%, with 30% for research. The Panel is concerned that this could put it at a disadvantage in the research capacity rankings with universities. The MESRS has promised to establish a specific grid for higher education institutions in order to adapt to the real situation.
96. The coexistence of the two study paths, BMD and *Ingénieur*, does not seem to pose a problem to ENSA, except perhaps from the point of view of the mobility of baccalaureate holders who have not passed the competitive entrance examination. Indeed, since access to the third year is linked to the success in this competition, the holders of a non-Algerian baccalaureate are not able to enrol in the Master's programme. This issue is in the hands of the the Direction of Cooperation of the Minisrty of higher Education. The management will follow it closely. The Panel encourages the management to be as proactive as possible on this issue. Furthermore, enrolling students from different degrees and countries would increase the internationalisation of the School.
97. While the Panel did not find any organisational impediments to the international mobility of foreign students enrolled in the bachelor's or master's programmes in their home country who would come to ENSA to complete part of their curriculum, it found that it is not currently organised. The Panel encourages ENSA to sign mobility agreements with international higher education institutions so that students enrolled in Master's programme in their own neighbouring countries can come and follow course modules for one or two terms.
98. At present, international mobility is mainly organised at doctoral level. It has also obviously suffered from the COVID-19 period, but ENSA is doing everything possible to revive it through the international research programmes in which it is involved.
99. Regarding the internationalisation of life-long learning, an initiative was launched in 2017-18 to assess the needs of the School's private sector partners. The idea was to organise a series of courses mobilising international skills dedicated to agribusiness specialists such as marketing of organic products or management strategy. Unfortunately, the project collapsed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Panel strongly encourages the School to re-launch this process.
100. **In summary**, the attractiveness of ENSA's course offer is obvious and confirmed by the very large number of students who enrol in the preparatory years. Teachers put a lot of energy into maintaining this quality. The reopening of ENSA studies to foreign students is a major issue to be solved in the near future with the support of the MESRS and the social partners.
101. **Judgement:** the area is assessed good, it substantially meets the requirements, there are no significant shortcomings.
102. **Recommendations for the area:**
- To develop closer consultation with representatives of the economic and social world, possibly through an ad hoc committee, in order to achieve a better match with the training needs of today's society.

- To organise an information campaign for students in consultation with the alumni involved in the specialisations of lower attractiveness in order to broaden the students' range of interests.
- To evaluate the impact of the introduction of an immersive internship in the 3rd year with students and alumni and perhaps adjust the measure taken before pursuing the dynamic of increasing practical training in some specialisations where the practical part of the training seems too low.
- To launch a more proactive dynamic in the provision of short term training modules.
- To relaunch the initiative of 2017-2018 aiming at assessing the LLL needs of the School's private sector partners.
- To sign mobility agreements with international higher education institutions so that students enrolled in Master's programmes in their own neighbouring countries can come and follow course modules for one or two terms.

### 103. **Good practice examples:**

- Creation of the Master in Smart Agriculture as a result of the ability to respond to current needs and international collaboration.
- The quality of the information system developed by the Library's team.
- The hosting of the national network of agronomists on the campus.
- The incubator created within ENSA allowing young alumni to test their ideas to create their own company.

## 3.3. Research and Development and (or) Art Activities

*Research and Development and (or) Art Activities* area is analysed in accordance with the following criteria, set up in the Methodology.

### 3.1. *The relevance of research and/or art activities*

3.1.1. *alignment of research (applied research) and/or art activities with the institution's mission and strategic documents;*

3.1.2. *alignment of research (applied research) and/or art activities (and cycle 3 study programmes) with the priorities of the national and/or regional economic, cultural and social development;*

3.1.3. *impact of academic, social and business partners on the research (applied research) and/or art activities of the higher education institution.*

104. The Panel was able to observe that the activities carried out by ENSA within its 10 laboratories are coordinated by clearly established bodies and aligned with its strategic objectives in terms of research, namely: training students to become researchers; creating new knowledge; promoting excellent research; developing the territory and creating wealth; developing research and professional training courses, based on the knowledge produced in research laboratories.



105. Research projects have recently been financed via calls for projects launched by the MESRS around the 4 national strategic axes described above. The National Research Fund (FNR) no longer distributes structural funding for research, except for a modest budget to follow-up PHD students. Applications are selected on the basis of their socio-economic impact. ENSA's research strategy is therefore properly articulated around these national priorities as well as ENSA's staff skills.
106. Given the scarcity of resources and in order to maintain quality research, the panel recommends that ENSA resolutely adopt a niche strategy where it can focus its energy on some national research priorities rather than trying to embrace everything and create frustration. It is important to build on the researchers' areas of excellence and to anticipate recruitment by monitoring the evolution of research priorities for the country and the region.
107. As already said, there is an ongoing reflection within ENSA to reduce the number of labs in order to favour interdisciplinary research. This approach will include a broad survey among the academic staff. This survey aims to take into account the quality of interpersonal collaborations for the setting up of new research teams which could be a premise of the recommended niche strategy.
108. ENSA has working relationships with the local and national socio-economic sector, which are reflected in several agreements that appear on the School's website. More than half of the Master's theses (about 54%) and doctoral dissertations (about 66%) are devoted to the problems faced in the central region of the country.
109. Joint School/business research projects are being set up, for example on the substitution of pesticides by essential oils. The SER explains that fundamental research is still favoured at the expense of applied research. The social partners confirm they would like to see more applied research projects. The establishment of an advisory council would enable ENSA to be permanently connected to the needs of the economic and social world and multiply the potential sources of funding.

*3.2. The international links of research and development and/or art activities of the universities and their alignment with the provisions of the European Research Area*

*3.2.1. alignment of the higher education institution's strategic documents relating to research and/or art activities with the priorities of the European Research Area;*

*3.2.2. participation in international research and/or art projects;*

*3.2.3. researchers' and/or artists' international mobility and the impact of the visiting researchers and artists on the research and/or art activities of the higher education institution.*

110. Research at ENSA is supervised by trained staff (management and qualification procedure of the personnel inspired by the JO. N° 23 of 04 May 2008 decree N°08-130 of 03 May 2008) on the particular status of the teacher-researcher. The Panel understands that there are no direct references to the procedures to the European Research Area (ERA) in its strategic documents, yet understands that, in practice, the School shows a good knowledge of the procedures of the ERA and efficient know-how in term of project building and management through the European projects in which it has been involved for many years.



111. The activity of the research laboratories is based on specific infrastructure: a farm and an experimental station, a sheepfold, a horticultural station, botanical gardens and an arboretum. The latter two contain numerous and diverse plant and animal species that allow scientific activities to be carried out without having to travel outside ENSA. The maintenance of this remarkable infrastructure is a constant concern of the School. During the visit of some of the laboratories as well as during its interviews, the Panel was told by researchers that the School management took into account the limited availability of funds and proposed a clear policy that prioritised quality over quantity. The Panel commends ENSA on its efforts to maintain the School's heritage while equipping laboratories with modern equipment.
112. Although this number tends to decrease, the School still attracts many PhD candidates, which confirms the socio-economic value of its research activity and is an excellent way to promote it. The limitation of the number of PhD students per supervisor to 6 and thus to a maximum of 15 PhD enrolments per year at ENSA is presented in the SER as a brake for the development of research: it could also be seen as a criterion for the quality of supervision even if imposed by the MESRS. In 2020-21, 171 students were enrolled in the PhD programme, 37 of whom defended their thesis. The entry into the labour market of 37 PhDs is an impressive result that the Panel wishes to highlight.
113. The evaluation of the three-year review of the scientific activities and training through research carried out by the Labs is carried out by the MERS according to a grid with well-defined criteria, about which the Panel was informed. The evaluation covers both the activities of researchers, research entities and research programmes. It is carried out by peers, in a collective approach and in accordance with a code of ethics. The results of the evaluation are communicated to the parties concerned while respecting the anonymity of the expert evaluators.
114. The evaluation of scientific production takes into account many criteria including the number of publications, papers, book chapters, software, prototypes and patents, etc. The publications of ENSA's scientific staff are visible in Google scholar via the School's website. Scientific productivity is judged to be low by the authors of the SER, who point to the sub-optimal conditions in which research must be conducted. As stated in the SER, ENSA must also move from the publication stage to the patent stage.
115. The Panel considers that all the guarantees for evaluating the quality of research are present and that measures are taken by the School to improve the research environment, within the framework of the means available. The current management could devise ways of better appropriating the good practices which are currently felt by many to be imposed by public authorities.
116. The Training/Research link is considered in the SER to be underdeveloped and only reflected in the teaching of "research methodology" to Master's students. The Panel however noted that teachers usually present the results of their research to their students, which is undoubtedly a good practice to be continued and in line with ESG standards.
117. The various labs are involved in numerous international projects listed on the School's website such as the *CMEP-Tassili Project* with France, the *Life at the Edge* project with Sweden, *Contract farming in Algeria* with Canada; Tempus, Erasmus+CBHE, Erasmus+mobility and Prima projects.

118. The mobility of professors and researchers is a reality, with as many as 30 to 80 professors spending periods of time abroad each year (before the pandemics). The mobility of doctoral students has enabled the publication of scientific articles with foreign partners in highly indexed journals. Teachers express their willingness to see their School even more involved in international projects to be able to increase the number of international co-authored articles, which the Panel support.

119. International mobility has also enabled visits by foreign speakers (32 in 2019 before the pandemic). International mobility has indirectly enriched the content of some of ENSA's teaching programmes. As long as student mobility is not better organised, the Panel suggest increasing the number of invitations to international scholars to take part in the teaching or conduct research seminars.

120. **In summary**, the Panel consider that ENSA has set up an organisation that makes it capable of carrying out quality research activities. It should think about taking more ownership of the rules that are felt as imposed by the MESRS. The Panel encourages ENSA, like any research institution, to recognise its inability to embrace all areas of research and to make choices by relying, as it already does, on its teacher-researchers, by seeking more support from the socio-economic world and by continuing to develop partnerships with foreign higher education institutions. This niche strategy will allow the researchers to regain serenity and pride in belonging to ENSA.

121. **Judgement:** the area is assessed good, it substantially meets the requirements, there are no significant shortcomings.

122. **Recommendations for the area:**

- To adopt a niche strategy where the School can focus its energy on a few clearly identified national research priorities.
- To establish an advisory council in order to enable ENSA to be permanently connected to the needs of the economic and social world and increase its potential sources of funding.
- To move from the publication stage to the patent stage.
- To better appropriate good practices even if imposed by public authorities. By example, the limitation of the number of PhD students per supervisor to 6 and thus to a maximum of 15 PhD enrolments per year at ENSA is presented in the SER as a brake for the development of research: it can also be seen as a promoter of the quality of supervision.
- As long as student mobility is not better organised, to increase the number of invitations to international scholars to take part in the teaching or conduct research seminars.

123. **Good practice examples:**

- The ability of the management to maintain ENSA's remarkable infrastructure while equipping it with modern equipment.
- The entry into the labour market of 37 PhDs in 20-21 shows the dynamism of research.





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© *Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), 2022.*  
*A. Goštauto g. 12, 01108 Vilnius, Lithuania*  
*tel.: +370 5 205 3323*  
*skvc@skvc.lt*  
*<http://www.skvc.lt>*