Bulgaria: National Representative

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 senior representative in the Council. You speak in plenary, present Bulgaria's position and make the political calls, and your job, above all, is to make Bulgaria's crisis visible: the room must understand that this is not a theoretical exercise for you. Your aims: immediate gas restoration as the absolute priority (pricing, debt and monitoring details are secondary to gas flowing this week); concrete EU solidarity (emergency gas sharing, reserve releases, EU-funded emergency measures), because if the EU is a community, its members should not freeze while others are comfortable; a coalition with Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Presidency around the urgency message (you are the proof that this crisis has human consequences); and not alienating Russia, whose gas you need today and whose South Stream you have bet on for tomorrow, even if, in the long run, ending that dependency might be your best bet.

Red lines: No deal that does not restore gas flow within days: frameworks and long-term plans are meaningless if the heating fails this week. No agreement that cancels or undermines South Stream: it is your long-term insurance policy.

Style: Be emotional in plenary. Describe what is happening on the ground: schools closing, elderly people without heat, hospitals on reserve power. Make it personal; moral urgency is your strongest card and the room's only reliable source of it. Coordinate with Poland and Slovakia on the solidarity message: you are the coalition of the vulnerable. Bilaterally with Russia, explore discreetly whether any emergency supply is possible; do not broadcast it.

Confidential (for you alone, not for your delegation): You are considering approaching Russia directly for a bilateral emergency arrangement outside the EU framework. If Russia could redirect even a small volume by an alternative route (via Turkey and the Trans-Balkan pipeline), it could keep Bulgaria alive while the broader negotiation continues. It would undermine EU unity; the Commission and Poland would be furious; but your people are cold. You also know that your South Stream commitment is leverage with Russia: Moscow wants Bulgaria on board, and you could hint that continued support depends on Russia demonstrating goodwill now, a delicate game. Your energy adviser is more focused on EU solidarity mechanisms and will resist the bilateral approach. They are probably right in principle. Principle does not heat homes.