Beat: Politics

FRANCE'S LEFT ENTERS 2027 DIVIDED: J.L MELENCHON FILLS STADIUM OF 10,000 RALLY

Vs GLUCKSMAN CLAIMS SOCIAL-DEMOCRATCROWN

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USPA NEWS - France's presidential campaign of Election 2027, is beginning long before the official starting gun, and on the left, it is beginning in fragments. On Sunday 11 October, Jean-Luc Mélenchon filled the Zenith d'Auvergne near Clermont-Ferrand with more than 10,000 supporters, according to his movement, while Raphael Glucksmann was winning the (Social Party) PS–Place Publique social-democratic primary. Two stages, two audiences, two strategies and very little sign, for now, of a common route toward the first round on 18 April 2027.

The contrast was almost theatrical. Jean Luc Melenchon, leader of the radical-left La France Insoumise (LFI), was demonstrating grassroots strength, speaking directly to youth anger and the international crises shaping the anxieties of a generation. Raphael Glucksmann, meanwhile, was securing institutional legitimacy with a decisive primary victory. Each now claims a different path for the left: Jean Luc Melenchon through mobilisation and rupture; Raphael Glucksmann through social democracy, European engagement and a refusal to remain under LFI's political shadow.

TWO CAMPAIGNS, ONE POLITICAL FAMILY, AND A BATTLE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE FRENCH LEFT

At Clermont-Ferrand, Melenchon turned a campaign rally into a declaration of political intent. The packed venue, with supporters reportedly left outside, was designed to show that LFI remains the most organised electoral machine on the left, capable of filling halls, setting the agenda and placing its candidate at the centre of the presidential debate.

His message was aimed in particular at young people, following the recent lycée protests. He expressed support for students angered by Parcoursup, under-resourced schools and a future overshadowed by insecurity. "We understand the youth revolt," he told the crowd, describing it as the voice of a generation ending one political era and entering another. He also revived a long-standing proposal to lower the voting age to 16, arguing that young people who work, pay taxes and face criminal responsibility should also have a voice at the ballot box.

" OUR CHILDREN AND GRAND CHILDREN WILL NOT DIE IN WAR"

On foreign policy, Jean Luc Melenchon delivered another defining line: France, he said, must refuse co-belligerence in Ukraine or the Middle East and return to non-alignment. "Our children and grandchildren will not go and die for hazardous operations invented by NATO," he declared. Such language is central to his identity: he is not only seeking to represent social anger at home, but also a left distrustful of military escalation and wary of alignment with major powers.

LE BOURGET: FROM RALLY TO PROGRAMME

The next test for LFI will take place in November. Its revised platform, L'Avenir en commun, is due to be published on 6 November, before a major convention at Le Bourget on 7 November. The event will seek to transform the energy of campaign meetings into a governing offer, covering the economy, ecology, democracy, science, social policy and foreign affairs.

That shift matters. Jean Luc Melenchon's rallies are built on intensity, presence and political conflict. A presidential program must do something more difficult: persuade voters who may agree with his anger but remain uncertain about his ability to govern, build majorities and reassure a country worried about purchasing power, healthcare, taxation, security and international instability. The question for LFI is no longer whether it can mobilise a crowd. It is whether it can turn mobilisation into a coalition.

RAPHAEL GLUCKSMANN'S VICTORY AND ITS LIMITS

Raphael Glucksmann (Socio-Democrat MEP) won the PS–Place Publique primary with more than 66 percent of the vote, gaining the

social-democratic camp's nomination in the first round. The victory gives him a clear mandate within that particular political family, but it does not settle the broader contest for the left. The Communists, Ecologists and LFI remain separate political forces, each with its own candidate, organisation and strategy.

Glucksmann's first message was deliberate: there would be no alliance with LFI. He is seeking to end what he sees as the radical-left dominance of the left-wing debate and to present himself as the leader of a "democratic left", pro-European, social, ecological and willing to govern from the centre-left rather than through permanent confrontation. His primary victory gave him a crown; the difficult task is now to build a kingdom beyond the primary electorate

HIS FELLOWS FROM THE LEFT WING CRITICISED ALREADY GULKSMANN'S VICTORY

The response was immediate. Clementine Autain described the contest as a narrow primary designed around its expected winner and accused Glucksmann of turning away from left-wing unity. Marine Tondelier regretted what she called a choice of retreat, warning against the return of the old doctrine of "irreconcilable lefts." François Ruffin, with his customary irony, mocked the result as "Raphael Glucksmann winning the Raphael Glucksmann primary," arguing that the contest had excluded alternative voices. These are not merely personal attacks: they expose the unresolved strategic argument over whether the left wins by broad unity or by drawing sharp ideological borders.

FORMER PRESIDENT FARNCOIS HOLLANDE'S PATIENCE GAME

François Hollande remains the most intriguing figure in the background. The former president chose not to enter the primary, judging that it was too narrow to settle the wider question of the left. He congratulated Glucksmann warmly after the result, saying the victory clarified a political line and could generate momentum. Yet Hollande's silence is not withdrawal; it is strategy.

For months, he has left open the possibility of a presidential candidacy, initially pointing to December as a moment for a decision. His calculation has been clear: if no contender on the moderate left generates sufficient momentum, he could reappear as the experienced figure able to offer order, institutional knowledge and political reassurance. Glucksmann's emphatic result complicates that scenario, even if it does not close it. The former president may now wait longer, perhaps until January, to determine whether the new nominee expands beyond his own camp or stalls under the weight of division.

A SECOND ROUND THAT POLARISES FACIN LEFT AND RIGHT EXTREME

Recent polling scenarios placing Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Melenchon in a possible second round reveal the wider danger for the left and the centre alike. Mélenchon's ability to reach the run-off in several tested scenarios confirms his electoral resilience. But it also underlines the depth of the country's polarisation: a Marine Le Pen–Jean Luc Melenchon contest would confront two radically different visions of the Republic, Europe, immigration, public spending, foreign policy and France's role in the world.

Polls, however, are snapshots not verdicts. With more than six months before the first round, candidates have time to rise, collapse, unite or divide further. The lasting lesson of this early campaign week is simpler: the left has no shortage of leaders, ideas or activists. What it lacks is agreement on which of them can assemble a majority.

ONE LEFT, SEVERAL CAMPAIGNS

For now, the French left is conducting several presidential campaigns at once. Jean Luc Melenchon has the crowds, the discipline and a program convention approaching. Rapahel Glucksmann has the primary victory and the ambition to represent a moderate, democratic left. The Ecologists, Communists and dissident figures still insist that no one can claim the whole family alone. Francois Hollande, meanwhile, remains close enough to the stage to hear the applause but far enough away to avoid owning the disappointment.

The 2027 campaign may eventually force these camps into dialogue. Today, it is doing the opposite: it is making their differences louder, clearer and more personal. The battle for the left has begun and the real opponent, for each candidate, may first be the neighbour standing on the same side of the political map.

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