

**European
Elections monitor**1) **Analysis** : page 12) **Result 1st round** : page 73) **Result 2nd round** : page 11

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Analysis

Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen running easily ahead in the polls just one month before the presidential election in France

On 23rd April next 46.6 million French voters and 1.3 million living elsewhere in the world are being called to vote in the first round of the presidential election. The two candidates who come out ahead on the eve of 23rd April will face each other in a second round of voting that will take place two weeks later on 7th May. The presidential election will be followed on 11th and 18th June by general elections that will lead to the renewal of the 577 members' seats in the National Assembly, the lower chamber of parliament.

The election that will be taking place in an international context marked by the Brexit and the victory of Donald Trump on 8th November last in the American presidential election means that everything is now possible and more uncertain than ever before. The main issue at stake in this presidential election is the following: who will challenge Marine Le Pen (Front National, FN) in the second round? The qualification of the far right populist candidate in the battle on 7th May indeed seems to be certain, if we are to believe the polls. If the latter are right she may face Emmanuel Macron (En Marche, EM), who, in the face of a candidate who is advocating national withdrawal, the rejection of Europe and immigration, is standing as the defender of openness, a supporter of the European Union and a reformer who will take France into the 20th century. We can see that the rift between the open/closed societies seems to be taking over from the left/right vote in this election.

Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen are thriving on the crisis ongoing in the partisan system, on the weakening and discredit which the politicians from the two "main" parties are suffering, i.e. the Socialist Party (PS) in office for the past five years in France and the Republicans (LR), who might not feature in the second round of the presidential election, which would certainly lead to a major reshuffle in the French political landscape.

According to the most recent poll by IFOP between 21st and 24th March last, Emmanuel Macron is due to come out ahead in the first round of voting on 23rd April next

with 26% of the vote, ahead of Marine Le Pen, who is due to win 25% of the vote. The candidate of the government right, François Fillon (Les Républicains, LR) is due to win 18% of the vote. On the left, with 18% of the vote, Jean-Luc Mélenchon is due to draw ahead of the Socialist Party's representative, Benoît Hamon, who is due to win 10.50% of the vote. Although the electorate's interest is high so is the level of uncertainty and indecision. One third of those interviewed (35%) said that they might still change their mind. Finally 37% of those interviewed maintain that they will not go to ballot.

The candidates running

On 18th March last, the Constitutional Council published a list of 11 people, i.e. one less than in the election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012, of candidates who are officially running in the presidential election. They will be the following:

- Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la France DLF (France, Arise)), 56 years old, unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012 (1.79% of the vote in the first round), eurosceptic and anti-liberal;
- Marine Le Pen (Front national, FN (National Front)), 48 years old, leader of the populist far-right since 2011, unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012 (17.90% of the vote in the first round);

Presidential election in France 23rd April and 7th May 2017

– Emmanuel Macron (En Marche, EM), 39 years old, former Secretary General of the Elysée under the presidency of François Hollande (2012-2014) and former Minister for the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs (2014-2016);

– Benoît Hamon (Socialist Party, PS), 49 years old, former delegate Minister for Social Economy and Solidarity and Consumer Affairs, (2012-2014) and the National Education, Higher Education and Research, (April-August 2014), presently an MP and regional councillor in the Ile-de-France. He was appointed to be his party's candidate after so-called "Belle Alliance" primary on 22nd and 29th January 2017, when he came out ahead of former Prime Minister (2014-2016) Manuel Valls with 58.69% of the vote;

– Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO (Workers' Struggle)), 47 years old, economics teacher, defends the overthrow of capitalism. She was the unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012 (0.56% of the vote in the first round);

– Philippe Poutou (Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste, NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party)), 50 years old, unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012 (1.15% of the vote in the first round). He is fighting amongst other things for the prohibition of dismissals and an increase in the minimum salary to 1,700 € net per month;

– Jacques Cheminade (Solidarité et progress (Solidarity and Progress)), 75 years old, unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May 1995 (0.28% of the vote in the first round) and that of the presidential election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012 (0.25% of the vote in the first round). He is fighting to counter the dictatorship of finance and American imperialism;

– Jean Lassalle (independent), 61 years old, MP, stands to be the defender of rurality;

– Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Front de gauche, FG (Left Front)), 65 years old, MEP, unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 22nd April and 6th May 2012 (11.10% of the vote in the first round);

– François Asselineau (Union populaire républicaine (People's Republican Union)), 59 ans, former councillor for Paris (2001-2008). Extremely hostile to "American imperialism" he is fighting for France's exit of the EU and NATO;

– François Fillon (Les Républicains, LR (The Republicans)), 63 years old, former Prime Minister under the Presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012) and former minister on several occasions. He was appointed candidate of his party after the primary on 20th and 27th November 2016 when he drew ahead of former Prime Minister (1995-1997) and present Mayor of Bordeaux, Alain Juppé, taking 66.49% of the vote.

The campaign full of surprises

The presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May is already unique since it goes against all of the rules in this type of exercise.

Firstly, the relinquishment of the outgoing President of the Republic, François Hollande (Socialist Party, PS) on 1st December to stand for a second mandate. "*I am doing this and take full responsibility, but also I am appealing for a collective leap of conscience which involves all of the progressives who must come together in these circumstances since what is at stake is not one person, it is the future of the country,*" declared the head of State in his speech delivered to the nation. This withdrawal is the first under the fifth French Republic. The head of State, who has an extremely low popularity rate in the polls (4% according to a survey undertaken by Ipsos-Cevipof for the daily *Le Monde*), partly linked his political fate after his five year mandate to the results he achieved in terms of unemployment. This has not declined over the last five years as much as he had hoped it would (9.30% unemployed in the second quarter of 2012 amongst the working population and 9.70% in the fourth quarter of 2016).

François Hollande has also possibly learnt the lesson of other seasoned politicians, who were ejected during the primary on the right and the centre – the second unique event – his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy (LR) in the first round of voting (20.67% of the vote) and Alain Juppé (LR) in the second (33.51% of the vote). Some weeks later it was the turn of former Prime Minister Manuel Valls (PS) to suffer the same fate in the primary on the left (41.31% of the vote in the second round).

Indeed, on the right and the left, each organised a

primary to appoint their candidate in the presidential election. However, unlike events in 2011, during the primary on the left when voters chose “the candidate of consensus” as François Hollande was then called, in each of the camps this year the primary gave victory to candidates that were strongly influenced either by the right (François Fillon) or the left (Benoît Hamon), more than the line of their respective political party. This is the third unusual element in this campaign.

As a result (fourth factor) this situation has been to the advantage of Emmanuel Macron who declares that he is neither left or right-wing and that he stands under the colours of the movement “En marche” which he created on 6th April 2016. He is a candidate who has never been elected, and has been joined by François Bayrou (Democratic Movement, MoDem), positioning himself in the centre of the political scale, who decided not to stand in the election. Emmanuel Macron is attracting supporters of the Socialist Party and the Republicans who have been disappointed by their camp.

Hence several ministers of the outgoing government (to date, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (PS), the Secretary responsible for Biodiversity, Barbara Pompili (Europe Ecology-Greens, EELV) and her counterpart, the Minister for Youth and Sport Thierry Braillard (Radical Left Party, PRG)) have chosen to support rather than to campaign for Benoît Hamon, whom they criticise for his rebellious, if not hostile attitude to those in office during the five year mandate of François Hollande, and his programme which is too far to the left than that of the Socialist Party. Manuel Valls himself declared on 19th March that he was not supporting the official candidate of his political party. The former Prime Minister denounces the “*ambient cynicism in which everything and its contrary is being promised, in which blank cheques are being signed.*”

On the right some of those close to the Republicans have stepped back from the victor of the primary in their camp, François Fillon, but for other reasons. Indeed, and this is the fifth unique element in this campaign; on 14th March, the official Republican candidate was charged with embezzling public funds, for aiding and abetting the embezzlement of public funds, for aiding

and abetting the misuse of company assets and the breach of his declarative obligations (taxes), which is a first under the fifth Republic.

He is accused of having paid his wife, Penelope and his two children for supposedly fictitious jobs as parliamentary assistants. His wife was also paid by the “Revue des deux mondes” for work that is also said to have been fictitious. Two days later, François Fillon was challenged for having accepted gifts of luxury suits totalling several tens of thousands of euros on the part of a lawyer, Robert Bourgi.

After having declared that only if he was charged would he step down from the presidential race, the right-wing candidate finally chose to offer himself up to universal suffrage. “*The closer we get to the presidential election the more scandalous it would be to deprive the right and the centre of a candidate (...). My decision is clear: I am running and I shall go to victory,*” he indicated on 18th February last. The Republican candidate claims he is the victim of a frame-up, a conspiracy, launched by the highest office of State, of a “*black cabinet driven by the outgoing President of the Republic, François Hollande,*” he said on 23rd March last.

But François Fillon is not the only candidate to be experiencing legal problems. Marine Le Pen is also being accused by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) for having paid two people (one of her co-workers and body guards) for fictitious jobs as parliamentary assistants between 2010 and 2016. Protected by her parliamentary immunity as an MEP she has refused to answer any court summons.

What are the candidates offering?

Over the last five years the Front National has constantly consolidated its influence: Marine Le Pen’s party won 24.86% of the vote in the European elections on 25th May 2014, 25.24% of the vote in the first round of the departmental elections, on 22nd and 29th March the following year, and finally, 27.73% in the first round of the regional elections on 6th and 13th December 2015. The populist candidate has led in all of the polls and all political analysts have been anticipating her presence

Presidential election in France 23rd April and 7th May 2017

in the second round of the presidential election for the last few years. She can rely on an extremely determined electorate who really do not care at all about the accusations and the questions of which she is the focus. Moreover, in Emmanuel Macron, she has found a "globalist" as she likes to call him, and an ideal rival.

Marine Le Pen's programme is extremely nationalist (re-introduction of the national borders, exit of the Schengen area and the euro area). Her lead proposal "is to win back France's sovereignty". She is promising, if she is elected, to organise two referendums in quick succession, one on national priority and the second so that France can "recover its budgetary, territorial, monetary and legislative sovereignty". The Front National candidate supports retirement at 60 after 40 years of contributions and the re-introduction of the national currency. She hopes to introduce a tax on the engagement of foreign workers and to grant priority to the French in terms of the attribution of social housing.

Emmanuel Macron says he is "outside of the system", whilst his career has taken him through the best schools of the Republic, the corporate bank Rothschild, the Elysée and the Ministry of the Economy. He is taking advantage of the discredit to which the political parties have fallen in the eyes of the French population. *"I will not settle to be blocked in by divisions of another age which no longer respond to the challenges of the world and our country. Regarding the major issues of our time, the left and the right are deeply divided and so they are being prevented from taking action;"* he wrote in his book, Révolution.

Although Emmanuel Macron has managed to rally 200,000 people to his name under his movement "En Marche" and although the polls are forecasting him to be Marine Le Pen's future rival in the second round on 7th May next, it remains that he is also the candidate whom potential voters also say they are finally less sure to pick. Unlike the Front national candidate his electoral base is extremely volatile.

Emmanuel Macron stands as a pragmatist. Pro-European, he hopes for the harmonisation of the EU

Member States' budgetary policy and the introduction of new institutions to which national governments would transfer more sovereignty. He is also attached to the respect of the European rule which stipulates that the budgetary deficit must remain below 3% of the national GDP.

He supports the end of special retirement schemes, the abolition of sickness and unemployment contributions, a 1.7 point increase in the CSG (except for the unemployed and 40% of the poorest pensioners), the exoneration of the housing tax for 80% of households within the next three years, the suspension of unemployment benefits after the refusal of two decent job offers and a reduction on corporate tax from 33.3% to 25%.

The "En Marche" candidate also wants to create around 5000 teaching posts and 10,000 police and gendarme positions. Finally, from a political point of view, he wants to reduce the number of French parliamentarians by one third.

For his part François Fillon is continuing his electoral campaign. Some analysts thought for a time that he would be obliged to throw in the towel; likewise some of those close to him had started to defect (more than three hundred MPs, his spokesperson Thierry Solère and his campaign director Patrick Stéfani). On 5th March the former Prime Minister held a meeting at the Trocadero in Paris which helped him bounce back. The next day his rival in the November primary Alain Juppé announced that he was not going to replace the candidate of the Republicans or stand for the vote of the French. There are many questions: is François Fillon in a position to lead a campaign? Is he able to explain his austerity policy to the French? Can he force them to adhere to a discipline from which he freed himself? Finally, will he succeed in rallying a fragmented right-wing to his name? Answer on 23rd April.

The Republican candidate is offering a liberal but Colbertist economic programme (a two point increase of VAT, the repeal of the 35 hour working week, the abolition of the wealth tax, an alignment of the public/private retirement schemes, abolition of 500,000 civil

servants' positions over five years. He is a conservative regarding questions of society: revision of the Taubira bill to prevent plenary adoption by homosexuals, a ban on medically assisted procreation for single women or women only couples.

A supporter of a strong Europe with strong nations, François Fillon wants to strengthen the intergovernmental functioning of the EU and introduce a policy service for the euro zone by the heads of State and government. He also supports a Defence Union. Finally he supports the repeal of economic sanctions implemented against Russia.

Benoît Hamon is also finding it difficult to rally support from his own camp and has widened his electoral base. On 23rd February last the ecologist candidate Yannick Jadot (Europe Ecology/The Greens EELV) gave up running in the presidential election to the benefit of the socialist candidate. The ecologist gained the promise from Hamon for an exit from nuclear power over the next 25 years, the end of the planned airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes (Nantes) and the introduction of proportional voting in the general elections. The socialist candidate also proposed an alliance to Jean-Luc Mélenchon, which the latter refused. Now the two men are vying for the leadership of the left. Benoît Hamon must imperatively win more votes than his Left Front rival if he wants to play a role in the reshuffle of the left which will take place after the presidential election.

The introduction of a universal revenue and ecological transition are two main priorities in the socialist programme. The universal revenue, planned to support the buying power of those who receive it, should, once it is initially introduced, cover 19 million French citizens whose revenues do not exceed 2,200 € monthly. Benoît Hamon also plans to increase the minimum wage and also the minimum retirement pension. He wants to introduce a tax on robots (in companies where automation is going hand in hand with reductions in the number of employees), to protect work which in his opinion is becoming rarer and to retain half of public procurement for SMEs.

At European level the Mr Hamon would like to see the signature of a treaty on the democratisation of the governance of the euro area. He is against "austerity" and wants a repeal of the 3% rule (public deficit of a Member State must not exceed 3% of its GDP) and a pooling of a Member State's debt when this rises beyond 60% of the GDP.

Finally he would like to introduce a citizens' initiative bill whereby 1% of the electorate would be able to propose a bill on parliament's agenda and submit this law to referendum.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon wants "austerity" to end and the launch a vast plan of revival that would involve an investment plan of 100 billion € financed by borrowing. The populist left candidate plans for an increase in the public debt of 1,733 billion € over the five year mandate (France's debt totals 2196.4 billion €, i.e. 97.60% of its GDP). He also maintains that he would create more than three million jobs. He is campaigning for a devaluation of the euro and is challenging the independence of the European Central Bank (ECB) and would like a moratorium on the reimbursement of debts.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon is demanding the re-negotiation of the European treaties in force (the result of this would be submitted to referendum by the French population) and a "democratic, social and ecological re-founding of the Union".

The French Political System

France is a semi-presidential regime. Since 1962 the president of the French Republic has been elected by direct universal suffrage according to a majority two round vote. If none of the candidates wins the absolute majority of the vote in the first round, a second round is organised two weeks later.

Any candidate running for the supreme office must imperatively be aged 23 at least and present at least 500 signatures of elected representatives (MPs, regional councillors, general councillors, mayors) from at least 30 departments or overseas communities

Presidential election in France 23rd April and 7th May 2017

without one tenth of them being representatives of the same territory. Since this year the name of the representatives who have given their name to a candidate is published.

The head of the army, the President of the French Republic holds the executive power. He appoints the Prime Minister and terminates his function on the presentation by the latter of his resignation from

government. The head of State promulgates the laws on the proposal of the government or by both chambers of parliament. He can also submit a bill or a treaty ratification to referendum. After consultation with the Prime Minister and the leaders of both chambers the President of the Republic can also pronounce the dissolution of the National Assembly, the lower chamber of Parliament.

Reminder of the Presidential election results of 22nd April and 6th May 2012 in France

Turnout: 79.48% (first round) and 80.35% (second round)

Candidates	Number of votes won (first round)	% of votes won (first round)	Number of votes won (second round)	% of votes won (second round)
François Hollande (Socialist Party PS)	10 272 705	28.63	18 000 668	51.64
Nicolas Sarkozy (Union for a Popular Movement, UMP)	9 753 629	27.18	16 860 685	48.36
Marine Le Pen (National Front, FN)	6 421 426	17.90		
Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Left Front, FG)	3 984 822	11.10		
François Bayrou (Democratic Movement, MoDem)	3 275 122	9.13		
Eva Joly (Europe Ecology The Greens EELV)	828 345	2.31		
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Republic Arise, DLR)	643 907	1.79		
Philippe Poutou (New Anti-Capitalist Party, NPA)	411 160	1.15		
Nathalie Arthaud (Workers' Struggle, LO)	202 548	0.56		
Jacques Cheminade (Solidarity & Progress)	89 545	0.25		

Source: Web site of the Constitutional Council <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/les-decisions/acces-par-date/decisions-depuis-1959/2012/2012-152-pdr/decision-n-2012-152-pdr-du-25-avril-2012.108521.html> (for the first round) and <http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/les-decisions/acces-par-date/decisions-depuis-1959/2012/2012-154-pdr/decision-n-2012-154-pdr-du-10-mai-2012.108531.html> (for the second round).

Emmanuel Macron will face Marine Le Pen in the second round of the French presidential election on 7th May next

Result
1st round

After a totally unique electoral campaign the results of the first round have confirmed the exceptional nature of the presidential election that took place in France on 23rd April.

As forecast by the polls Emmanuel Macron (En Marche) came out ahead in the first round. The former Minister for the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs (2014-2016) won 24.01% and drew ahead of Marine Le Pen (Front National, FN) who won 21.3% of the vote (+ 3.4 points in comparison with the first round of the presidential election on 22nd April 2012). François Fillon (Les Républicains, LR) came third winning 20.01% of the vote. "In spite of all my best efforts, my determination, I did not manage to convince you. The obstacles placed in my way were too numerous, too cruel. The truth of this election will be written. I assume my responsibilities, this defeat is mine, it is up to me to bear it alone," declared the former Prime Minister (2007-2012) when the results were announced. Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Front de gauche, FG) came fourth with 19.58% of the vote (+ 8.4 points in comparison with 2012). Initially the MEP refused acknowledge the election results, indicating until late in the night that he might garner more votes but this did not happen. Although he did not qualify for the second round Jean-Luc Mélenchon can rejoice in the fact that he won the battle on the left, of which he has been dreaming since he left the Socialist Party in 2008, and that he is now well positioned to take the lead of this political trend.

For his part Socialist Party candidate

(PS) Benoît Hamon suffered a serious defeat: he won just 6.36% of the vote, the lowest score ever won by a socialist in the presidential election since 1969, the year in which Gaston Defferre won 5.01% of the vote. "I failed to foil the disaster that had been brewing for many months. I take full responsibility for this without blaming the last five years and the betrayals. This failure is a deep wound, of which I gauge the historic, legitimate sanction expressed in regard to the Socialist Party. The elimination of the left by the far right for the second time in fifteen years is not only an electoral defeat. It is also a moral one for the country," declared Benoît Hamon when the results were announced. The candidate certainly suffered because of the divisions within the party, with some socialists not forgiving him for having taken part in the rebellion against the outgoing government in the second half of François Hollande's five year term.

Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la France, DLF) won 4.7% of the vote. He came out ahead of independent Jean Lassalle who won 1.21% of the vote; Philippe Poutou (Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste, NPA), 1.09%; François Asselineau (Union populaire républicaine, UPR), 0.92% ; Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO), 0.67% and Jacques Cheminade (Solidarité et progrès), 0.18%.

Presidential election in France 23rd April and 7th May 2017

Turnout was slightly lower than that recorded during the first round of the presidential election on 22nd April 2012. It lay at 78.69%.

For the first time in the history of the 5th Republic, the candidates of the country's two main government parties – the Socialist Party (PS) and the Republicans (LR) – were severely sanctioned and eliminated in the first round of the election. Together they rallied 26.37% of the vote, i.e. -9.84 points in comparison with the first round of the presidential election of 2002 when the socialist candidate Lionel Jospin came third, beaten by Jean-Marie Le Pen (FN).

Fifteen years later the Front National has qualified for the second time for the second round of the French presidential election. Its representative, Marine, (48 years), daughter of Jean-Marie, will face a young candidate (39 years), unknown to the man in the street until three years ago, never elected previously, positioned outside of the traditional parties and the right/left split (neither left nor right or left and right) and leader of the movement "En Marche" that was created just three years ago, who

won his wager and qualified for the second round of the presidential election.

Emmanuel Macron, whose talent is undeniable, also had a great deal of luck during the entire campaign. Indeed the primary elections led, on the right – for whom the presidential election was impossible to lose – as on the left – where it was thought to be unwinnable – to the victory of the radical candidates. After this "the scandals" in which François Fillon was involved, then his indictment for the embezzlement of public funds, complicity and the concealment of the embezzlement of public funds, complicity and the concealment of the misuse of company assets and failure to make truthful tax declarations, a first under the 5th Republic, meant that the former Prime Minister was inaudible in the campaign and made an easy path for the representative of En Marche.

A page is now turning in French political life which should lead to many reshuffles.

"In one year we have changed the face of French political life," indicated Emmanuel Macron. In spite of the results and the qualification of the populist

Results of the first round of the presidential election of 23rd April 2017 in France

Turnout: 78.69%

Candidates	No of votes won	% of votes won
Emmanuel Macron (En marche, EM)	8 528 585	24.01
Marine Le Pen (Front national, FN)	7 658 990	21.3
François Fillon (Les Républicains, LR)	7 126 632	20.01
Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Front de gauche, FG)	7 011 856	19.58
Benoît Hamon (Parti socialiste, PS)	2 268 838	6.36
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la République, DLR)	1 689 686	4.7
Jean Lassalle (indépendant)	433 996	1.21
Philippe Poutou (Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste, NPA)	392 454	1.09
François Asselineau (Union populaire républicaine, UPR)	329 951	0.92
Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO)	231 660	0.67
Jacques Cheminade (Solidarité et progrès)	63 076	0.18

Source: Home Affairs Ministry <http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Election-presidentielle-2017/Election-presidentielle-2017-resultats-globaux-du-premier-tour>

candidate for the second round of the election, matters are very different in 2017 from those in 2002. The left/right split is floundering – it is a system/anti-system split that seems to be emerging, together with a pro-European/anti-European divide. The “En Marche” candidate, Emmanuel Macron, aims to rally left and right; like his Front National rival – he wants to transform the political system. “*The challenge is to break with the system that has been unable to solve problems for the last thirty years,*” he repeated during the campaign.

If he wins against Marine Le Pen on 7th May he will then have to win a majority in the National Assembly in the general elections that will follow on 11th and 18th June. To do this Mr Macron has called on a wide assembly “*of all the progressives*” to form his parliamentary majority: “*The French have expressed their will for renewal. Our attitude is now that of an assembly that we shall continue until the elections.*” Undeniably Emmanuel Macron is the grand favourite in the second round. He has a great reservoir of votes and when the results were announced many personalities, both on the right and the left, called for people to vote for him on 7th May next.

On the left, Benoît Hamon called to vote him declaring that he wanted a “*barrier to be created against the far right*”; government spokesperson Stéphane Le Foll (PS) and even the leader of the National Assembly, Claude Bartolone (PS) called for the same action. Outgoing President of the Republic François Hollande (PS) is due to do the same in the days to come.

On the right, François Fillon immediately called for a vote in support of the En Marche candidate in the second round. “*Extremism can only bring misfortune and division to France. There is no other choice but to vote against the far right. I will vote in support of Emmanuel Macron. I believe it my duty to tell you in all honesty, it is with your conscience to think about what would be best for your country and your children,*” indicated the former Prime Minister. The leader of the region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur, Christian Estrosi (LR), the Senator and Mayor of Troyes, François Baroin (LR), the leader of the Senate Gérard Larcher (LR),

and former Prime Minister (1995-1997) and present Mayor of Bordeaux Alain Juppé (LR) said that they would vote for Emmanuel Macron.

However Jean-Luc Mélenchon did not give any voting directions for the second round. “*I have not been given any mandate by the 450,000 people who supported my candidacy. They will be called to vote,*” said he said. Philippe Poutou and Nathalie Artaud for their part said that they would vote blank on 7th May next.

“*This result is historic (...)* I am the candidate of the people. I am calling on all sincere patriots, where ever they might come from and whatever their experience and their vote, to leave their feelings behind because there is a higher interest for the country. What is vital is now at stake: the survival of France. I am calling on national unity behind our project for recovery,” declared Marine Le Pen on the announcement of the results.

Although the Front National candidate can be pleased with her qualification for the second round she is certainly disappointed with her result, which was below what she had hoped for, and her second position behind Emmanuel Macron.

After the first round the dynamic is more on the side of En Marche, who is however the person that Marine Le Pen wanted to confront the most.

Until now the populist candidate has never been able to assert her favourite themes (national identity, anti-globalisation) in this unique campaign. Between tours things will be different, such is the difference between the projects and visions for the future between the two candidates. Emmanuel Macron represents social liberalism, opening, Europe; his rival demands economic Statism, the nation, protectionism, and she challenges European integration and the euro.

Marine Le Pen, who claims to be the representative of the people, is due to depict her rival between rounds as the legacy of the outgoing President François Hollande and the candidate of the elites ad of Europe. Emmanuel Macron is indeed the most pro-European candidate of all of those who stood and he won the first round. Europe, like globalisation, are

to feature at the heart of the debate in the campaign in the second round.

A “*Republican front*” emerged as soon as the results were announced. This will however be weaker than the one that caused the failure of Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002. For the time being all of the polls credit Emmanuel Macron with victory in the second round of the presidential election on 7th May next with around 65% of the vote.

The result will be decisive on the one hand because the En Marche candidate will, if he wins, have to build (to earn) his parliamentary majority after the presidential election, which is far from being a certainty, and on the other hand, because the Front National with 35% of the vote and possibly even 40% would be able – given the state of collapse in which the Socialist Party and the Republicans find themselves, become the country’s leading opposition party.

Emmanuel Macron is the new President of the French Republic

Results 2nd round

Emmanuel Macron (En marche, EM) won the second round of the French presidential election by a wide margin on 7th May. The former Minister for the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs (2014-2016) won 66.10% of the vote; his rival Marine Le Pen (Front national, FN), won 33.90%. In the first round of the election on 23rd April the En Marche candidate won 24.01% of the vote and his rival 21.30%.

The Republican front was therefore effective. The vast majority of the representatives of the two "main" government parties – the Republicans (LR) and the Socialist Party (PS) – called to vote in support of Emmanuel Macron, likewise the outgoing head of State François Hollande (PS) on 24th April. However, Jean-Luc Mélenchon (France insoumise) chose not to indicate how to vote in the second round. On 2nd May his movement published the results of the consultation of his supporters regarding the choice they were to make in the 2nd round. Most of them (36.12%) said they would vote blank or void, 34.83% would vote for Emmanuel Macron and 29.05% said they would choose abstention.

Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la France, DLF), who won 4.70% of the vote in the first round was the only one to rally to the Front National candidate between rounds. Marine Le Pen promised to offer the leader of Debout la France the position of Prime Minister if she won on 7th May.

The post electoral polls show however that few of Dupont-Aignan's voters followed his voting indications in support of the Front National on 7th May: 30%, according to Ipsos and 39%, according to Harris. According to the latter Marine Le Pen also

received the support of 21% of François Fillon's voters (LR) and 11% of those who had voted for Jean-Luc Mélenchon. These figures were respectively 20% and 7% according to Ipsos.

For the latter 43% of Emmanuel Macron's voters said they voted for him firstly to block Marine Le Pen, 33% for the renewal that he represents, 16% for his programme and 8% for his personality.

Turnout was the vital issue at stake in the second round of the election. It rose to 74.56%, i.e. the lowest rate ever recorded since the second round of the presidential election of 2002. We might note that it was also below that of the first round of 23rd April last (77.77%), a first since 1969. Finally, a record number of voters (8.56%) chose to vote blank or void on 7th May.

"I know that the divisions of our nation have led to some voting for an extreme; I know of the anger, the doubt, the fear that some have expressed. I shall fight against the divisions that are undermining our society," declared Emmanuel Macron after the results were announced. The new president of the Republic maintained that he wanted to "rally and reconcile" over the next five years.

Presidential election in France 23rd April and 7th May 2017

Results of the Presidential Election 23rd April and 7th May 2017 in France

Turnout: 77.77% (1st round) and 74.56% (2nd round)

Candidates	No of votes won (1st round)	% of the votes won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of the votes won (2nd round)
Emmanuel Macron (En marche, EM)	8 656 346	24,01	20 753 798	66,10
Marine Le Pen (Front national, FN)	7 678 491	21,30	10 644 118	33,90
François Fillon (Les Républicains, LR)	7 212 995	20,01		
Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Front de gauche, FG)	7 059 951	19,58		
Benoît Hamon (Parti socialiste, PS)	2 291 288	6,36		
Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout la République, DLR)	1 695 000	4,70		
Jean Lassalle (indépendant)	435 301	1,21		
Philippe Poutou (Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste, NPA)	394 505	1,09		
François Asselineau (Union populaire républicaine, UPR)	332 547	0,92		
Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO)	232 384	0,64		
Jacques Cheminade (Solidarité et progrès)	65 586	0,18		

Source: Home Affairs Ministry <http://elections.interieur.gouv.fr/presidentielle-2017/FE.html>

For her part, Marine Le Pen quickly acknowledged her defeat. She immediately positioned herself as the leader of the opposition against the new head of State. She also announced that the Front National would undergo “deep transformation” in the weeks to come.

Emmanuel Macron, whose talent is undeniable, was extremely fortunate during the entire campaign. Indeed the primary elections led – on the right, which believed the presidential election to have been won already, likewise on the left, which believed it unwinnable – to the victory of the radicals. Following this the scandals in which François Fillon was involved, then the indictment of the former Prime Minister for the embezzlement of public funds, complicity and concealment of the embezzlement of public funds, complicity and concealment of the abuse of social goods and breach of reporting requirements, a first under the V Republic, made the campaign of the Republican candidate inaudible and allowed a wide margin to be

won by the representative of En Marche. Finally the relinquishment of the outgoing head of State François Hollande (PS) to stand in the election on 1st December last allowed him to enter the stage.

The first president of the Republic since Charles de Gaulle (1958-1969) to come from a movement formed around his personality rather than a political party, Emmanuel Macron now has to achieve a majority in the general elections that will take place on 11th and 18th June next. En Marche will put forward candidates in all constituencies, 70% of them will be from civil society. “*We have an enormous task before us and we have to build a true majority, one that is strong right away,*” stressed the new Head of State after his victory. Although Emmanuel Macron was elected by a wide margin as President of the Republic, the French do not seem prepared however to grant him an absolute majority in the National Assembly, if we are to believe the opinion polls: according to Ipsos 61% of them

do not want this, 39% support it. However his movement would come out ahead according to the polls. Kantar SOFRES forecasts it with 24% ahead of the LR-UDI 22%, the FN 21%, France insoumise 15% and the PS 9%; Harris credits it with 26% ahead of the LR and the FN standing equal with 22%, France insoumise 13% and the PS 8%.

The reform of the Labour Code, the moralisation of public life, the simplification of business life, the reform of the primary school, not forgetting new Franco-German impetus for Europe (before the summer and the German electoral campaign in view of the general elections on 24th September next) are the first areas on which the new president of the Republic will have to concentrate.

Aged 39, Emmanuel Macron holds a Masters in Philosophy from the University of Paris X (Nanterre). He is also a graduate of Sciences Po and the National School of Administration (ENA). In 2004 he became a finance inspector before joining the business bank Rothschild & Co four years later. In 2012, he was appointed Deputy Secretary General under François Hollande, before becoming Minister for the Economy, Industry and Digital Affairs in 2014 in the new government led by Manuel Valls (PS), a post from which he resigned on August 30th last year.

A member of the Socialist Party between 2006 and 2009 Emmanuel Macron founded En Marche on April 6th 2016, a movement that he defines as being neither on the left or the right. Never previously elected, he announced on 16th November last that he was standing for the French vote in the presidential election.

In three years, Emmanuel Macron has therefore achieved

what each of his predecessors have been seeking for decades: the acquisition of the status of potential president and to win the most important election in French political life. On 14th May he will take over from François Hollande at the Elysée and will become the youngest head of State in France's history.

Finally, we shall note that the French have chosen the most European of all of the candidates, also the young president elect celebrated his victory with his supporters to the sound of the European anthem, "Ode to Joy" by Beethoven.

Many European leaders were delighted with his election. "I am happy that the French have chosen a European future," said the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker (European People's Party, EPP). The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk (EPP) said that "France has always played a central role in the construction and development of the European Union and I am convinced that under your presidency France will continue to make a constructive contribution so that we can rise to our joint challenges and maintain our unity."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was one of the first "to warmly congratulate" Emmanuel Macron who is to make his first foreign trip one to Germany. Ms Merkel welcomed "a victory for a strong, united Europe and for Franco-German friendship." British Prime Minister Theresa May also congratulated him: "France is one of our closest allies and we are impatient to work with the new president in a great number of common priority areas."

This impatience was also shown by American president Donald Trump, who will meet the new French President very quickly given the international agenda that brings a NATO summit in Brussels on 25th May, a G7 Summit on 26th and 27th May in Italy and a G20 Summit on 7th and 8th July in Hamburg.

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