Teaching philosophy in France

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France
1 Where philosophy is taught in France

2 Who teach philosophy in France

3 What sort of philosophy is mainly taught in France?

4 Conclusion
Philosophy is taught in France mainly in two institutions

- In high schools, but *only* during the last year of the high school teaching, i.e. at the terminal class that leads to the “baccalauréat”, the year that precedes immediately the first year at the University.
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- At the University (in philosophy Departments) and in other institutions of higher education, called in France “les grandes écoles” (the “Great schools”) i.e. the famous “Écoles normales supérieures” (Rue d’Ulm, ENS Lyon), École Polytechnique, Écoles de commerce (Business Schools) (e.g. HEC), etc. and therefore in all preparatory schools of higher education that prepare to the national competitions to obtain the right to study in such or such “Great school”. (Commentary and philosophical essay are exercises in almost all competitions for theses “Great schools”, including the scientific ones.)
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- In high schools, except those who are in a position as non-incumbents or some who teach in private schools, all philosophy teachers are state officials who succeeded either the “CAPES de philosophie” (Certificate of Proficiency in Secondary Education in philosophy) or the more prestigious “agrégation de philosophie”. The rules and the jury for these competitions are strictly national, the written tests are based on a blind refereeing system, and the members of jury ignore the results of these tests when the admissible candidates give their lessons tests.
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  2. the selection for each position (each job) is made by a selection committee composed by colleagues of the philosophy Department of LU, and at least 50% of colleagues that do not belong to LU.

NB: It is not disputable that those from the Ecole Normale Supérieure enjoy a big advantage for getting positions in higher education (around 60% of ENS students get a position in higher education).
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From high school to University, philosophy teachers have the feeling to belong to a community, and there is no doubt that the “agrégation de philosophie” plays an important role in this feeling. (It is not impossible but very difficult to get a professor position in higher education for philosophy without having obtained the “agrégation”.)
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The teaching of philosophy in France is often the occasion for pedagogical and political debates. It is rightly considered as an important teaching, but I believe, maybe in a pessimistic way, that a lot of teachers at all levels feel that it is nowadays a task more and more difficult.
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