Czech Presidency: Presidency Representative (chair)

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.

Your delegation: the Czech EU Council Presidency (2 members

You are part of the Czech Presidency delegation. The Czech Republic took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 January 2009, the same day Gazprom cut the gas to Ukraine. This is your first major test, in your first week. Your Presidency's motto is "Europe without Barriers", and energy security was already a declared priority.

The Czech Republic is itself about 79 % dependent on Russian gas, with roughly 40 days of storage: not among the hardest hit, far from insulated. But your job here is not national. You chair this conference and the Council; you run the EU's collective response. As Presidency you have **no independent power**: you cannot force member states to agree, impose sanctions or release reserves. Your authority comes entirely from being seen as an honest broker. If any party sees you as biased, the process collapses.

Key facts (both members):

- The Presidency chairs all plenaries, controls the speaking order, sets the agenda, calls plenaries and can propose compromise formulations.
- The Presidency conducts diplomacy between parties: you can meet Russia and Ukraine bilaterally and carry messages between them.
- The Presidency works in tandem with the European Commission, which has the technical expertise, the monitoring-mission proposal and the only money in the room.
- The member states at the table have radically different exposure: Bulgaria is facing a humanitarian crisis; the United Kingdom is barely affected and Germany little more. Finding a common position between them is your central challenge.
- Russia has five people, Ukraine three. Both will try to win you to their narrative. Stay balanced.

Decision rule: the Presidency does not vote. It counts the Council's votes against the qualified-majority threshold and, if the threshold is met, signs the protocol on the Council's behalf. During the break, the Presidency and the Commission post the Presidency text (the protocol skeleton with options struck or added) as the basis for the second block. The shared document is open to everyone; the facilitator may name the Presidency's energy adviser as the holder of the final text if the drafting gets chaotic.

Your role

Motivations & constraints: You are the chair. You open and close plenaries, control the speaking order, call meetings, set the agenda, deliver the state-of-play summary at the end of the first block, post the Presidency text at the break with your adviser and the Commission, triage the endgame to the decisive articles, run the vote and count the Council against its threshold. You are the closest thing to a host this conference has. Your job is process management, not policy advocacy: you do not push a Czech agenda, you push for a result that all EU members can accept and that Russia and Ukraine will both sign. Your worst outcome is member states fragmenting into bilateral deals with Russia; your second-worst is a conference that drifts because nobody created momentum. This is the Czech Republic's first Presidency, and its credibility (and that of every small state that will ever hold the chair) depends on what happens in this room.

Red lines: No appearance of bias: side openly with Russia or Ukraine and you lose the room. No letting the Council fragment: if Germany or Italy start cutting side deals, pull them back to the table and remind them what a common voice is worth. No skipping the process: the state-of-play summary, the triage and a formal, one-by-one vote happen whatever the state of the text.

Style: Be the calmest person in the room; if others get heated, lower your voice. Open strong (this is an emergency and the EU must respond collectively), then give every delegation its 45 seconds and enforce them. Keep time pressure visible. When progress stalls, ask questions rather than propose answers: "What would it take for Russia to accept Article 3?" Shuttle between Russia and Ukraine, convene small groups on specific articles, and force a plenary at the scheduled time regardless of progress. You have no formal power; use the chair's tools instead: the floor, the agenda, the summary, the clock.

Confidential (for you alone, not for your delegation): You are under immense pressure from Prague, which sees this crisis as make-or-break for Czech credibility in Europe. There is a strong temptation to be more active and ambitious than the Presidency role traditionally allows: to propose solutions, take initiative, put your own formulations on the table. Your energy adviser will prefer a cautious, procedural, Commission-led approach; they are right that overstepping could backfire, but you sense that pure facilitation is not enough. If you only chair and ask others for ideas, the crisis will drift, and someone has to create momentum. You also have a national read: Czechia is 79 % dependent on Russian gas, and you would privately prefer a deal that includes some form of solidarity or emergency-sharing arrangement among EU states, but proposing it as Presidency would look self-serving. You may need the Commission to propose it while you quietly support it. Finally: you have good reason to believe that Ukraine's Strategic Adviser is the most pragmatic voice in the Ukrainian delegation. If the Government Representative is being difficult, work through the adviser.