France

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: France (solo)

You represent France alone. France's energy profile gives you a unique position: about three-quarters of French electricity is nuclear, your dependence on Russian gas is around 20 %, storage is full, imports are diversified (Norway, Algeria, LNG), and the crisis has had negligible impact on French supply. You have no bilateral pipeline project with Russia. You are insulated from the immediate crisis, and deeply invested in the EU's long-term energy and strategic architecture: France traditionally favours strong EU institutions, strategic autonomy and a coherent common policy. It is also pragmatic and commercial (GDF Suez holds supply contracts, some of them Russian) and will not sacrifice business interests to abstract principle.

Decision rule: you cast France's vote in the Council. France is one of the four big states whose votes the qualified majority requires.

Your role

Motivations & constraints: You are one person, insulated from the crisis and deeply invested in what it means for the Union. You have four aims. A coherent EU response, because France wants the EU to speak with one voice, not because you are suffering but because a divided EU is a weak EU. The case for a common energy policy, because this crisis demonstrates the need for shared rules, common institutions and collective capacity, and France supports the Third Energy Package and the principle of solidarity. Balanced relationships, because France is not anti-Russian, but it will not subordinate EU interests to bilateral commercial deals the way Germany and Italy seem willing to. And French commercial interests where relevant (GDF Suez contracts, nuclear technology exports), which are not directly at stake tonight.

Red lines: No EU response so weak that it damages the Union's credibility: if the EU cannot respond to an energy crisis hitting several member states, what is it for? No binding obligations beyond what France has agreed in treaty: solidarity in principle, caution about new legal commitments made under crisis pressure.

Style: Speak thoughtfully, not first. Listen to the extremes (Bulgaria's desperation, Poland's principles, Germany's caution) and then offer a synthesis; position France as the voice of reason. Talk to everyone, but especially Poland and Germany: can you find a formulation both accept? A solidarity commitment that is politically meaningful but not legally binding; a statement on energy security that acknowledges transit diversification without naming Nord Stream. With Russia, be polite and professional: you have no axe to grind; ask what Russia needs; and make clear, privately, that the EU will draw institutional conclusions from this crisis. Your power is synthesis, not volume: you cannot out-shout Poland or out-lobby Germany, but you can craft the compromise the room accepts. That is how France leads in Europe.

Confidential (for you alone, not for your delegation): You are in a uniquely powerful position and you know it: not desperate like Bulgaria, not compromised by Russian commercial ties like Germany and Italy, not ideologically invested like Poland; and under the Council's rule a common position needs two of the four big states, which makes you the swing vote in fact as well as in temperament. Whichever way France goes, the EU's position tilts. Poland will ask you to back a strong solidarity statement and oppose bypass pipelines; you are sympathetic to solidarity but wary of the anti-Russian framing: EU energy policy should be about European strength, not about punishing Moscow. Germany will want you on the cautious line; you are sympathetic to the pragmatism but uncomfortable with how transparently Germany puts its Gazprom relationship above EU solidarity. You will not join a blocking minority with Germany and Italy, and you will not lead a charge against them. Your ideal: a moderate but meaningful EU position (a protocol that restores gas, a monitoring mission, a political commitment to review energy security leading to the Third Energy Package, perhaps a voluntary solidarity declaration). Nothing binding, nothing punitive toward Russia, nothing that constrains national sovereignty over the energy mix. You also hold a nuclear card, to be played gently: France's fleet shows that real energy independence comes from diversifying sources, not just suppliers. Plant the seed; do not push it.