

Immigration, Europe and French Elections

by Luca Merotta, Livia Ortensi, Marta Regalia
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In the prospect of the French elections, this paper introduces the elements at the centre of the debate. Its first section provides a critical overview of the politics around migration in France with a focus on the National Front and the idea of national identity. The second section draws a picture of immigration trends in France in a comparative perspective. The third section describes and analyses the political responses proposed by the candidates to the presidential election.

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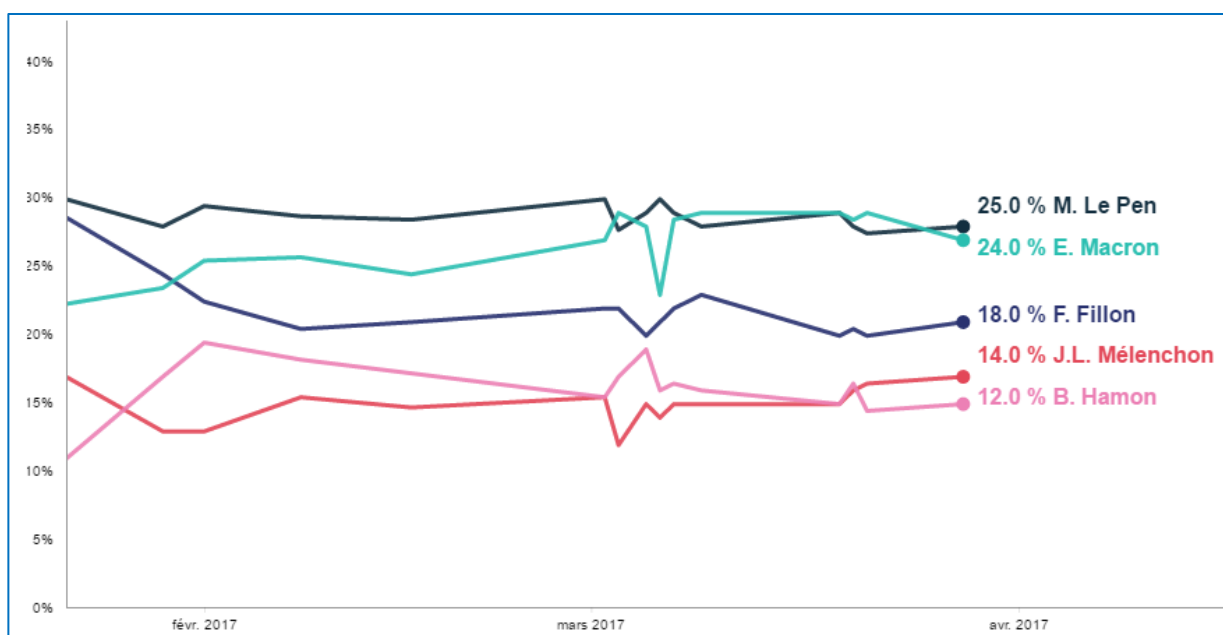
1. A French fable: National identity and National Front

“Every nation gets the government it deserves”.
Joseph de Maistre, 1811

The origins of the French

In France as in other European countries, immigration occupies a central place in the political debate in this year's elections. Questions relating to migrations have long had political relevance in France, and more generally in old destination countries. We have seen the Brexit campaign and its framing of immigration as a problem to be solved; we have seen the elections in Austria and the rise of the FPÖ; or else the elections in the Netherlands and the success of Wilders' anti-immigration discourse. It is now time for the French to go to the polls in a similar context, marked by M. Le Pen and the National Front scoring too well in opinion polls.

Figure 1.1 – Opinion polls for the five candidates best faring in opinion polls



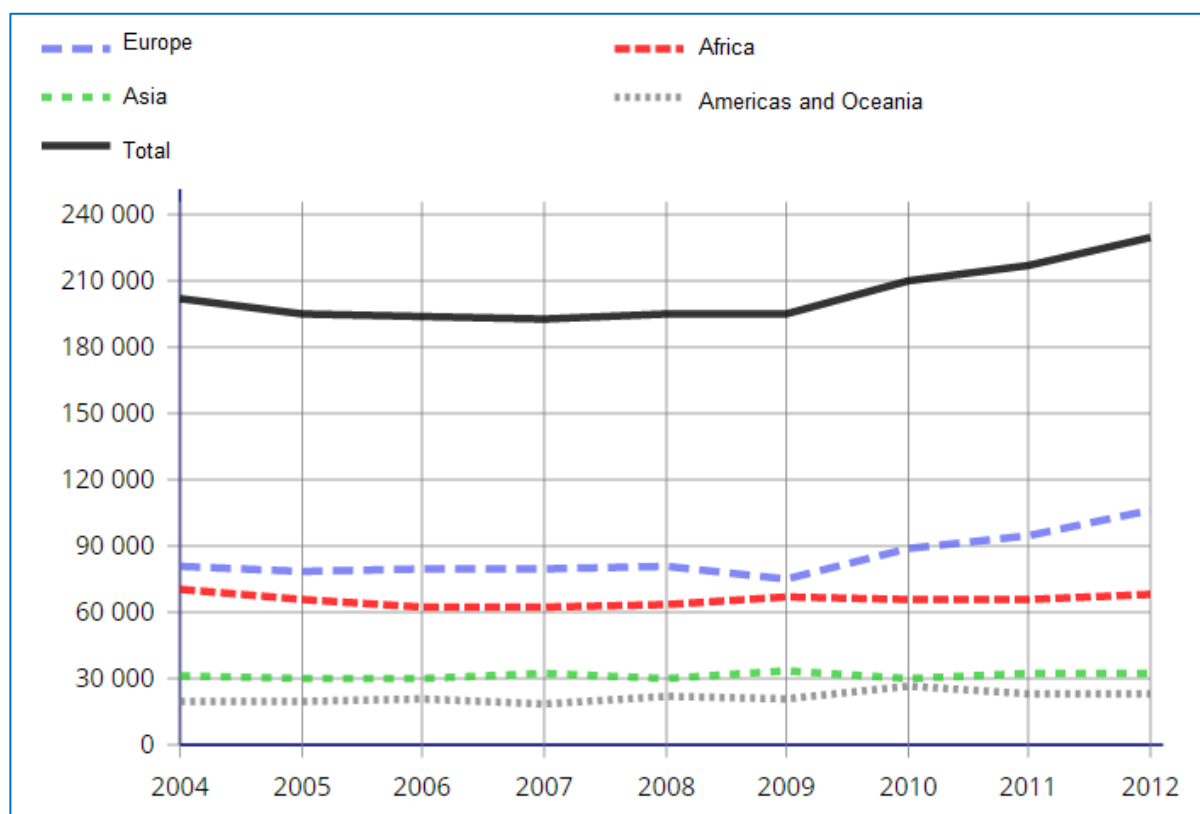
Source: BFM, all opinion polls from 10 institutes, <http://www.bfmtv.com/politique/sondage/>.

But the French should not forget their migration history. As Dominique Schnapper, eminent sociologist, put it: France is “*un pays d’immigration qui s’ignore*” (a country of immigration that ignores it is one; Schnapper, 1996:42). When, in the 19th century, neighbouring countries were sending millions of emigrants to the US, France was already welcoming workers from all over Europe, making of France the oldest European destination country. Main countries of origin included Belgium, Italy, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. Between the

two world wars, countries of origin comprised Poland, Russia, and Armenia amongst others. They were followed after the Second World War by Algerians, Portuguese, Moroccans, Tunisians, Turks, South-East Asians and Sub-Saharan Africans.

Resultantly, in the turn of the 21st century, a fourth of the total population was deemed to be immigrant, or to have an immigrant parent or grandparent (Borrel and Simon, 2005). A century before, in 1891 to be precise, 1.1 million foreigners were living in France, or else 3% of the then population; 37% of whom were born in France and became French nationals when they came of age (Borrel and Simon, 2005). Attempts to stem immigration actually rarely occurred. The first time was in 1931 when the international economic crisis hit the country. A bill passed in August 1932 enshrined the national preference in hiring and established quotas of foreign workers in French companies. In 1934, aid to voluntary repatriation was proposed to foreign workers, followed by forced returns a year after. The second time was in 1974 when France was hit by the oil crisis. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing steered a restrictive immigration policy characterised by a halt to new immigration waves and toughened controls of entries and stays whilst foreigners present in the territory were encouraged to leave and irregular migrants expelled.

Figure 1.2 – Evolution of the number of entries of immigrants since 2004 by continent of birth



Source: INSEE, enquêtes annuelles de recensement de 2005 à 2013

Since then, immigration to France has been incredibly stable. Over the period 1980-2008, the number of newcomers, about 150,000/year, was equivalent to the number of those who acquired French nationality (Wihtol de Wenden, 2011). France counts 4 million foreigners in 1982, 4.1 in 1990, 4.3 in 1999 and 5 million in 2006, which amounts to more or less 8% of the total population. From 2004 to 2012, census data shows that an average of 200,000 immigrants a year arrived in France, some 0.3% of the French population, the [lowest proportion of immigrants in Europe](#). Throughout Europe, immigration contributes to a significant extent to the increase of national population: 60% in Ireland, 70% in Denmark, 75% in Belgium and 86% in Spain whereas immigration contributes to a [sheer 20% in France](#).

The French, the far right and national identity

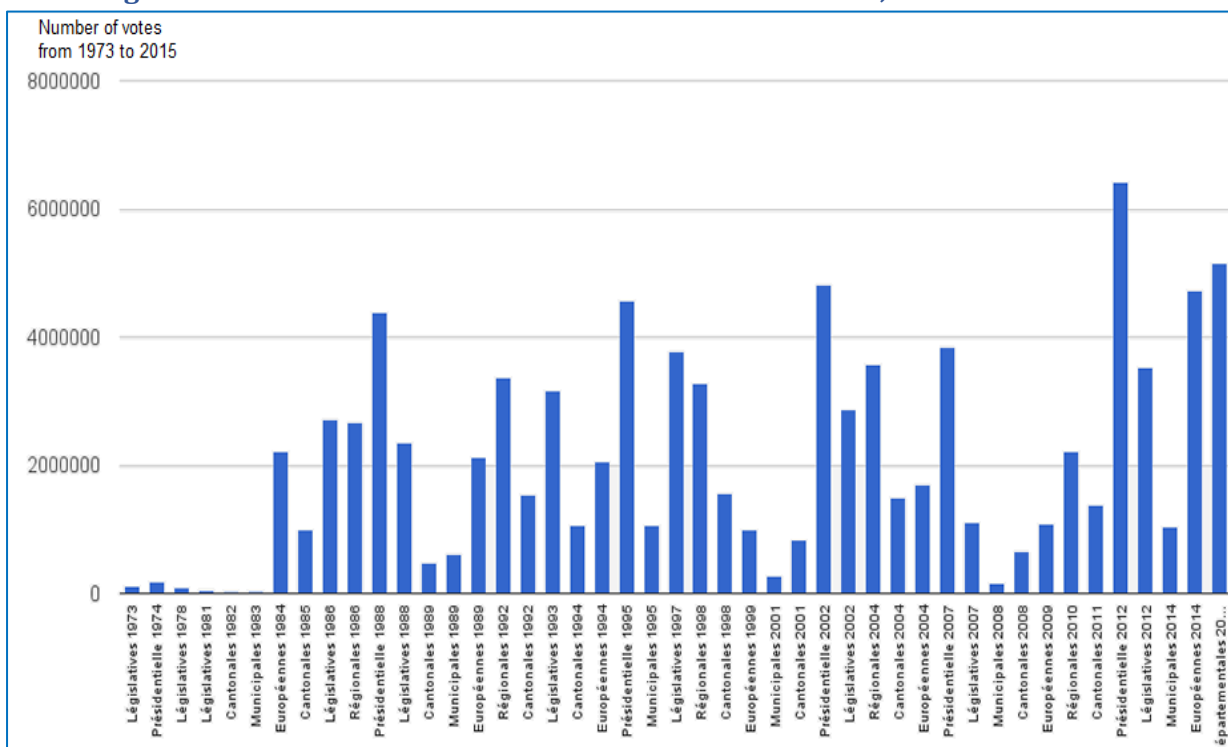
Despite the old age of migration in France, the politicisation of the issues relating to it are relatively recent. Immigration has become an issue in the 1980s' (Schnapper, 1994), when the search for a national identity, a notion hitherto absent of French politics (not to say of French dictionaries)¹, took off (Thiesse, 2001). Before that, the French Revolution had placed equal rights amongst French core values, thereby giving rise to the Republican model of integration; a model based on a certain idea of universalism and equality before the law (and therefore before the state, which translated in the interdiction of intermediary bodies). Accordingly, the state shall be blind to cultural and ethnic differences (hence the prohibition of ethnic statistics in France).

At the end of the *Trente Glorieuses*, the name given to the 30 years of unprecedented economic growth after WW2, France is on the decline. After having lost its empire and political leadership, it is severely hit by the international crisis in 1974 which brought the full employment period to an end. In the same period, profound social changes have questioned traditional identification sources. For instance, the decline of Marxism and the fragmentation of the labour market have shrunk the capacity of social classes to produce identification. In such a context, the search for identity turned towards the nation (Thiesse, 2001).

This materialised in a number of ways, one of which is the surge in votes for the National Front, then steered by Jean-Marie Le Pen. Since its creation in 1972, it had had little success, with a percentage of votes below 1%. In 1983 though, the National Front won the little city of Dreux before faring very well in the European elections of 1984: 10.95%, almost as much as the Communist party.

¹ The concept of group identity was first used by US sociologists such as Erving Goffman in the 1960s'. The first French scholar to ever use the notion of national identity was (allegedly) historian Fernand Braudel in *L'Identité de la France*, published in 1986.

Figure 1.3 – Vote for the National Front from 1973 to 2015, in number of votes



Source: Slate France, <http://www.slate.fr/story/99391/graphique-evolution-scores-fn>.

Another way in which the debate on national identity materialised is through public opinion polls and the claim that immigration was threatening national identity; about 66% of respondents thought so in 1985, 75% of them in 1989 (Hargreaves, 2007:141).

The anti-immigration rhetoric then gained other political parties in a process of growing politicisation that reached its paroxysm in 1993 when Charles Pasqua, then Minister of Home Affairs, promised government action would tend to zero-immigration. The idea then was to erect ever-higher walls to immigration... whilst accepting the idea that once passed the foreigner would stay in the country (Weil, 2005:19). And this is precisely what matters today. With a stable net migration over the last 30 years, immigration is not the issue at the centre of the debate. What is at the centre is what appears in French society today, that has been called here and there a “crisis of integration”² (Favell, 2001; Noiriel, 2006), but that may be better captured by the term diversity. Inevitably, the idea of a diverse France takes the debate towards the concept of *laïcité*, a concept originally conceived as open and liberal, sometimes hardly reconcilable with a certain idea of national identity (most often based on homogeneity; as in the process of the construction of the nation).

² Speaking of crisis of integration may mean very different things. It can mean the failure of the French integration model, originally based on a high level of assimilation, sometimes called *Creuset Français* (or literally French melting pot). This acceptance often includes a notion of social cohesion and integration of society at large. Another acceptance regards the enduring social differences between natives and people with an immigration background, and the failure of a system to create equality between its citizens.

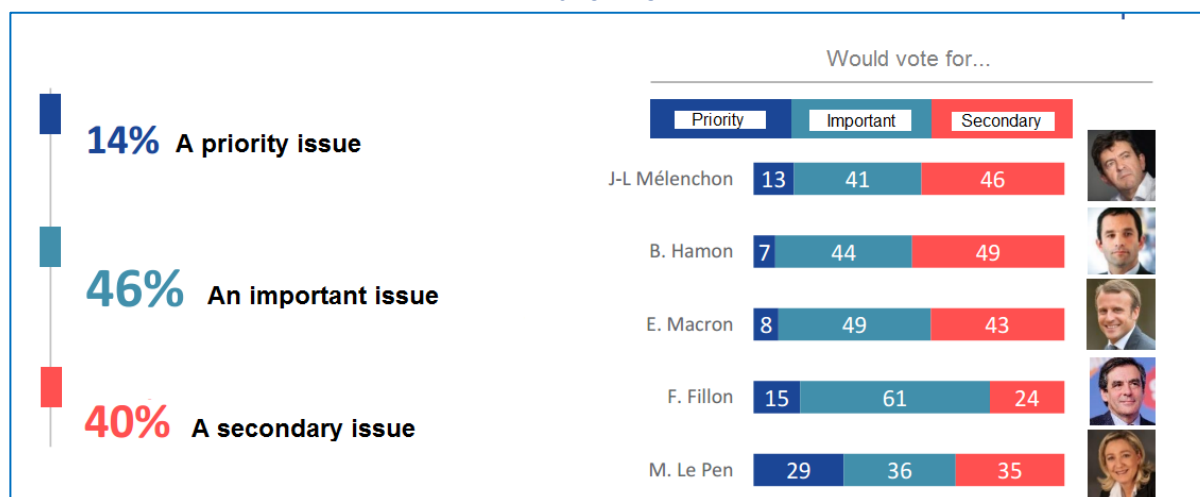
Laïcité à la française. State of a confusing concept

Finding a French that has no idea of what the *Loi de 1905* is almost impossible. This is a landmark in the history of contemporary France: it enshrined the concept of *laïcité* (or secularism) in French law. The 1905 Bill lied on three basic principles: freedom of conscience, separation of the Church and the State, and free exercise of cults (Weil, 2005). In principle, it is easy: religion is a private matter that shall not interfere with political or administrative matters.

Easy to define in principle, it proves quite hard to observe in facts. Nativity scenes in city halls, Islamic veil in public spaces, administration, companies, schools or universities, menus without pork in schools' cafeterias, interdiction of soup kitchens giving only pork dishes to the needy, Burkini bans in some municipalities... All these aspects present particular challenges sometimes presented under the guise of the respect for *laïcité*, sometimes under the guise of security, sometimes under the guise of tradition.

Anyhow, the concept of *laïcité*, since its introduction in 1905, has opposed defenders of a hard line version (Charles Chabert's), willing to ban religious signs, and defenders of a more liberal stance (Aristide Briand's), based on the tolerance of religious signs. Whereas it targeted the Catholic Church back then, talking about *laïcité* today often takes the debate towards the place of Islam in the Republic, as bears witness the presidential debate on 20 March 2017 (Le Monde, 2017). If *laïcité* appears to be important for many voters, regardless of who they vote for (see figure 1.4), understanding what it means remains a challenge.

Figure 1.4 – Laïcité and Religion: How important an issue, according to vote intentions, March 2017



Source: Ipsos, La place de la religion et de la laïcité dans l'élection présidentielle, http://www.ipsos.fr/sites/default/files/doc_associe/religions_et_laicite_mars2017_0.pdf

From centre-right to left (reading E. Macron, B. Hamon, J-L. Melenchon), *laïcité* is conceived in a similar fashion, with nuances indeed, but with a clear attachment to its liberal acceptance. For F. Fillon, too, the concept is vested with liberal ideals, even though its actual application seems to be directed to Muslims in particular. Beside their prudence with words and concepts, there is M. Le Pen... For M. Le Pen, *laïcité* means prohibiting the Islamic veil, not only in the schools of the Republic, as provided for by the 2004 Bill, but in the public space as a whole. A conception that echoes a conception of Frenchness: “national identity and values of the French civilisations”, as [her programme reads](#) (p.15).

France to the French? But what French?

Whereas France has been largely spared by recent influxes, immigration continues to occupy a large part of the public debate in this year of elections.

If the slogan of the far right can be summarized as giving France back to the French (be it as an anti-EU attack, an anti-migrant statement or a defense of French “traditions”), the question that should arise right away is: to what French? Many French have a migration background and most Muslims are French citizens. The figures are clear, 50% of the Muslims in France are French by birth, 24% of them acquired French nationality (see Le Monde, 2016). In summary, 74% of the 3 to 4 million Muslims in France are French. Giving France back to the French and forbidding the Islamic veil altogether is somewhat of a contradiction in terms, unless dual nationality is forbidden too, which is precisely what is in the National Front programme.

In the same vein, the idea of defending a national identity or a “French civilization” makes little sense. The debate on national identity over the last 30 years has shown how difficult it is to define its boundaries. A talkative example is the country-wide debate launched by Eric Besson in 2009 that ended up being a failure.

True, France is a diverse country. The relative failure of multiculturalist approaches and the U-turns made in the [Netherlands](#) and the UK (Van Wolleghem, 2016) bear witness of a felt need for some more social cohesion, for some more nationhood. If there should be one place where that is possible, this should be France. French history has it that, as opposed to the German romantic acceptance of the Nation (embodied by Strauss or Fichte for instance), the concept of Nation as expressed by Renan insisted on the subjectivity of its existence (Martinelli, 2013). Whereas the German concept of nation is based on the objective belonging to the ethnic group (“nation of culture”), and is therefore by nature anti-cosmopolitan, the French concept relies on the feeling of belonging to a common ensemble; a concept, therefore, open to diversity (“nation of state”). Such feeling of belonging is not a given but rather a construction, as shows Anderson’s work (Anderson, 1991), undertaken by the state. But what the National Front proposes is not construction; it is destruction.

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2. The figures of migration in France

The French migratory context is very similar to the one typical of other countries of central Europe with a colonial past. In these countries, that were once the destination of important flows from Southern Europe, the proportion of third country nationals has been increasingly growing. That was particularly true for countries characterized by former colonial ties. Starting from the end of WWII the main flows towards France had their origin from Algeria (from 1947), Portugal (early '60s), Morocco and Tunisia (Kirszbaum et al., 2009). When the Government decided to suspend immigration by low-skilled foreign workers in 1974 migration for family reunion became the first channel of immigration. As a consequence immigration diminished, but then stabilized leaving some openings also for humanitarian driven migration. In recent years the geography of flows slightly changed with growing immigration from China, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Eastern Europe. These flows are nevertheless smaller than those seen before the '70s (Kirszbaum et al., 2009).

Last available data report the presence of around 4.5 million foreign citizens in France (6.6% of the total population) and slightly less than 8 million foreign born. The number of foreign born closely approximate the number of first generation immigrants, and they currently are 11% of the total population. These data show that France has not recently been among the European countries most affected by migration. Italy and Spain have a higher number of foreign citizens and Germany or UK shows higher figures in terms of both foreign born and foreign citizens. It's also evident that small countries as Switzerland, Austria or Sweden shows higher percentage of both foreign born and foreign citizens compared to France.

Table 2.1 - Foreign born and foreign citizens in the European Area. Figures and percentages, year 2016

Countries	Foreign citizens	% on total	Foreign born citizens	% on total
Liechtenstein	12,775	34.0	24,241	64.4
Luxemburg	269,175	46.7	260,573	45.2
Switzerland	2,048,667	24.6	2,324,461	27.9
Cyprus	147,268	17.4	172,808	20.4
Austria	1,256,873	14.5	1,578,177	18.2
Sweden	782,833	7.9	1,675,116	17.0
Ireland	586,826	12.4	798,564	16.9
Belgium	1,333,243	11.8	1,845,631	16.3
Norway	534,453	10.3	774,043	14.9
Estonia	198,251	15.1	193,813	14.7
UK	5,684,047	8.7	8,698,152	13.3
Germany	8,651,958	10.5	10,908,255	13.3
Latvia	288,946	14.7	258,889	13.1
Croatia	43,287	1.0	547,929	13.1
Spain	4,418,158	9.5	5,919,157	12.7

Iceland	26,485	8.0	41,853	12.6
Netherlands	900,501	5.3	2,056,520	12.1
France	4,408,563	6.6	7,902,783	11.8
Slovenia	107,766	5.2	241,203	11.7
Greece	798,357	7.4	1,220,395	11.3
Denmark	463,147	8.1	636,666	11.2
Malta	30,923	7.1	45,880	10.6
Italy	5,026,153	8.3	5,907,452	9.7
Portugal	388,731	3.8	872,501	8.4
Finland	229,765	4.2	329,219	6.0
Hungary	156,606	1.6	503,787	5.1
Lithuania	18,682	0.6	129,706	4.5
Czech Republic	476,346	4.5	433,290	4.1
Slovakia	65,840	1.2	181,642	3.3
Bulgaria	78,058	1.1	136,421	1.9
Romania	107,235	0.5	350,753	1.8
Poland	155,533	0.4	626,396	1.6

Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data. Data sorted by % of foreign born on total population

According to most recent data available most foreign born citizens that were settled in France in 2013 originated from Africa 43.5% and Europe (36.5%; tab.2.2).

Table 2.2 - Foreign born by country of birth, France. Year 2013

Country of birth	%	Population (thousands)
Europe	36.5	2,127
UE27	31.8	1,852
Spain	4.2	246
Italy	5.0	289
Portugal	10.4	607
UK	2.6	150
Other (EU27)	9.6	560
Other (Europe)	4.7	275
Africa	43.5	2,540
Algeria	13.0	760
Morocco	12.2	710
Tunisia	4.4	259
Other (Africa)	13.9	811
Asia	14.5	840
Turkey	4.3	249
Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam	2.8	161
Other (Asia)	7.4	431
America, Oceania	5.6	328
Total	100.0	5,835

Source: Insee (2017)

Data apparently shows a distance from the emphasis given to migration in the current debate in France. A partial exception to this situation are asylum seekers applications. France is the third country in terms of number of received applications in 2016 but the number of applications was not subjected to peaks observed in first line receiving countries as Hungary, Germany, Italy or Austria (table 2.3).

Table 2.3 - Richieste di asilo e tasso di richiesta per singolo paese. Anni 2011-2016

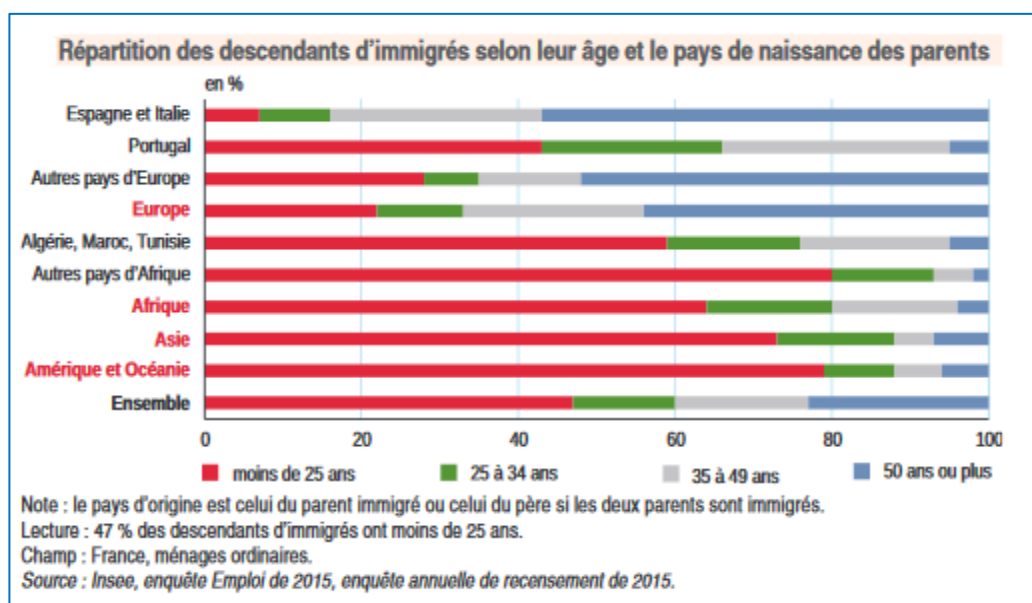
Countries	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Asylum applications per 10,000 inhabitants
European Union (28 countries)	309.040	335.290	431.090	626.960	1.322.825	1.258.865	16,2
Belgium	31.910	28.075	21.030	22.710	44.660	18.280	27,1
Bulgaria	890	1.385	7.145	11.080	20.365	19.420	1,4
Czech Republic	750	740	695	1.145	1.515	1.475	10,8
Denmark	3.945	6.045	7.170	14.680	20.935	6.180	90,7
Germany	53.235	77.485	126.705	202.645	476.510	745.155	1,3
Estonia	65	75	95	155	230	175	4,8
Ireland	1.290	955	945	1.450	3.275	2.245	47,4
Greece	9.310	9.575	8.225	9.430	13.205	51.110	3,4
Spain	3.420	2.565	4.485	5.615	14.780	15.755	12,5
France	57.330	61.440	66.265	64.310	76.165	83.485	5,3
Croatia	:	:	1.075	450	210	2.225	20,3
Italy	40.315	17.335	26.620	64.625	83.540	122.960	34,7
Cyprus	1.770	1.635	1.255	1.745	2.265	2.940	1,8
Latvia	340	205	195	375	330	350	1,5
Lithuania	525	645	400	440	315	425	37,5
Luxembourg	2.150	2.050	1.070	1.150	2.505	2.160	29,9
Hungary	1.690	2.155	18.895	42.775	177.135	29.430	44,4
Malta	1.890	2.080	2.245	1.350	1.845	1.930	12,3
Netherlands	14.590	13.095	13.060	24.495	44.970	20.945	48,3
Austria	14.420	17.415	17.500	28.035	88.160	41.950	3,2
Poland	6.885	10.750	15.240	8.020	12.190	12.305	1,4
Portugal	275	295	500	440	895	1.460	1,0
Romania	1.720	2.510	1.495	1.545	1.260	1.880	6,3
Slovenia	355	295	270	385	275	1.310	0,3
Slovakia	490	730	440	330	330	145	10,2
Finland	2.915	3.095	3.210	3.620	32.345	5.605	29,2
Sweden	29.650	43.855	54.270	81.180	162.450	28.790	5,9
United Kingdom	26.915	28.800	30.585	32.785	40.160	38.785	33,8
Iceland	75	115	125	170	345	1.125	21,3
Liechtenstein	75	70	55	65	150	80	6,7
Norway	8.990	9.675	11.930	11.415	31.110	3.485	32,6
Switzerland	23.615	28.400	21.305	23.555	39.445	27.140	16,2

Source: ISMU elaborations on Eurostat data

As in most part of Central Europe, in France the number of foreign and foreign born citizens is an underestimation of the overall number of people with a migratory background. The latter and wider group is the true target of the public debate on migration and of integration policies and outcomes. The proportion of second generation migrants in France is among the highest in Europe. Once the dimension of second generation migrants is accounted for,

the migration background of France appear different. According to INSEE data on 2008, foreign born without the French nationality at birth and their descendants amount to around 12 million, 20% of the total population. If we add to these population those foreign born with the French nationality at birth and their descendants, we observe that they amount to 30% of the population aged 18 to 50 (Bouvier, 2012).

Figure 2.1 - Descendants of foreign born by age and parents' country of birth



Source: Insee 2017b

Most recent data quantifies the French born people living in a household with at least a foreign born in 7.3 million people, 11% of the total population. Among the latter 55% has at least a parent born outside Europe. 31% of second generation migrants has at least parent born in Maghreb, 11% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 9% in Asia. The age structure of second generation migrants reflects the recent history of migration to France, with a prevalence of children and young adults with an African background aged 0-24 (Figure 2.1). What emerges with evidence from French researches in the field of second generation is that young adults of immigrant origin are more likely to be outside the educational system and not be economically active. The ability of children of immigrants to enter the labour market is affected by their social origin, their limited personal networks and the discrimination they face (Kirszbaum et al., 2009). So part of the migratory pressure perceived in the French society is not really due the migration. Instead is a combination of the number of birth among immigrants (natural population growth) combined with a substantial failure of integration policies in eliminating the effect of the migration background in the performance of French born second generation migrants.

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3. The political offer: the candidates and their positions

The first round of the 2017 French presidential election will be held on 23 April 2017. Should no candidate win a majority, a run-off election between the two most voted candidates will be held on 7 May 2017. The five main candidates accounting for nearly 95% of potential votes³ are Marine le Pen (National Front, ENF group), François Fillon (Republican party, EPP group), Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Unsubmissive France, independent), Benoît Hamon (Socialist party, S&D group) and Emmanuel Macron (Forward!, independent).

The five candidates have different political profiles as a result of different ideological backgrounds and political career at both national and European level. Four of them served as ministers under three different presidencies (Fillon, Mélenchon, Hamon, Macron), one of them served as Prime Minister (Fillon) and two are currently Members of the European Parliament (Le Pen, Mélenchon).

While the analysis below indicates that migration and Europe are featured as key political objectives in the candidates' respective programmes at different degrees, EU integration has been partly side-lined in the media campaign. On 20/03 a presidential debate was broadcast on French television. Throughout a round of questions on France's role in the world, all five candidates presented their personal stance on how to reform immigration without focusing explicitly on the EU⁴.

Actors from the EU scene are historically quite cautious about getting involved in Member states' national politics. However, Marine Le Pen's strong rhetoric on EU membership, Schengen and the single currency has triggered a series of political responses. Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs Pierre Moscovici (Socialist party, S&D group) said "it's a mistake" not to fight anti-EU candidates such as Le Pen, that "Europe is France' future" and that Europe needs "France to be a driving force⁵". A few weeks before the presidential campaign started and through its representation office in France, the European Commission has also launched a service⁶ to intercept and decode fake-news on EU-related policies and happenings covering, among other things, migration and asylum⁷.

The electoral programmes

Looking at candidates' political programmes, the very first issue cited by Marine Le Pen's electoral programme⁸ concerns the European Union or, rather, the strong willingness to give the "French people" back their national sovereignty (monetary, legislative, territorial and economic). Le Pen pledged to start new negotiations with European partners and to call a referendum on EU membership with the goal of re-establishing national borders and

³ <http://opinionlab.opinion-way.com/opinionlab/832/627/presitrack.html#m6>

⁴ <http://www.politico.eu/article/5-takeaways-from-the-french-presidential-debate-emmanuel-macron-marine-le-pen/>.

⁵ <http://www.politico.eu/article/french-election-vote-existential-threat-eu-brussels-worried-marine-le-pen/>.

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/france/event/20161214_lancement_decodeurs_ue_fr.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/france/news/decodeurseurope_fr.

⁸ <http://www.frontnational.com/le-projet-de-marine-le-pen/>.

leaving the Schengen area. On immigration, Le Pen's electoral programme is no less steadfast: making impossible to regularize illegal immigrants; capping the number of immigrants accepted every year (10.000); simplifying expulsion procedures; hindering family reunification and the acquisition of French nationality by marriage; abolishing the *ius soli* and double nationality.

In his electoral programme⁹, the republican candidate François Fillon claims the European Union is at a crossroad. His proposal is to speed up integration with all the EU partners willing to do so. This enhanced integration will concern security and defence policy (increasing EU military efforts), economic policy (strengthening the EU economic governance), commercial policy (protecting EU firms against unfair foreign competition) and immigration policy. Immigration appears to be one of key issues in Fillon's manifesto. Fillon claims that, demographically, France does not need immigrants like other European countries and that the economic and social situation does not allow receiving other migrants. Therefore, Fillon proposes to reduce legal immigration to the minimum by establishing national annual quotas and renegotiating EU quotas; to give access to the welfare only to people having resided in France for at least two years; to increase immigration-related taxes; to fight illegal immigration (reducing the time needed to evaluate asylum requests, leading back illegal immigrants to their countries); to renegotiate the Schengen treaty by introducing Schengen exclusion criteria for EU Member states that fail to control their external borders; to grant French nationality only to foreigners who are clearly assimilated, namely through longer residency time requirements, absence of illegal behaviours, etc.

The electoral programme of the socialist candidate Benoît Hamon¹⁰ does not mention the issue of immigration extensively. It devotes only a short paragraph to international migrations, proposing to establish a "humanitarian visa" to host refugees and calling for the experimentation of new forms of mobility to simplify non-EU workers schemes. At EU level, Hamon proposes a revision of the Dublin regulations based on the values of hospitality and solidarity among EU Member states. Regarding the European Union, Hamon acknowledges the challenges faced and proposes to re-launch the European project to overcome economic austerity and democratic deficit without restoring divisions among nation-states. Thus, Hamon proposes strengthened integration of energy, technology, defence, health and education policies. He proposes also an economic, social and fiscal harmonisation with the aim of fostering growth and employment.

Emmanuel Macron's electoral programme¹¹ cites the European Union as a key organisation to the development of France that, however, needs to be reformed in order to "protect our present and prepare our future" (p.20). To this end, Macron proposes an increased EU budget aimed at fostering employment and economic growth. Moreover, he calls for a stronger European market and common investments, and for further integration in technology and energy and defence policy (with a European headquarter and a budget for common equipment). On immigration, Macron proposes an integrationist stance based

⁹ <https://www.fillon2017.fr/projet/>.

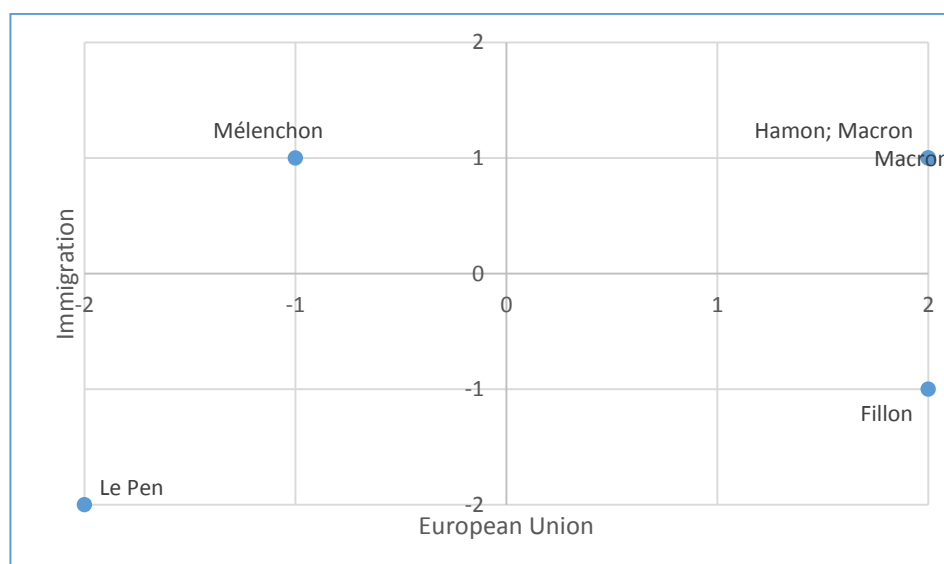
¹⁰ <https://www.benoithamon2017.fr/2017/03/16/mon-projet-pour-faire-battre-le-coeur-le-coeur-de-la-france/>.

¹¹ <https://en-marche.fr/emmanuel-macron/le-programme>.

on a secular approach. Asylum requests will be evaluated within six months, refugees will be protected by France and economic migrants will be returned to prevent irregular migration. Fluency in French will be necessary to obtain French citizenship, while different religions and republican values will be taught in schools and universities.

In an electoral programme¹² that constitutes the backbone of a political movement specifically launched for this election, Jean-Luc Mélenchon focuses on both migration and the EU. Generally speaking, Mélenchon proposes to refund the EU by ending the social dumping and the unregulated free movement of capitals, rejecting the recent free trade agreements (CETA, TTIP), and the pact for stability and growth in order to establish a protectionist system based on solidarity. His electoral manifesto calls for a stronger global governance on migration and the establishment of a new organisation on migration to strengthen the capacity of the UN, now considered to play a marginal role through the IOM and the High Commissioner for Refugees. It also aims at addressing the roots of migration by adopting an independent and active diplomacy to end wars, combating global warming and supporting co-development. At EU level it calls on EU institutions and Member states to strengthen rescue operations in the Mediterranean, to refund the common migration policy in order to avoid militarisation of the external borders, and to reject the EU-Turkey agreement in order to launch a comprehensive return programme for refugees willing to go back to their country. With regard to infra-EU migration, Mélenchon is very critical of the current regime governing posted workers and calls for employers to apply the social and work standards of the host countries.

Figure 3.1 - French candidates' positions on immigration and European Union



Source: authors' elaboration on the basis of candidates' respective manifestos

¹² <https://laec.fr/sommaire>.

Figure 3.1 shows candidates' positions on immigration and the European Union. Negative values indicate negative attitudes towards the two issues. Marine Le Pen (National Front) is very negative on both immigration and the EU, while Emmanuel Macron (Forward!) and Benoît Hamon (Socialist Party) are in favour of both European integration and a more open immigration policy. François Fillon (Republican Party) shows a positive stance on the EU, but a negative one on immigration. Finally, Mélenchon (Unsubmissive France) is considered negative on EU, as he wants to refund it, and quite positive on immigration.

As illustrated below, the five main candidates cover the whole spectrum of opinion on the two subjects at stake, which could work in favour of political representation and enhance the chances for the electorate to identify politically with this or that candidate.

By comparing the space that each candidate gives to the issues of immigration and the European Union inside her/his political programme, we note that not all candidates give these issues the same importance. While Macron devotes to immigration and the EU the same as other issues, Fillon pays them more attention: apart from health and security, they are among the most extensively treated issues. As mentioned before, Hamon does not give much attention to immigration while focusing considerably on the European Union. Surprisingly enough, Le Pen dedicates just one out of her 144 points to the EU (albeit as the opening point) and ten to immigration and terrorism. Finally, Mélenchon mentions the EU as an organisation in need of reform to ensure social standards but fails to discuss migration issues beyond the handling of asylum-seekers and the posting of workers.

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