



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# Despite all the risks, Gabriel Attal is the strongest, and possibly the last, card for Macron's political regeneration



French President Emmanuel Macron made the seemingly risky move of appointing Gabriel Attal as Prime Minister. However, given the circumstances surrounding his presidency and the stakes on the table, Attal might be Macron's strongest card.

The prime minister started in a way that will mark his mandate, no matter how long it lasts. Instead of being in the office and meetings, he **spent the first day** touring flooded areas in the Pas-de-Calais department in northern France and talking to residents.

This kind of start befits a skilled political communications professional, such as Attal, the calm and eloquent government spokesman during the COVID-19 epidemic and later the minister of national education and youth.

His professional skills, and above all, his oratory and talent to make a point in political debates, will be more in focus in the future than his young age, which dominated the headlines in the first days of his new position.

But they are also not unimportant for the political moment in which Attal (34) takes office as the youngest prime minister in the history of France.

President Macron emphasised his age, although indirectly when he **congratulated** Attal on X and said that he would revive "the spirit of 2017". It was a clear allusion to the year when Macron was elected president of France, also the youngest in history.

## Rejuvenating political project

The French president does not want to rejuvenate himself by appointing Gabriel Attal, returning to the time of his great victory in the presidential elections.

But rejuvenation is at issue here, that is, the desire to inject new energy into Macron's political project, which should help him get out of the negative spiral he has been in for a long time.

Gabriel Attal will have several crucial tasks in front of him, and he will have to solve them simultaneously with equal success.

He will not have much time for the first and perhaps the most significant task. Macron expects the new prime minister to deliver a good result in elections for the European Parliament next June.

A good result in this case would mean a victory over the growing far-right National Rally of Marine Le Pen, which currently leads Macron's centrist alliance by almost 10%.

The forthcoming European elections are significant for Macron in many ways. He wants confirmation of his pro-EU policy and, as a result, the intact influence of France in the institutions in Brussels.



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A victory by Eurosceptic Marine Le Pen in the European Parliament elections would mean the defeat of Macron's European course, which he had achieved at a delicate moment, winning the election just a year after Britain's referendum on leaving the Union.

The European elections next June are very significant for Macron because there will be no elections before 2027 when his presidential term ends.

Even though he will not be able to run again then, Macron already has to pave the way for his centrist option and ensure the best possible outcome for his successor.

The new prime minister will lead the Macron option campaign in the European Parliament elections. Until the election, it will also be his priority political job.

After all, the qualities that recommended him for that 5-month mission were perhaps decisive for him to receive the position of prime minister.

## A generational response

His age (again) plays a role. The appointment of Gabriel Attal is Macron's generational response to the principal competitor, Marine Le Pen's party, whose 28-year-old leader, Jordan Bardella, has been campaigning heavily for European elections, with much success reflected in his growing popularity.

Attal has confronted Mr Bardella in media debates and proved a good counterbalance to the ultra-right leader's energy.

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Along with running the campaign, Gabriel Attal will have a difficult job of securing a majority to pass legislation in parliament, given that Macron's alliance has not had an independent majority since last year's election.

Like his predecessor, Elisabeth Borne, Attal will have to seek additional votes of support from the opposition and often face proposals for his replacement.

However, Attal's political profile gives him a slightly better chance than Elisabeth Borne during her 20-month mandate of getting through the unenviable position in parliament.

## Something for both the left and the right

Gabriel Attal, a staunch supporter of Emmanuel Macron, accepted the course of tightening the policy towards migrants, verified by the recently passed law, assessed as Macron's step to the right since he won the far-right votes.

An acceptable part of Attal's political career among the right-wingers is his decision as Minister of Education to ban the wearing of abayas (long robes), which are often worn by Muslim women, in public schools.

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The leftists have in mind that the new prime minister started to engage in politics as a member of the Socialist Party in 2006 as a 17-year-old. The fact that he is the first openly gay prime minister, standing for progressive ideas and opposing cyber-bullying and homophobia, complements his leftist image.

A significant portion of his political profile is currently required for Emmanuel Macron to forge unity around the policies he leads and to mend the weakened and broken lines between partners.

Gabriel Attal will face resistance from the old guard of politicians and voters, who are not inclined to have leading positions in the establishment taken over by politicians with insufficient experience.

But Macron also faced such resistance in his rise and maintaining the highest position and managed to overcome them.