

European
Elections monitor

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D-7
7 days before
the poll
(2nd round)

2nd round of the French Presidential Election between the Socialist candidate François Hollande and the outgoing Head of State, Nicolas Sarkozy

On 22nd April last the Socialist Party candidate, (PS) François Hollande came out ahead in the first round of the French presidential election winning 28.63% of the vote, taking the lead over outgoing President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy (Union for a Popular Movement, UMP), who won 27.18% of the vote. Both men will be facing each other in the second round of the election that will take place on 6th May next.

People who voted for Marine Le Pen, the National Front candidate (FN), who won 17.90% of the vote, taking third place, are now the focus of the campaign. To win on 6th May next each of the candidates has to attract a share of the voters who opted for Ms Le Pen a week ago.

The outgoing President of the Republic must also convince the electorate of centrist François Bayrou (Democratic Movement, MoDem), who won 9.13% of the vote on 22nd April. Nicolas Sarkozy must therefore achieve an impossible acrobatic feat and rally two electorates (those in the centre and on the populist right) who are totally opposite each other. He challenges the idea however that there is an "insurmountable barrier" between the two camps. He has no problem in going too far – too far in the eyes of some – to convince the National Front electorate, pursuing a campaign that is oriented far to the right, which is leading to some dissension amongst the presidential majority. Nicolas Sarkozy has said though that there will be no agreement between the UMP and the National Front and that no FN minister will sit in the future government if he is re-elected on 6th May next.

For her part, Marine Le Pen, sticking to her campaign message, is refusing to choose between the outgoing President of the Republic and his socialist challenger. She must however be careful not to appear, in the event of victory on the part of François Hollande, as the one responsible for Nicolas Sarkozy's defeat, although this might in fact please her, since she has not hidden her desire to take over as head of the opposition against a socialist government after the general elections that will take place on 10th and 17th June next.

François Hollande is continuing his federating strategy, including beyond his own camp, which is vital if he wants to win on 6th May next. *"First we have to motivate those who did not turn out to vote. Secondly we have to speak to all sincere republicans who have France's interest at heart. Finally there is the electorate of Marine Le Pen part of which comes from the left and ought to find itself on the side of progress, equality, change and justice because it is against privileges, against financial globalisation, against a weak Europe,"* declared the socialist candidate in an interview in the daily, Liberation on 23rd April.

The socialist candidate is finding it easier to rally people to his name. Indeed with the exception of Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte ouvrière, LO) all of the leftwing candidates in the first round – Philippe Poutou (New Anti-Capitalist Party, NPA), Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Left Front, FG) and Eva Joly (Europe Ecology-the Greens, EELV) – called to vote for the *"best placed left candidate"* in the second round. Without approving the socialist programme, voters who opted for the *"left of the left"* will do everything in their power to beat the outgoing President, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Prime Minister François Fillon (UMP), whose constant worry vis-à-vis the need to reduce the deficit and to control public finance, has always been appreciated by the centrists, addressed François Bayrou's electorate, insisting on the common values shared by the right and the centre, calling for their vote on 6th May. He promoted Nicolas Sarkozy's credibility, notably regarding issues of security, immigration and the protection of the French. François Fillon says he is convinced that the people do not *"really want the left"* and is confident about Nicolas Sarkozy's victory.

In his opinion *"the President of the Republic's determination, his authority, his ability to assume the position of Head of State in the crisis"* will be confirmed during the televised debate between the two men that will take place on 2nd May.

On 25th April François Bayrou sent a letter to both candidates indicating his priorities. These refer to the fight to counter deficits, development of production, the moralisation of political life, national unity and the European project. In his 2 pages answer, François Hollande indicated that he was planning the approval of a law on the moralisation of political life that would include a restriction on multiple mandates, the independence of the legal system and the exemplarity of the State. He also declared that he supported the introduction of a dose of proportionality into the general elections. Nicolas Sarkozy, in a 7 pages answer, recalled that he supported the inclusion of the golden rule into the constitution (commitment to respecting the goal of budgetary balance on the part of public administrations and a limit of the structural deficit of 0.5% of the GDP) unlike his socialist rival.

Outgoing President, Nicolas Sarkozy was the source of polemic between rounds as he announced that he was going to organise the celebration of *"real work"* on May 1st, for those *"who work hard, who are exposed to, who suffer and who no longer want people to be able to earn more if they don't work than when they work."* May 1st in France is a bank holiday when work is celebrated in commemoration of May 1st 1886, when the unions demonstrated in Chicago, USA, in support of an eight hour working day, a demonstration that turned into a riot that subsequently

was severely repressed. Every May 1st the National Front organises a rally in Paris in celebration of Jeanne d'Arc.

Just one week from the election the second round of the French presidential election seems more than ever like a referendum on Nicolas Sarkozy's personality and government style.

According to a TNS Sofres poll for the channel Itélé published on 27th April, François Hollande is due to win the second round with 55% of the vote, i.e. a ten point lead over outgoing President Nicolas Sarkozy (45%). Slightly more than one quarter of those interviewed (27%) did not say which way they would vote. 81% of interviewees say they are certain of their choice, including 94% of voters for François Hollande and 88% for the outgoing head of State. According to a poll half of Marine Le Pen's electorate (51%) are going to vote for the outgoing President, 16% for his socialist rival and one third say they will abstain (33%) or will vote blank or null. Amongst François Bayrou's electorate 39% lean towards the UMP, 32% for the PS and 29% will abstain or vote blank or null. Finally eight of those interviewed out of ten (81%) said they were sure to go and vote on 6th May.

Another poll by IFOP reveals that most of the French (52%) think that François Hollande will win in the 2nd round; one quarter (21%) anticipate victory for the outgoing President. 43% of the French wish the victory of François Hollande and 35% the victory of Nicolas Sarkozy.

Since the autumn Nicolas Sarkozy has not once been forecast by the polls to win in the 2nd round against François Hollande.

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