Promoting the Positive Role of the Administrative Judge as a Mechanism to Enhance the Effectiveness of Justice in Algeria

An Analytical Study of the Amended Provisions on the Appeal by Petition for Review in Light of the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law as Amended and Supplemented by Law No. 22/13

Dr. Betaina Malika
University of El Oued, Algeria
Betaina-malika@univ-eloued.dz

Submission date: 02.04. 2025. **Accepted date:**02.06. 2025. **Publicaion date:**12.11.2025

Abstract:

In the context of a comprehensive and profound reform of the justice sector, the Algerian legislator introduced a revolution in updating and amending the legal system following the 2020 Constitution. The most prominent reforms include the Law on Civil and Administrative Procedures dated 25/02/2008, issued under No. 08/09, amended and supplemented by Law No. 22/13, alongside Law No. 22/10 concerning the judicial organization.

Through this amendment, the Algerian legislator sought to achieve efficient justice in the normative law by *"promoting the positive role of the administrative judge"*, who is no longer merely a referee settling administrative disputes brought before him but has become a key actor in realizing administrative justice. This was achieved by expanding the powers of the trial judge (both degrees of litigation) by granting him the jurisdiction to decide on appeals by petition for review—an exceptional legal remedy—that was previously the exclusive competence of the Council of State.

The promotion of the positive role of the trial judge in administrative justice represents a pivotal step in the history of the judicial system, as the trial judge has become the judge of law in the same dispute in which a final judgment or decision tainted by an error not attributable to the judge has been rendered. This constitutes a step toward achieving efficient justice that contributes to improving the quality of judicial rulings and enhancing citizens' trust in administrative justice.

Keywords: judicial jurisdiction, appeal by petition for review, trial judge and judge of law, efficient justice.

Introduction:

Since the 2020 Constitution, the Algerian legal system has undergone profound reforms through the introduction of new laws and the amendment of others. The Law on Civil and Administrative Procedures No. 08/09 dated February 25, 2008, was among those amended as part of *"the continued implementation of the President of the Republic's commitment to comprehensive and profound justice reform."* Accordingly, Law No. 22/10 introduced fundamental amendments to the judicial organization, particularly in administrative justice, followed by Law No. 22/13, which amended and supplemented several provisions of the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law. Its purpose was to enhance the effectiveness of justice and facilitate access to it, thereby guaranteeing the right to a fair trial and the right of defense in civil and administrative matters.

In the draft of this law presented by the Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals, Mr. Abderrachid Tabi, it was stated that these are: *"provisions aiming to simplify, modernize, and digitize procedures, promote the positive role of the judge, establish new investigative mechanisms, and reactivate notification and enforcement procedures."*

Among these reforms was the amendment of Articles (966) and (967) of the amended and supplemented Civil and Administrative Procedures Law, relating to the provisions governing the appeal by petition for review before administrative courts. This remedy is one of the extraordinary judicial remedies recognized by the legislator in this law. It is distinguished by its exceptional nature, which sets it apart from other extraordinary remedies such as cassation and third-party opposition, among others.

This exceptional character lies in the purpose intended by the legislator for its use in the role of the administrative judge toward achieving quality judgments, as stated in Article (390) of the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law—which remained unamended—providing that: *"The petition for review aims to reconsider the interim order, judgment, or decision ruling on the merits and having the authority of res judicata, in order to decide anew on the facts and the law."* Article (966) of the same law further provides that: *"A petition for review may be filed only against decisions issued by the Council of State."*

Within the framework of justice reform, however, the legislator departed from this position by granting the jurisdiction to examine and decide on the appeal by petition for review to the administrative court and the administrative court of appeal—trial judges—rather than the Council of State, the judge of law, through the amendment of Articles (966) and (967) of the same law.

Research Question:

Did the legislator, through amending Articles (966) and (967) of the same law, by granting jurisdiction to the administrative court and the administrative court of appeal to examine and decide on the appeal by petition for review—an extraordinary and exceptional legal remedy—achieve the intended legislative purpose and thereby contribute to justice reform by promoting the positive role of the administrative judge in adjudicating this appeal to ensure the effectiveness of justice?

Research Methodology:

To achieve the objectives of this study, the analytical method was adopted to examine the available body of knowledge on the topic, as it is the most appropriate for addressing the research subject. Legal texts relating to the appeal by petition for review in the amended and supplemented Civil and Administrative Procedures Law were collected—whether contained in the section on common provisions or in the specific section on judicial remedies before administrative courts, both amended and repealed provisions as well as those still in force. These were then analyzed and interpreted to extract the principles and rules derived therefrom and assess their practical implementation to draw conclusions serving the objectives of the study.

Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to achieve a set of scientific and practical objectives, notably:

- To highlight the evolution of the positive role of the administrative judge—particularly the trial judge—in light of legal transformations aimed at reforming the judicial system in Algeria.
- To determine the extent to which this substantial amendment to the role of the administrative judge aligns with fundamental legal principles.
- To clarify the impact of promoting the positive role of the administrative judge on the effectiveness of administrative justice, which is the cornerstone of building a state governed by the rule of law.
- To propose practical mechanisms that overcome challenges hindering the promotion of this pivotal role of the administrative judge as protector of rights and guardian of freedoms.

Structure of the Study:

- **Chapter One:** Mechanisms for promoting the traditional role of the trial judge in administrative justice toward judicial effectiveness.
    - *Section One:* Redistribution of the Council of State's jurisdiction in appeals by petition for review.
    - *Section Two:* Establishing jurisdiction over the appeal by petition for review for the trial judge in administrative justice.
- **Chapter Two:** Effects (implications) of promoting the positive role of the administrative judge in achieving administrative justice.
    - *Section One:* Legal effects (implications) of promoting the positive role of the administrative judge in achieving administrative justice.
    - *Section Two:* Practical effects (implications) of promoting the positive role of the administrative judge in achieving administrative justice.

Chapter One: Mechanisms for Promoting the Traditional Role of the Trial Judge in Administrative Justice Toward Judicial Effectiveness

Since the appeal by petition for review against final administrative judgments is an exceptional remedy, whereby the appellant seeks to have the judgment withdrawn by the same judicial body that issued it whenever it is affected by an error in the assessment of the facts of the case that is not attributable to the judge, the deep transformations in administrative justice—such as the increase in administrative disputes, the complexity of relations between the administration and citizens, and the evolution of legal concepts toward strengthening rights and freedoms—have compelled the legislator to transform the trial judge in administrative justice from a mere legal examiner into an active judicial actor equipped with effective supervisory and investigative tools. Thus, the jurisdiction over the appeal by petition for review—an exceptional legal remedy—has been entrusted to the administrative court and the administrative court of appeal as trial judges of the dispute before them, rather than to the Council of State, the judge of law and apex of the administrative judicial hierarchy.

Section One: Redistribution of the Council of State's Jurisdiction in Appeals by Petition for Review

Among the reforms experienced by administrative justice is the redistribution of certain judicial competences within administrative courts to achieve fundamental principles such as bringing justice closer to citizens, accelerating case resolution, and distributing judicial workload. In this context, the legislator redistributed the Council of State's jurisdiction over appeals by petition for review through the amendment of the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law by

Law No. 22/13, after this jurisdiction was previously exercised exclusively by it under Law No. 08/09 (now repealed).

Subsection One: The Council of State's Jurisdiction over Appeals by Petition for Review in the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law

According to Article (966) of Law No. 08/09 on Civil and Administrative Procedures, the legislator provided that: *"A petition for review may be filed only against decisions issued by the Council of State."*

By reading this provision, it is evident that the legislator explicitly limited the scope of the petition for review to decisions rendered by the Council of State, thereby adopting the issuing authority of the contested decision as the criterion for admissibility.

Thus, the conditions for the admissibility of a petition for review can be summarized as follows:

1. **The decision must be issued by the Council of State:** This is a legal requirement, as a petition for review may only be filed against a decision issued by the Council of State. The Council of State issues three types of decisions according to Articles (901–903): those of an original and final nature, appellate decisions, and final decisions on cassation.
2. **The decision must rule on the merits and have the force of res judicata:** According to Article (390) of the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law, the decision subject to a petition for review must be one that rules on the merits and has become final, either as an original final decision or as a final one. Conversely, a petition for review may not be filed against purely preliminary decisions, since such decisions are still subject to ordinary remedies, whereas the petition for review is an extraordinary remedy.

Subsection Two: Removal of the Council of State's Jurisdiction over Appeals by Petition for Review in the Amended and Supplemented Civil and Administrative Procedures Law

In order to enhance the effectiveness of justice and facilitate access to it, the legislator revised the jurisdiction of the Council of State as the highest body in the administrative judicial system through Law No. 22/13, which amends and supplements the Civil and Administrative Procedures Law. The exclusivity previously granted to the Council of State over appeals by petition for review was removed and transferred to other judicial bodies. The Council of State retained only the jurisdiction to decide on petitions for review against decisions issued in appeals concerning rulings by the Administrative Court of Appeal in Algiers, as provided by Article (966) of the amended and supplemented law.

This reflects the legislator's implementation of two core principles: (1) **bringing justice closer to the citizen**, by relieving litigants from the burden of traveling to the capital for such

procedures, and (2) **reducing judicial workload**, by alleviating the burden on the Council of State.

Section Two: Establishing Jurisdiction over the Appeal by Petition for Review for the Trial Judge in Administrative Justice

In the context of realizing administrative justice by strengthening the principle of litigation at two levels, the legislator introduced a fundamental step in the history of the administrative judicial system by organizing the rules of administrative courts of appeal as a second level of litigation—as a general principle—and ensured their establishment alongside administrative courts as the first level of litigation. This was done pursuant to the 2020 Constitution and the legislative amendments to the Judicial Law No. 22/10 and Law No. 22/13, which amended and supplemented the Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure. Moreover, the legislator went further by assigning jurisdiction over petitions for review (requests for reconsideration) to these judicial bodies (courts of first instance in administrative justice), thereby expanding their jurisdiction. This reflects the legislator's intent to uphold several principles, foremost among them fair trial and enabling litigants to have an effective mechanism to remedy gross judicial errors.

Section One: Courts of First Instance in Administrative Justice

The courts of first instance in administrative justice are defined by Organic Law No. 22/10 concerning the organization of the judiciary, which stipulates in Article 4 that: "The administrative judicial system consists of the Council of State, courts of appeal, and administrative courts."

Based on this provision, the administrative judiciary is defined in Articles 29(1) and 31 respectively as follows: "The Administrative Court of Appeal shall serve as the appellate body for judgments and orders issued by administrative courts," and "The administrative court shall hear administrative matters."

Accordingly, under these two provisions, the legislator established two levels of litigation within the administrative judicial system: the administrative court as the first instance court, and the administrative court of appeal as the second instance.

The legislator also granted the Administrative Court of Appeal in Algiers jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate certain disputes as a court of first instance, with its rulings subject to appeal before the Council of State, which acts as the second level of litigation.

Below are the provisions related to each level of litigation, both of which represent the courts of first instance:

First: Administrative Courts

These form the base of the administrative judicial hierarchy in Algeria. They constitute the first level of litigation in administrative disputes and exercise general jurisdiction therein, except for disputes assigned to other judicial bodies pursuant to Article 800(1) of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure.

They have jurisdiction to rule in the first instance, with appealable judgments, in all cases involving the state, wilaya, municipality, administrative public institutions, national public bodies, and national professional organizations, in accordance with Article 800(2) of the same law.

Article 801 of the same law provides that:

"Administrative courts shall also have jurisdiction over:

1. Actions for annulment, interpretation, and examination of the legality of decisions issued by:

− The wilaya and deconcentrated state services at the wilaya level.
− The municipality.
− Regional professional organizations.
− Local public administrative institutions.

2. Full jurisdiction actions.
3. Cases assigned to them by specific texts."

However, contrary to the above, administrative courts do not have jurisdiction over road traffic offenses or disputes involving liability claims for damages caused by vehicles belonging to the state, wilayas, municipalities, or administrative public institutions, in accordance with Article 802 of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure. Articles 803 to 806 of the same Code define the local jurisdiction of administrative courts. The legislator delegated the determination of court locations to regulatory authority, which was established by Executive Decree No. 22/435 of 11 December 2022, specifying the territorial jurisdictions of administrative courts of appeal and administrative courts.

Second: Administrative Courts of Appeal

The subject-matter jurisdiction of administrative courts of appeal is defined in Article 29 of Organic Law No. 22/10 on judicial organization, which provides:

"The Administrative Court of Appeal is the appellate body for judgments and orders issued by administrative courts.

It also has jurisdiction over cases assigned to it by specific texts."

This provision is identical in wording and substance to the first and second paragraphs of Article 900 bis of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure.

Accordingly, administrative courts of appeal constitute the second level of litigation and also have jurisdiction to:

− Hear appeals against judgments and orders issued by administrative courts.
− Hear cases assigned to them by specific texts.

The legislator defined the territorial jurisdiction of administrative courts of appeal in Article 8 of Organic Law No. 22/07 concerning judicial division, without establishing separate rules of territorial jurisdiction for them. Therefore, the territorial rules applicable to administrative courts remain applicable to them.

Third: The Council of State as an Appellate Court

The legislator granted the Administrative Court of Appeal in Algiers exclusive jurisdiction to hear certain disputes listed in paragraph 3 of Article 900 bis of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure (Law No. 22/13) as a court of first instance, with appeal to the Council of State as the second level of litigation. These disputes include actions for annulment, interpretation, and assessment of the legality of administrative decisions issued by central administrative authorities, national public bodies, and national professional organizations.

Thus, actions for annulment, interpretation, and legality assessment of decisions issued by these authorities are exclusively filed before the Administrative Court of Appeal in Algiers, excluding full-jurisdiction cases, which remain under the competence of administrative courts as courts of first instance.

Accordingly, the Council of State acts as a court of first instance when hearing appeals against decisions issued by the Administrative Court of Appeal in Algiers in disputes lawfully assigned to it. Its decisions are final and can only be challenged by a petition for review (request for reconsideration).

Section Two: Extension of Jurisdiction over Petitions for Review to Administrative Courts of First Instance

In order to enhance judicial efficiency and strengthen the positive role of the administrative judge, the legislator expanded the jurisdiction of courts of first instance in administrative justice to include petitions for review, as stated in Article 10 of Law No. 22/23 amending and supplementing the Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure:

“Articles 966 and 967 … of Law No. 08-09 of 25 February 2008 … are amended and supplemented as follows:

Article 966: 'A petition for review may only be filed against final judgments issued by administrative courts and final decisions issued by administrative courts of appeal and/or the Council of State acting as an appellate court.'"

Based on this provision, the legislator took a significant step in the history of administrative justice by granting litigants an additional opportunity to correct miscarriages of justice before the nearest judicial authority instead of having to travel to Algiers, where the Council of State—the highest administrative judicial body—has exclusive jurisdiction to hear petitions for review. This enables the administrative judge at the administrative court or court of appeal, or the Council of State acting as a court of first instance, to reexamine the facts of the case with full authority based on the grounds for the petition to determine its legality. This approach contributes to realizing the principle of bringing justice closer to citizens, facilitating access to courts, and ensuring the right to litigation. It also allows the judge to elevate his role from being merely a judge of fact to a judge of both fact and law, by reviewing his own decisions in light of new evidence or serious errors, thereby improving the quality of judgments and ensuring a fair trial for litigants.

Chapter Two: Legal and Practical Implications of Strengthening the Positive Role of the Administrative Judge in Achieving Administrative Justice

The Algerian legislator's approach to promoting the positive role of the administrative judge—from being merely a judge of fact to one of both fact and law—at both levels of litigation inevitably reflects its effects on the philosophy of administrative justice. It enhances judicial oversight over administrative actions, protects rights and freedoms, and contributes to the development of administrative law through judicial interpretation. These are among the legal and practical consequences that must be understood to assess the growing impact of this role on administrative justice and to anticipate the future development of administrative adjudication amid contemporary challenges.

Section One: Legal Implications of Strengthening the Positive Role of the Administrative Judge

Amid the legal transformations observed in comparative legal systems, it has become necessary for the Algerian legislator to strengthen the positive role of the administrative judge to establish the rule of law and ensure the protection of rights and freedoms. This allows the administrative judge to enhance justice through the quality of his judgments and by ensuring fair trials for litigants.

Subsection One: At the Level of Judiciary (Quality of Judicial Decisions)

The quality of administrative judgments is a mechanism for enhancing judicial efficiency. This can only be achieved through the exercise of judicial appeal mechanisms that allow review of judgments, thereby correcting legal or procedural errors. This process encourages judges to issue precise and well-reasoned rulings that elevate judicial quality.

A petition for review is an extraordinary remedy against final judgments rendered by administrative courts and final decisions of administrative courts of appeal and/or the Council of State acting as an appellate body. For admissibility, it must be based on one of the reasons explicitly enumerated by law, as stated in Article 967 of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure:

"A petition for review may be filed in the following two cases:

1. If it is discovered that the decision was based on forged documents presented for the first time before the administrative court.
2. If a party was convicted due to the non-presentation of a decisive document withheld by the opponent."

From this, it appears that the legislator defined two specific grounds for review:

- If it is discovered that the decision was based on forged documents presented for the first time before the administrative court, the court of appeal, or the Council of State as an appellate court.

A valid decision must rely on authentic documents; thus, if it is established that a decision was based on forged documents, whether official or private, and those documents influenced the outcome, the petitioner may seek review before the same administrative court that rendered the decision. If the forged document had only minor influence and the decision was supported by sufficient other evidence, review is inadmissible. The forgery must be proven by admission or judicial decision—civil or criminal—and discovered after the decision but before filing for review.

- If a party was convicted because a decisive document was withheld by the opponent: A losing party may file for review if they later obtain documents that, had they been submitted during trial, could have changed the outcome. The decisive nature of the document—not its formal status—is what matters, and this is determined by the judge's discretion. The document must have been withheld by the opponent, whether intentionally or incidentally, and the petitioner must not have known of its existence or withholding before the decision. If the petitioner knew of it and failed to compel its production, the petition is inadmissible.

Subsection Two: At the Level of Litigants (Guarantee of Fair Trial)

When the administrative court considers a petition for review, it must first verify, ex officio, the formal validity of the petition and ensure that it challenges a final judgment based on one of the statutory grounds. If all legal conditions are met, the court accepts the petition and proceeds to examine the merits impartially and independently, within the scope defined by the legislator. The petition for review is an exceptional remedy filed before the same judicial body that rendered the decision, supported by reasons defined by law, allowing the court to reconsider the case de novo—factually and legally—pursuant to Article 390 and Article 395 of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure, which provides: "Review upon petition for reconsideration shall be limited to the parts of the judgment or decision that justify review, unless there are other interrelated parts." Thus, the court examines only the aspects raised by the petition within the legal grounds invoked, without reassessing the entire judgment, focusing instead on new reasons discovered after its issuance that could have altered its outcome.

Consequently, acceptance of the petition leads to the annulment of the challenged decision, rendering it void as if it never existed, which is the very purpose of this remedy. If, however, the judicial authority finds that the petition lacks any of the statutory grounds, it must, ex officio, rule the petition inadmissible.

Chapter Two: Practical Implications of Strengthening the Positive Role of the Administrative Judge in Achieving Administrative Justice

By upgrading the role of the administrative judge from a judge of fact to a judge of both fact and law simultaneously, the legislator did not limit this to ruling on appeals but rather enabled the judge to exercise this pivotal role as an influential actor in the creation of legal and administrative rules and the development of their system, in order to realize effective justice and strengthen judicial oversight to achieve a balance between public authority and individual rights and freedoms.

Section One: Achieving Effective Justice

In its pursuit of administrative justice, the legislator adopted the principle of effective justice in amending the Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure through a set of legal provisions that were modified. The authority to adjudicate petitions for review (requests for reconsideration) was transferred from the highest judicial authority in the administrative judicial system—the Council of State acting as a judge of law—to first- and second-instance judges of fact. This represents clear evidence of the legislator's intention to achieve effective justice, as the

judgment under review is reconsidered based on one of the grounds for review before the same judicial body that initially ruled on the case, both in terms of facts and reasoning, ensuring adjudication within reasonable timeframes and quality judgments, provided the case file remains before the same judicial body that issued the contested decision, in accordance with Article 394 of the amended and supplemented Code of Civil and Administrative Procedure, which stipulates:

"The petition for review shall be filed before the judicial body that issued the judgment, decision, or order under review, according to the forms prescribed for filing a lawsuit, after summoning all parties in accordance with the law."

This approach strengthens litigants' confidence in the justice system, instead of restricting petitions for review to decisions issued only by the highest judicial authority in the administrative judicial system, which would prolong procedures and result in delays, accumulation of cases, or require review of first-instance decisions before another body at the apex of the administrative judicial system. Furthermore, the petition must include specific information and procedural details, or it will be rejected. It must explicitly state the details of the contested decision, its date, and the grounds for review; otherwise, it is null. Complementing these procedures, the legislator requires the official summoning of opposing parties and other stakeholders, as expressed in Article 394: "after summoning all parties in accordance with the law," which encompasses all parties against whom the petition for review is filed in a single case—a fundamental requirement for practical litigation logic to ensure a fair trial.

Section Two: Strengthening Judicial Oversight

As part of justice sector reform, the legislator made the amended provisions governing petitions for review an effective mechanism to expand judicial oversight over administrative judicial decisions. The law requires that petitions for review be filed against final judgments of administrative courts and final decisions of administrative courts of appeal and/or the Council of State acting as an appellate court. This is an exclusive competence despite the fact that the judge is a judge of fact, making it a legal appeal.

This means that once these judicial bodies issue a judgment or decision—thereby resolving the dispute—they may reconsider the dispute if one of the grounds for review is met. This enhances judicial intervention in monitoring administrative acts, empowering judges to challenge unlawful administrative actions and to develop legal mechanisms to ensure the protection of rights and freedoms.

This expansion of judicial oversight at the level of judges of fact, extending to their authority as judges of law, allows them to verify the legality of a judgment or decision when one of the

grounds for a petition for review is invoked, reflecting the legislator's confidence in the administrative judge's ability to balance authority and rights—a key indicator of judicial security.

Conclusion

Our study of the legislator's experience in strengthening the positive role of the administrative judge shows that it was a pivotal step toward achieving effective administrative justice. It established a set of constitutional principles for human rights in justice, such as the right to a fair trial, bringing justice closer to citizens, and so on—all aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of administrative justice, the cornerstone for building a rule-of-law state.

In this context, the legislator, fulfilling the President's commitment to comprehensive and deep justice reform, expanded the powers of judges of fact at both levels of administrative litigation to include the powers of judges of law when exercising petitions for review. This legislative initiative embodies the purpose of such petitions: to review a final judgment or decision when one of the grounds for review is met.

However, the practical implementation of this legal experience faces several challenges that limit its effectiveness, such as weaknesses in the procedural legal framework for this type of petition, the lack of a participatory culture regarding the administrative judge's role among some judges, and insufficient specialized training.

Accordingly, to implement this legislative experience and address the challenges, we propose the following points:

- Continue reforming the judicial system, particularly by modernizing procedural laws and digitizing administrative justice to facilitate easy and rapid access to justice through technology.
- Ensure continuous professional development for judges through specialized training programs in administrative law, comparative law, and alternative dispute resolution methods.
- Expand the powers of administrative judges to intervene positively in oversight, enhancing their effectiveness in reducing judicial backlog and procedural delays by accelerating case adjudication and improving the quality of judicial decisions in terms of reasoning and reliance on accurate facts.
- Expand the powers of administrative judges to intervene positively in evidentiary matters, granting them wide discretion in accepting evidence, including the authority to request documents from the administration, for example.

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