

FRENCH AND EUROPEANS: STRONGER TOGETHER!

Enrico Letta | *President of the Jacques Delors Institute*

Pascal Lamy | *President emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institute*

Yves Bertoncini | *Director of the Jacques Delors Institute*

The second round of the French presidential election will be held on the 7 May 2017 and will be played out in a duel between Marine Le Pen and Emmanuel Macron. We are hoping the victory of M. Macron, in order to reaffirm France's attachment and influence in Europe, and to continue and deepen the challenging dialogue on which European integration has always been founded.

The French presidential election, which will be played out in a duel between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, has a European dimension that must be apprehended with both attention and resolution, based on three complementary observations.

1. A decisive national election that will have major consequences for Europe

From a European standpoint and beyond, it is significant that the French accorded first place in the first round of elections to a candidate who is supportive of European integration, its reform and its intensification. While greater prominence than usual has been given to European issues in the campaign, exit polls indicate, however, that people voted first and foremost on the basis of domestic considerations (renewal of political practices, education and training to fight unemployment, taxation, social protection, etc.). Some people even voted despite their reservations concerning the positions of their candidate on Europe, thus confirming that Europe was not one of their main concerns.

This vote, which focused on domestic issues, is quite logical, since the EU has subsidiary powers and since it is not the main cause of difficulties in France, or of the difficulties and achievements of the 27 other member states. This welcome reminder is in fact good news for the French, who hold the key to their fate in their hands for the second round, as they will have to choose between two very different alternatives in terms of national policies. For this reason, this second round is first of all a decisive election for French recovery, and at the same time, the verdict will have far-reaching

consequences on France's European policy, and therefore on the future of European integration.

2. The French are not Europhobic and can put an end to the Brexit-Trump sequence

First position for Emmanuel Macron advantageously contradicts the prophecies announcing that Trump's win and the vote in favour of Brexit would lead to an overwhelming wave of national votes of withdrawal, forgetting, in passing, the specific nature of these two Anglo-Saxon votes. After the defeat of the extreme right in Austria and in the Netherlands, the French vote is a welcome halt, which we hope to see confirmed in the second round, through the rejection of Europhobia as embodied by the National Front.

For "Europhobia" not only concerns strongly criticising the EU, its decisions or its failings, by expressing a sort of "Euroscepticism" that should be better heard and heeded by both national and European authorities. Being "Europhobic" means hating the EU, Schengen or the euro to a point that there is a desire to leave, at the cost of taking a step into the unknown, the magnitude of which public opinion is better able to measure after the "Brexit" vote, which had nothing to do with belonging to a monetary union, no more than the Trump vote.

Leaving the euro area would be depriving oneself of solid protection against global financial speculation and playing Russian roulette with the savings of the French people. It would mean once again facing the destructive competitive devaluations of the past: monetary nationalism means monetary war! French Europhobes have perceived the popular support for belonging to the

euro area so well that they keep in check or even distort their strong desire to leave: it is better not to take the risk of allowing them to play the sorcerer's apprentice with our economy and our savings!

3. Let's look to the outside world in order to become even more European

A win for Emmanuel Macron, for which we are hoping, would reaffirm France's attachment and influence in Europe and allow it to better defend its interests and values within the EU, which needs strong Member States in order for it to be strong.

It would reinforce the ability of Europeans to overcome successive co-owner crises (Constitutional Treaty, euro area, refugees, etc.) by taking a better look at the world, of which we are no longer the centre and which is full of opportunities but also poses serious threats. Union is strength more than ever when facing challenges that are as numerous and diverse as the chaos in Syria and Libya, Russian aggressiveness,

Islamist terrorism, climate change, global financial deregulation, uncontrolled waves of migrants, the mounting power of China, the unpredictability of Donald Trump or the management of the EU-United Kingdom divorce...

It is also in this unstable global context that the choice of those called on to vote on 7 May next is taking place, before the Czechs and the Germans are called to the polling booths later in the year. We urge the majority of French people not to give their vote to a candidate who would have her eye on the exit door rather than towards her neighbours, and to support the candidate calling to continue and deepen the challenging dialogue on which European integration has always been founded, in order to fully adapt it to the 21st century.

French and Europeans, we are and we will always be stronger together!

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Yves Bertoncini and Dídac Gutiérrez-Peris, *Policy Paper No. 194*, Jacques Delors Institute, 24 April 2017

YES, WE ARE EUROPEAN!

Jacques Delors, Enrico Letta, Pascal Lamy, Yves Bertoncini and the participants to the ESC 2016, *Tribune-Viewpoint*, Jacques Delors Institute, 7 October 2016

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Yves Bertoncini and Enrico Letta, *Tribune-Viewpoint*, Jacques Delors Institute, 15 September 2016

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Jacques Delors, António Vitorino, Pascal Lamy, Enrico Letta and Yves Bertoncini, *Tribune-Viewpoint*, 17 June 2016

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