

The President of the Republic should secure a majority in the National Assembly on the occasion of the legislative elections of 12-19 June

Fifty days after the second round of the presidential election, the French are being called to the polls again on 12 and 19 June to renew the 577 members of the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament. The head of state, Emmanuel Macron (Renaissance/Renew), re-elected on 24 April with 58.55% of the vote, appointed on 16 May, Elisabeth Borne, Prime Minister of France. The latter formed her [government](#) on 20 May. This is the longest period spent forming a government in the history of the Fifth Republic.

By taking time to appoint the Prime Minister and members of the government, Emmanuel Macron has left his opponents uncertain about the direction he wants his second five-year term to take. The president of the Republic is fighting to keep his majority in the National Assembly. His two main opponents in the presidential election - Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement national, RN) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (La France insoumise, LFI) - are vying for the position of first opponent of the head of state.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon is campaigning calling on the French to "elect him Prime Minister" and he is pushing for cohabitation at the head of state. Marine Le Pen, who was Emmanuel Macron's rival in the second round of the presidential election on 24 April (she garnered 41.45% of the vote), is however severely hampered by the voting system in force in legislative elections. Moreover, since 2002 and the inversion of the electoral calendar (the legislative elections now follow the presidential elections), turnout

in the legislative elections has been steadily decreasing. Considering that the votes of 12.5% of registered voters are required to be included in the second round of voting, in the event of low turnout (e.g. around 50%, it was 48.70% in the first round of the last elections on 11 June 2017), the percentage of 12.5% of registered voters corresponds to around 25% of the votes cast. This also explains why five years ago there was only one three-way election in the second round.

"As this voting system was designed for a two-party system, when there are three blocs, there is a strong incentive for voters to position themselves in the centre against a more radical candidate on the left or right," analyses Martial Foucault, director of the Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po (CEVIPOF), adding "The situation is such that keeping the system as it is, is simply explosive. Institutions must evolve to deal with this essential question of representation."

Indeed, the two main opposition forces, the Rassemblement National and France Insoumise (leading the Nouvelle Union Populaire Ecologique et Sociale (NUPES)), could be reduced to a fraction in the next Assembly. "We are gradually sliding towards a presidential system with a National Assembly where small centrist groups from the centre-left or centre-right will multiply and where the extremes risk being left out. This is exactly how the Fourth Republic worked," says Frédéric Sawicki, professor of political science at the University of Paris 1.

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According to the latest opinion polls, the Ensemble confederation (presidential majority) and the NUPES (left-wing forces) are running neck and neck (around 26% of the vote) for the first round of voting on 12 June. The Rassemblement National is credited with 21% of the vote and Les Républicains (LR), allied to the Union des Démocrates et des Indépendants (UDI), with 10%. About 5% say they will vote for the candidates of Eric Zemmour's Reconquête! (R).

However, the presidential majority is expected to win in the second round of voting on 19 June: possibly taking around 300 seats in the National Assembly, thereby exceeding the absolute majority of 289. The left-wing are forecast to win 170 deputies. The Rassemblement National is credited with around 30 seats and Les Républicains/Union des Démocrates et des Indépendants with around 60.

The official campaign for the legislative elections will start on 30 May and end on 10 June at midnight.

THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY SHOULD RETAIN ITS MAJORITY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The bonus for the incumbent and the objective of offering a majority to the elected President of the Republic should benefit Emmanuel Macron on 12 and 19 June. The aim of the presidential majority, grouped under the label *Ensemble*, is to win a majority as large and solid as that of the previous five-year term, i.e. around 340-350 deputies in the Palais Bourbon, the seat of the National Assembly.

For these legislative elections, the presidential majority can no longer play on novelty as it did five years ago, but it must defend its record and set its course for the next five years.

The appointment of Elisabeth Borne, former Minister of Labour, Employment and Integration (2020-2022), Ecological Transition and Solidarity (2019-2020) and Transport (2017-2019), to the post of head of government on 16 May, can therefore be read as a wish by Emmanuel Macron to take his majority towards the left. The new Prime Minister, long close to the Socialist Party (PS), indeed worked with former Prime Minister (1997-2002) Lionel Jospin and Ségolène Royal.

Elisabeth Borne is a member of *Territoires de progrès*, a party that defines itself as the social-democratic wing of the presidential majority.

By his choice and that of the members of the new government, Emmanuel Macron hopes to win over voters of the social-democratic left who reject the radicalism of the new left-wing pole led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

Several ministers of the outgoing government have retained their portfolios, including Bruno Le Maire, in charge of the Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty; Gérald Darmanin, Home Minister, and Eric Dupond-Moretti, Justice Minister. Finally, Damien Abad, who was still chairman of *Les Républicains* group in the National Assembly a few days ago, will be Minister for Solidarity, Autonomy and the Disabled.

As for the method, the presidential majority was transformed on 5 May into a confederation called "Ensemble", which brings together three political parties: Renaissance, formerly Republic on the Move (LREM), the Democratic Movement (MoDem), party of François Bayrou, and Horizons, party of former Prime Minister (2017-2020), Edouard Philippe.

Emmanuel Macron supported the formation of a single party but had to bow to François Bayrou who defended a confederal model. However, it was agreed that MoDem and Horizons will each be able to form a parliamentary group (provided they get 15 MPs), but that they will not be able to poach members of another parliamentary group from the majority during the five-year term.

"The party has been reformed and is open to all elected representatives, wherever they come from, and to the current and future partners of the presidential majority," declared Stanislas Guerini, general delegate of Renaissance, who was appointed Minister of Transformation and Public Service on 20 May. The presidential majority aims to attract "orphaned" voters, from both the right and the left, who no longer recognise themselves in the parties that have long dominated the French political scene (on the right, the Republicans, and on the left, the Socialist Party). "Our respected differences are an asset," said Edouard Philippe. He

would have liked to make his Horizons party a central part of the future majority. For the President of the Republic, Renaissance forms the centre of the majority, the other parties being considered as auxiliary forces.

Renaissance candidates will be present in almost 400 constituencies, MoDem in 100 and Horizons candidates in 58 (having candidates in a minimum of 50 constituencies is mandatory to have access to public funding for the legislative elections).

RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL AND NEW PEOPLE'S ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL UNION, THE BATTLE FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION

Marine Le Pen is aiming to win at least sixty MPs for her party after the legislative elections. Five years ago, the RN, whose leader had reached the second round of the presidential election a few weeks before the legislative elections, won 8 seats in the National Assembly. In fact, forming a parliamentary group (i.e. securing at least 15 MPs) would already be a victory. Party leader, Jordan Bardella, repeats: "*This legislative election is the last opportunity, the French must realize this, which will help limit the powers of Emmanuel Macron*". Indeed, it should be noted that no local, regional or national elections will take place in France over the next four years. The French will only be called to the polls for the European elections in spring 2024.

Marine Le Pen, anxious to maintain her popular, anti-liberal and anti-European line, refused any rapprochement with Eric Zemmour, another populist right-wing candidate in the presidential election (7.07% of the vote in the first round on 10 April). After her defeat, the RN candidate virtually disappeared from the political landscape in the weeks following the election. This absence allowed Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who on 19 April, between the two rounds of voting, asked the French to "*elect him Prime Minister*", to occupy the field. The leader of La France insoumise (LFI) has achieved his old dream as he has succeeded in creating, in record time, an alliance between all the forces of the left, an alliance dominated by his own formation. Called the New Popular Ecological and Social Union (NUPES), it includes the Socialist Party (PS), the

Communist Party (PCF) and Europe Ecologie-Les Verts (EE-LV).

Jean-Luc Mélenchon is the representative of a radical left. The four parties of the new left-wing union held very different, even antagonistic, positions on several subjects until just a few days ago. They seem to have finally found minimal agreements. "*The history of the whole left is to have made possible things that were impossible*," said Olivier Faure, leader of the PS, after the controversial rally of the PS to the NUPES. The former, which will only be able to present 30 candidates, will therefore not be able to receive public funding!

The four parties agreed on a programme comprising 650 measures. These include raising the minimum wage to €1,500, access to retirement from the age of 60 with 40 years of service, a freeze on essential prices, France's exit from nuclear power by 2045 (which assumes that renewable energies alone will enable the country to meet its energy needs), the creation of at least one million jobs through investment in the ecological and social transition, the establishment of a shield to limit the share of the budget devoted to housing, the re-establishment of the wealth tax, the establishment of a VI Republic "*to reconcile citizens with their institutions and revitalise democracy*" with the introduction of citizens' initiative referendums (RIC), the right to disobey certain rules of the European Union, in particular economic and budgetary rules such as the respect of the Stability and Growth Pact, the rules of competition or the "*productivist and neo-liberal*" orientation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The pro-European ecologists and socialists said they agreed with the idea of disobeying European rules as long as this was done in compliance with the rule of law!

The Republicans (LR) are counting on their territorial base to keep most of their MPs but they are struggling to find their place on a political scene divided into three blocs after the heavy defeat in the presidential election of their candidate, Valérie Pécresse, who won 4.78% on 10 April. LR has set itself the goal of remaining the main opposition group in the Assembly and retaining the presidency of the Finance Committee, while its

incumbent, Eric Woerth, has joined the presidential majority.

THE FRENCH POLITICAL SYSTEM

The French parliament is bicameral. It comprises the National Assembly, the lower house, with 577 MPs elected by direct universal suffrage for five years, and the Senate, the upper house, with 348 members appointed by indirect universal suffrage for six years.

MPs are elected by a two-round majority system in 577 constituencies (556 for the departments of metropolitan France, 10 for the departments and territorial communities of overseas France and 11 for French citizens living outside France). To be elected in the first round of voting, a candidate must win an absolute majority of the votes cast and that this figure corresponds to at least one quarter of the registered voters. If no candidate is elected in the first round, a second round is held one week later. All candidates who won at least 12.5% of the registered voters in the constituency in the first round can stand in the second round. If only one candidate fulfils this condition, the candidate with the second highest number of votes in the first round is allowed to stand.

In France, political parties receive state support in proportion to the number of votes won by each of them in the legislative elections for any candidate obtaining a minimum of 1% of the votes in at least 50 constituencies (or in all those where the party's candidates were present in the case of the overseas territories). On average, each vote earns €1.64 per year for five years and an elected member earns €37,400 for his or her party. Campaign expenses are capped at €28,000 per candidate, plus €0.15 per inhabitant of the constituency in which the candidate is running. The average expenditure is around €70,000.

The electoral law obliges political parties to nominate at least 50% (give or take 2%) of women candidates in the parliamentary elections. Parties that do not comply with this principle have their state support reduced by a percentage equal to half the difference between the number of candidates of each sex and the total number

of candidates. Since the law of 16 February 2014, the combination of a parliamentary mandate with a local executive function is prohibited.

The political parties that won seats in the National Assembly in the last legislative elections of 11 and 18 June 2017 are divided into 9 groups:

- La République en marche (LREM), the party of the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron founded in April 2016, has 267 deputies;
- Les Républicains (LR), a right-wing party led by Christian Jacob, has 101 seats;
- The Democratic Movement (MoDem), a centrist party led by François Bayrou, has 57 MPs;
- the Socialist Party (PS), led by Olivier Faure, has 28 MPs;
- Agir, a centrist party led by Franck Riester, Minister Delegate to the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, in charge of Foreign Trade and Attractiveness, has 22 MPs;
- Union des démocrates et des indépendants (UDI), a centrist party led by Jean-Christophe Lagarde, has 19 seats;
- Libertés et territoires, has 18 deputies,
- France Insoumise (LFI), a left-wing populist party led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has 17 seats;
- Gauche Démocratique et Républicaine, which includes the elected communists, has 15 deputies.

The National Assembly also has 23 non-affiliated MPs, including the 8 elected by the Rassemblement National.

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Reminder of the results of the legislative elections of 11 and 18 June 2017 in France

Turnout: 48.70% (1st round) and 42.64% (2nd round)

Political Parties	No of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	No of seats won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)	No of seats won (2nd round)	Total seats
La République en marche (LREM)	6 391 269	28.21	2	7 826 432	43.06	306	308
Les Républicains (LR)	3 573 427	15.77	0	4 040 016	22.23	112	112
Front national (FN)	2 990 454	13.20	0	1 590 858	8.75	8	8
La France insoumise (LFI)	2 497 622	11.03	0	883 786	4.86	17	17
Parti socialiste (PS)	1 685 677	7.44	0	1 032 985	5.68	30	30
Europe écologie-Les Verts (EE-LV)	973 527	4.30	0	23 197	0.13	1	1
Mouvement démocrate (MoDem)	932 227	4.12	0	1 100 790	6.06	42	42
Union des démocrates et des indépendants (UDI)	687 225	3.03	1	551 760	3.04	17	18
Divers droite	625 345	2.76	0	306 240	1.68	6	6
Parti communiste (PCF)	615 487	2.72	0	217 833	1.20	10	10
Others	1681904	7.42	1	602880	3.32	24	25

Source : [https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Legislatives/elecresult_legislatives-2017/\(path\)/legislatives-2017/index.html](https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Legislatives/elecresult_legislatives-2017/(path)/legislatives-2017/index.html)

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