

The presidential coalition, Ensemble, has failed by a wide margin to win an absolute majority in the National Assembly

Whilst Emmanuel Macron was re-elected on 24 April in the second round of the presidential election - a first not involving cohabitation in the Fifth Republic - the parties supporting him failed to secure an absolute majority in the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, on 19 June in the second round of France's legislative elections, despite the two-round first-past-the-post system, another first of this magnitude since 1988. The government fell short of its target by 15 votes.

The "strategic vote" did not work, nor did the call for a "republican front" as used previously.

NO MAJORITY DESPITE MAJORITY VOTING

The coalition of the presidential majority, Ensemble, - which includes Renaissance (formerly Republic on the Move, LREM), the party of President Emmanuel Macron, François Bayrou's Democratic Movement (MoDem), and Horizons, the party of former Prime Minister (2017-2020) Edouard Philippe, came slightly ahead in the first round on 12 June with 25.75%, but it failed to win an absolute majority (289 seats) in the second round on 19 June. It garnered 245 seats of the 577 that constitute the hemicycle of the Palais Bourbon, thus falling short by 44 and winning 38.6% of the vote.

Within Ensemble, the Renaissance party will have 172 seats (-94 seats compared to 2017), the MoDem 43(-14) and Horizons 27.

The New Popular Ecological and Social Union (NUPES), which comprises Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Insoumise (LFI); the Socialist Party (PS), led by Olivier Faure; the Communist Party (PCF), led by Fabien Roussel, and Europe Ecologie-Les Verts (EE-LV) led by Julien Bayou, won 131 seats and 31.6% of the vote.

In the NUPES, LFI is due to have 72 seats (+55), the PS 26 (-2), EELV 23, the PC 15 (=). But each of its components will have to form a group, 15 elected members are needed to do so, which means that LFI will not be the main opposition group.

Indeed, with 89 deputies and 17.3% of the vote, the Rassemblement National (RN), the right-wing populist party of Marine Le Pen, Emmanuel Macron's unfortunate rival in the presidential election of 10 and 24 April, is being offered an unhoped-for representation with this voting method and an increase of 81 seats compared to 2017 (8 elected) which will permit it to form a group which was not the case in 2017. Unlike Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who did not stand for re-election, Marine Le Pen, future President of the RN group of deputies, will not take over the chair from Jordan Bardella, and will be an opposition figure in the National Assembly.

The centre-right Republicans (LR) won 61 seats and 7% of the vote. They lost 31 seats and their status as the first opposition group they held previously. Above all, LR must look for a new leader, since president Christian Jacob, who was not standing for re-election, indicated that he was stepping down at the end of the election, as well as a new political line. Faced with the rise of extreme radicals in the National Assembly, Les Républicains will be very much in demand to enable, or not, the formation of a majority. Will it be a "government pact", as some of its members are calling for, or a case-by-case decision depending on the texts, which will be a more uncertain path?

MASSIVE ABSTENTION BUT LESS THAN IN 2017

Turnout was low: 46.23%. More than half of the French population (53.77%) chose not to vote. This abstention

General elections in France

19th June 2022

rate is 1.51 points higher than that measured in the first round of voting (52.49%). This figure confirms a trend that has emerged since 2002: namely an increase in abstention between the two rounds of the legislative

elections. However, it is 3.36 points less than in the second round of the 2017 legislative elections, which recorded the highest abstention rate since 1958. Five years ago, 57.36% of voters stayed away from the polls.

Results of the second round of the legislative elections of 19 June 2022 in France

Turnout: 46.23%

Candidates	Number of votes	Percentage of votes registered	Percentage of votes cast	Number of seats won
New ecological and social popular union	6 556 198	13,49	31,60	131
Various left-wing	443 282	0,91	2,14	22
Various	18 295	0,04	0,09	1
Regionalist	264 779	0,54	1,28	10
Ensemble! (Presidential majority)	8 002 419	16,47	38,57	245
Various centre	99 145	0,20	0,48	4
Union of Democrats and Independents	64 443	0,13	0,31	3
Les Républicains	1 447 838	2,98	6,98	61
Various right-wing parties	231 071	0,48	1,11	10
Sovereign Right	19 306	0,04	0,09	1
National Rally	3 589 465	7,39	17,30	89

Source : <https://www.resultats-elections.interieur.gouv.fr/legislatives-2022/FE.html>

WHICH RESHUFFLE AND WHICH POLICY?

Several key figures from the presidential majority were badly beaten in the poll. The outgoing president of the National Assembly, Richard Ferrand, was defeated in his stronghold in Brittany, as was the president of the parliamentary group of LREM deputies, Christophe Castaner, former Home Affairs Minister, in the Alps and that of the MODEM group, Patrick Mignola, in Savoie.

Several ministers, including Amélie de Montchalin (Minister of Ecological Transition), Brigitte Bourguignon (Minister of Health) and Justine Benin (Secretary of State for the Maritime Affairs), were also defeated and will have to leave the government according to the unwritten rule that a defeated minister is fired ipso facto from the government.

A major reshuffle - and not just a technical one - is necessary given the "earthquake", the "disavowal", the

"slap in the face" that the French - those who did vote - wanted to give to the President's party.

Indeed, there is now the question of a change of Prime Minister. It is true that Elisabeth Borne, who has been in office since 16 May and who was running in an election for the first time, won in Normandy. But the weak result of the majority will force her to make a number of political contortions of which it is not sure that she is capable in the face of an opposition that promises to be thunderous and feverish both on the left (LFI) and the right (RN) in the hemicycle.

The battle for power is expected to be tough; since the President has been defeated, on 28 June an experienced elected official will have to be appointed, one who can control the deputies and prevent the debates from turning into a running battle.

It also promises to be very tough for the composition of the other bodies of the Parliament, and in particular for the chairmanship of the Finance Committee, which since 2007 has traditionally gone to the main opposition group – although this is not an obligation. The RN is already asking for it. The same goes for the posts of vice-presidents in proportion to the groups and the posts of quaestors.

Finally, it promises to be very difficult to achieve the adoption of the many reforms that the country needs.

The symbolism of Ms Borne's nomination, the second woman to become Prime Minister in France, more than 30 years after the first incumbent, Edith Cresson (1991-1992), might mean that she will be spared. However, this symbol was not enough to ensure the election of more women MPs. The new National Assembly comprises 215 women MPs (37.26%), which is fewer women than in the 2017 legislative elections (39%). In 2017, the feminisation of the hemicycle rose to a record level and was 12 points higher than in 2012, and more than triple that of 2002, when they represented barely 12%.

Moreover, will Elisabeth Borne manage to govern in this unprecedented political configuration? And for how long?

"EUROPEAN" STANDARDIZATION?

France, which is the only Member State of the European Union, since the departure of the British, to organise its elections according to a majority voting system, held a unique position on the European scene where all the

other countries organise their elections according to the proportional representation system.

Many debates took place in France to try and see whether it would be opportune to introduce a dose of proportional representation, without specifying the volume of this dose; to allow a rebalancing of the weight of the majority and to ensure a more faithful representation of the diversity of the political offer.

In their own way the French (those who did vote) taught their executive a lesson during the legislative elections, since the new composition of the National Assembly does not confer a stable majority on the President, which is unprecedented, and offers a picture closer to the one that might have been formed in the wake of a proportional election.

Is this an accident or is it a trend not to put all the eggs in the same electoral basket? Will it lead to permanent deadlock? Or will it be an opportunity to go beyond the usual political divide? In Europe, this situation is common and forces the parties to negotiate, often in threes or fours, to form a government with a coalition deal. This is the case in Germany.

If Emmanuel Macron does not want to be prevented from carrying out the reforms that are expected for his new five-year term, he will have to show imagination and innovation. He does not lack these qualities since he has been elected twice. The new political-fragmented parliamentary situation in France will oblige the executive power, more probably than the French President had anticipated, to deal with the legislative one. Moreover, the Senate, the upper house of Parliament, of 348 senators, is dominated by moderate right-wing opposition parties.

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