Bulgaria: Energy Adviser

Confidential: for the assigned participant only. Do not share with other participants, including the other members of your delegation. Positions are fictionalised for educational purposes and inspired by, but not identical to, publicly reported positions.

The Council in this scenario. Seven member states sit at the table: Bulgaria, Slovakia, Germany, Italy, Poland, France and the United Kingdom (this is 2009; the UK is a member state). Each state has one vote, cast by its National Representative. A common position endorsing the protocol needs a **simplified qualified majority: at least five of the seven, including at least two of Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom** (the facilitator will state the numbers for the actual cast). The small states cannot carry a position without the big ones; the big ones cannot decide alone. If the threshold is met, the Czech Presidency signs on the Council's behalf. Member states may also conclude side agreements outside the protocol (bilateral or trilateral understandings); these should be written down and supported by the stakeholders involved, and they are published only after the scenario. The Commission does not vote during the negotiation, but it votes last, to support or sabotage the result. The Presidency chairs without voting.

Your delegation: Bulgaria (2 members)

Bulgaria is among the most vulnerable countries in Europe: about 96 % of your natural gas comes from Russia, delivered entirely through the Ukrainian transit system. You have no LNG terminal, no significant interconnectors with your neighbours, and storage that covers only two or three days at winter demand. The crisis is not abstract for you. Transit stopped this morning; district heating in Sofia will fail within days. Schools are closing. Factories are shutting down. People will start burning wood and furniture. This is a humanitarian situation, not a policy debate.

At the same time Bulgaria signed up, in January 2008, to Russia's South Stream pipeline, which would bring Russian gas directly under the Black Sea to Bulgaria, bypassing Ukraine. This complicates your position: you are desperately dependent on Russia, you need EU solidarity, and you have made a strategic bet on a bilateral infrastructure deal with Moscow.

Key facts (both members):

- Russian gas dependency ~96 %; storage 2–3 days at winter demand, among the lowest in the EU.
- One of the EU's poorest economies; the impact of a cut-off is disproportionately severe.
- South Stream partner since 2008.
- You need gas restored immediately. Almost any deal is better than no deal.

Decision rule: Bulgaria's National Representative casts the state's vote in the Council.

Your role

Motivations & constraints: You are Bulgaria's energy-policy expert: storage levels, the (absent) alternative supply options, the heating infrastructure and the timeline before things turn critical. You support the National Representative with data and handle the technical discussions. Your aims: quantify the crisis (the room needs numbers, not adjectives: two to three days of storage, no alternative supply, hundreds of thousands of households on district heating); push for concrete EU emergency measures (reverse flows from neighbours where technically possible, coordinated releases from countries with surplus storage, EU-funded emergency heating fuel); and engage the Commission's Energy Commissioner's Representative on what the EU can actually deliver and coordinate, and prod the Commission into direct measures.

Red lines: No monitoring protocol without a gas-resumption clause. Monitoring alone is useless if the gas does not flow.

Style: Be the data person. When others speak in generalities, bring specifics: "our storage has 48 hours left; district heating in Sofia serves some 400,000 households; our system has no reverse-flow capability from Romania." Engage the Commission's energy expert early and concretely: what can the EU do for Bulgaria right now? Pair with Slovakia's adviser: you bring the numbers of the most desperate state, they bring the drafting. If your colleague starts exploring bilateral options with Russia, counsel caution privately.

Confidential (for you alone, not for your delegation): You are worried about the National Representative's temptation to cut a bilateral deal with Russia. You understand the desperation, but you think it would be a strategic disaster: if Bulgaria breaks EU ranks to negotiate with Gazprom alone, it tells every other vulnerable country that the EU cannot protect them and gives Russia exactly what it wants, proof that Europe divides when you turn the screw on its weakest member. Your preferred approach is to work within the EU framework but make it deliver faster: the Commission has hinted at limited financial resources, the Presidency wants a quick result. Help them help you by providing data, proposing concrete emergency measures and being constructive in the room. You also know something technical that few appreciate: Bulgaria's system could receive small emergency volumes from Greece through the existing interconnector, if Greece's Revithoussa LNG terminal has spare capacity. It would not solve the crisis but could buy a few days. Mention it to the Commission; it shows constructive thinking, and any EU financing of it would need the whole Commission team to sign off, which would itself be a political signal.