# European Pirate Academy

# Handbook 5

# EUROPEAN PIRATE ACADEMY

# The Pirate Academy Handbook

## Volume 5: The European Tech Champions Act (ETCA): How to run

*The Pirate Academy was made possible by the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament. The Pirate Academy was created by Paul Diegel and David František Wagner for MEP Markéta Gregorová. This handbook and the revised versions of all scenarios were prepared by David František Wagner.*

*Positions in this scenario are fictionalised for educational purposes and inspired by, but not identical to, publicly reported positions. Roles are institutional functions, never named living individuals.*

# Chapter 1
# Running this scenario

## What this is?

A two-day, in-person simulation of the ordinary legislative procedure on a fictional regulation: the **European Tech Champions Act (ETCA)**. The Commission has proposed a European Tech Champions Programme for artificial intelligence, semiconductors, high-performance computing, biotechnology and quantum technologies, with an envelope of EUR 10 billion up to 2030, financed by EU borrowing. Participants play the European Commission, five member states in the Council (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland) and five political groups in the European Parliament (EPP, S&D, Renew Europe, Greens/EFA, ECR). Two optional roles (Patriots for Europe and the Netherlands) extend the cast to thirteen.

On day 1, each institution builds its own **mandate**: a position on every article of the Commission's text, including a filled-in **budget sheet**. On day 2, both institutions meet in a single **trilogue**, negotiate the text block by block and try to adopt a final act that both a Council majority and a Parliament majority will confirm. Or they fail, which is a valid outcome.

This is a **Tier 4 scenario** of the Pirate Academy sequence (Volume 1, Chapter 2): it works on a real-looking legal text article by article, over two days, with weighted voting, individual scorecards and peer scoring. It assumes participants have played at least two of the earlier scenarios (Volumes 2 to 4) and know what a mandate, a bracket and a qualified majority are. It is designed as the in-person finale of the course, or one of two finale scenarios together with Volume 6.

The scenario's one big idea, which you should hold in your head throughout: **money decides everything else**. How large the envelope is, who pays for it, and who receives it determines who controls the programme, whose conditions apply and who can walk away. Every article of the text is, in the end, an argument about the budget sheet.

## What you need

1. **Facilitation**: one facilitator minimum, two recommended. The **lead facilitator** is the neutral referee and joint secretariat: keeps the four-column document and the budget sheet, checks the sheet's arithmetic, announces voting thresholds, counts votes and rules on anything the rules do not cover. The **second facilitator** runs the world: clock, injects, lobbyist amendment cards and observation notes for the debrief. The facilitators never play a role (Volume 1, Chapter 5).

2. **Participants: 11 as the designed cast** (the Commission, five member states, five political groups), 12 or 13 with the optional roles. The standard course (Volume 1, Chapter 3) sends 12 participants to the in-person finale, which gives the designed cast plus the Patriots for Europe. Below 11, see the casting guide (Chapter 5); the Commission is never cut. From 16 on, run two parallel tables and a joint debrief (Chapter 5).

3. **Time: day 1, about 3 hours** (briefing and mandate building); **day 2, about 7 hours** with breaks (trilogue, final votes, peer scoring, debrief). The two days need not be consecutive, but any gap weakens the mandates. It is also possible to run the scenario in one day (Chapter 7.7), but this structure allows for adding more classes or discussions.

4. **Rooms**: one plenary room large enough for all participants around one table; two institution rooms (Council and Parliament) for day 1 and for caucusing on day 2; two or three small rooms or corners for bilaterals.

5. **Before the session**: the general factsheet, the Commission proposal and the role handouts posted about one week ahead.

## Materials checklist

Before the session you should have prepared:

1. The **general factsheet** (separate document), with the rules, the budget sheet template, the mandate template, the four-column document template and the declarations sheet, posted to all participants about one week ahead.

2. The **Commission proposal** (separate document): the super-simplified ETCA text in eight recitals and nine articles plus the Commission's budget sheet. Printed, one copy per participant, plus the shared digital version.

3. Eight to thirteen **role handouts** (separate documents), sent individually. Each participant sees only their own. Unused roles are simply not sent.

4. **Scorecards**, one per role, printed for peer scoring on day 2. They are also the last page of each role handout.

5. The **four-column document** as a shared digital document (Commission proposal | Parliament mandate | Council mandate | compromise text), editable by the lead facilitator; read access for everyone.

6. The **budget sheet** as a large printed poster or projected table, updated live during the trilogue.

7. The **inject pack** (Chapter 7.3) and the **lobbyist amendment cards** (Appendix A), printed. Cards numbered 1 to 8.

8. The **run-sheet** (separate document).

9. Access to a **die or randomiser** (for example random.org) for drawing amendment cards.

10. The **communication templates** (Chapter 8), adapted with your dates.

## Tech checklist

The scenario is played in person, but the text lives in shared documents.

- The four-column document and the budget sheet are accessible to all participants (read) and to the lead facilitator (edit). Each institution has its own working copy for day 1 that it can edit freely.
- A projector or large screen in the plenary room shows the current state of the four-column document or the budget sheet.
- A messaging channel (Discord, Signal group, or similar) reaches all participants at once for time calls, injects and amendment cards. A private channel to each facilitator exists.
- Every participant has a device that can open and edit documents. Not every participant needs a laptop, but both Parliament and Council need at least two.

## Timeline around the scenario

| When | What |
|---|---|
| about 7 days out | Post the general factsheet and the Commission proposal; announce the cast and the voting rules; send role handouts individually (this can also be done 3 days before the scenario, not later) |
| 1 day out | Final cast check; apply the cut order (Chapter 5) if somebody dropped out; prepare printed materials |
| Day 1 | Briefing, mandate building, mandate votes; the lead facilitator collects both mandates into the four-column document the same evening |
| Day 2 | Trilogue, final votes, peer scoring, debrief |
| After | Post-session message with possible homework within 24 hours (template, Chapter 8) |

# Chapter 2
# What this scenario teaches

## Learning objectives

By the end of the scenario and its debrief, participants should be able to:

1. **Understand a simple legal text article by article**: read a regulation, write amendments in precise wording, keep track of a four-column document, and see how a change in one article moves the balance in another.

2. **Explain how the budget drives the politics of a file**: the size of the envelope, the sources of money (borrowing, national contributions, reprogramming, own resources) and the distribution key are not technical details but the core of who wins and who controls the outcome.

3. **Build and use a mandate**: negotiate inside one institution first, then defend and trade that position in the trilogue, and explain the difference between the two arenas.

4. **Count coalitions in a weighted Parliament** and understand why, in the 2024 to 2029 Parliament, no majority exists without the EPP, and why the EPP can choose between partners.

5. **Know their walk-away point**: compare the deal on the table with their no-deal outcome and decide whether to sign.

6. **Compare the room's result with reality**: the EU's actual instruments in this field from 2023 to 2026 (Chips Act, STEP, the European Tech Champions Initiative, InvestAI, SAFE, the Scaleup Europe Fund, the proposed European Competitiveness Fund), and explain why the real money arrived the way it did.

## Why a tech champions act

The file is fictional, but everything around it is real. Since the Draghi report of September 2024, the EU's debate has been dominated by competitiveness, the investment gap and technological dependence on the United States and China. In 2025, the Commission proposed a European Competitiveness Fund for the next long-term budget, announced the Scaleup Europe Fund, borrowed EUR 150 billion for defence loans, and watched a Chinese-owned chipmaker in the Netherlands become a geopolitical crisis. All of these sit in the background of the scenario, and all of them can be used in the debrief.

A fictional act has one advantage over a real file: there is no historical outcome participants can look up and copy. The room's result is entirely theirs. The debrief then compares it with what the EU actually did with the same problem.

## What this scenario does not do

- It does not simulate the full ordinary legislative procedure: there are no committee votes, no plenary amendments, no second reading, no comitology. The mandates of day 1 compress months of internal work into three hours.
- It does not reproduce real negotiation positions. Positions are fictionalised and sometimes sharpened for playability.
- It does not teach EU budget law in detail. The budget sheet is a simplified model. Its rules are realistic in direction (borrowing for grants is much harder than borrowing for loans; reprogramming is easier than fresh money) but not in procedure.
- It does not have a winner. Scores measure how well a role defended its interests against its no-deal outcome, not who played best.

# Chapter 3
# The context: facilitator background

This chapter gives you the real background of autumn 2025 so that you can answer questions in role and run the debrief. Participants get a shorter version in the factsheet.

## The competitiveness debate, 2024 to 2025

In September 2024, Mario Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness estimated that the EU needs additional investment of about EUR 750 to 800 billion a year to close its gap with the United States and China, and argued for common funding of European public goods, including in advanced technologies. In January 2025, the Commission turned the report into a Competitiveness Compass. Most member states agreed with the diagnosis. They did not agree on who should pay.

## What the EU actually did with money

The EU's real instruments in this field share one feature: very little of the money was new.

| Instrument | When | EU public money | Where it came from |
|---|---|---|---|
| European Chips Act | 2023 | EUR 3.3 billion to 2030 for the Chips for Europe Initiative; "more than EUR 43 billion" of policy-driven investment expected in total | half Horizon Europe, half Digital Europe (reprogrammed) |

| Instrument | When | EU public money | Where it came from |
|---|---|---|---|
| European Tech Champions Initiative (ETCI) | February 2025 | EUR 3.75 billion fund of funds | Germany, France and Spain EUR 1 billion each, Italy EUR 150 million, Belgium EUR 100 million, EIB Group EUR 500 million |
| Sovereignty Fund, became STEP | 2023 to 2024 | proposed EUR 10 billion of fresh money; agreed EUR 1.5 billion, all for the European Defence Fund | mid-term revision of the long-term budget; the rest by reprogramming existing programmes |
| InvestAI | February 2025 | EUR 200 billion to be "mobilised", including EUR 20 billion for AI gigafactories | existing programmes (Digital Europe, Horizon Europe, InvestEU) and voluntary cohesion money |
| EIB TechEU | 2025 | EUR 70 billion of EIB Group financing, aiming to mobilise about EUR 250 billion by 2027 | EIB balance sheet (loans, guarantees, equity) |
| SAFE | May 2025 | EUR 150 billion | EU borrowing, lent on to member states as loans, repaid by them |
| Scaleup Europe Fund | announced September 2025 | EUR 1 billion from Horizon Europe towards a EUR 5 billion fund with private investors | reprogrammed, plus private capital |

| Instrument | When | EU public money | Where it came from |
|---|---|---|---|
| European Competitiveness Fund (proposal) | July 2025 | EUR 409 billion for 2028 to 2034, including Horizon Europe; about EUR 54.8 billion for digital leadership | the next long-term budget (still under negotiation) |

The lessons for the scenario:

1. **Fresh grants financed by EU debt were politically out of reach in 2025**. The Sovereignty Fund shrank from EUR 10 billion to EUR 1.5 billion. The only new EU borrowing in 2025 (SAFE) was for loans that member states repay.

2. **The current long-term budget ends in 2027**. Any money for 2026 to 2027 has to be reprogrammed from existing programmes or borrowed. Money for 2028 to 2030 belongs to the next long-term budget, which was only proposed in July 2025.

3. **National contributions are a real precedent**: the ETCI was built from voluntary contributions by a few large member states, managed by the EIB Group.

4. **The big numbers are "mobilised" numbers**: EUR 43 billion, EUR 200 billion, EUR 250 billion include private and national money that the EU hopes to attract. The public EU share is usually a fraction.

## Borrowing, own resources and unanimity

The Commission's proposal finances the whole envelope with EU borrowing for grants (Article 2 and the budget sheet), as the 2020 own-resources decision did for NextGenerationEU. In reality, the 2020 borrowing empowerment covers NextGenerationEU only, and its net borrowing ends in 2026. A new borrowing power to finance grants would require a new or amended own-resources decision, adopted by the Council unanimously after consulting Parliament and then ratified by every member state. The same applies to any new own resource, such as a digital levy. Borrowing to lend money on to member states (the SAFE model) was done in 2025 under Article 122 TFEU by qualified majority, backed by the margin in the EU budget.

The scenario keeps this logic in a compressed form (Chapter 4): debt-financed grants and new own resources make the Council decide unanimously; loans and other sources do not.

## The Parliament in 2025

The Parliament elected in June 2024 has 720 members. At its constitution in July 2024, the groups were: EPP 188, S&D 136, Patriots for Europe 84, ECR 78, Renew Europe 77, Greens/EFA 53, The Left 46, Europe of Sovereign Nations 25, non-attached 33. Small changes since then do not change the coalition arithmetic.

Two majorities exist. The "platform" majority of EPP, S&D and Renew (401 seats) elected the Commission. On the right, EPP, ECR, Patriots and ESN together hold 375 seats. On 13 November 2025, the Parliament showed both on one day: it adopted its position on the 2040 climate target with the centrist majority and its position on the Omnibus I simplification package with the EPP and the groups to its right. That is the dynamic the optional Patriots role brings into the room.

## The Council in 2025

The Council was chaired by Denmark in the second half of 2025. In the scenario, the five largest member states (plus the Netherlands as an option) stand in for the Council; the Presidency is not played. The big fault lines on a file like this:

1. **Frugal versus spending**: Germany and the Netherlands against new EU debt for grants; France, Italy and Spain in favour of a large European effort.

2. **Excellence versus cohesion**: money for the best projects (which tend to be in the north-west) or for every region.

3. **State aid versus EU money**: countries with fiscal space (Germany, France) can subsidise their own champions if state-aid rules are loosened; countries without it (Italy, Spain, Poland) need EU money instead.

4. **Sovereignty versus openness**: France's "Buy European" against the Atlanticism of Poland and the Netherlands, sharpened by the US tariff framework of August 2025.

## The world in October 2025

Three real events form the injects (Chapter 7.3):

- **US tariffs**. The US-EU joint statement of 21 August 2025 set a 15% ceiling on US tariffs on most EU goods, and committed the United States to cap tariffs on EU semiconductors, pharmaceuticals and lumber at 15% after its Section 232 investigations. Any European preference that hurts US firms risks that arrangement.

- **Nexperia**. On 30 September 2025, the Dutch minister of economic affairs invoked the Goods Availability Act, a 1952 law never used before, against the Chinese-owned chipmaker Nexperia; the order was an-

nounced on 12 October. The Amsterdam Enterprise Chamber had suspended the Chinese CEO on 7 October. China's ministry of commerce banned exports of Nexperia products made in China from 4 October, and European carmakers warned of chip shortages. The Dutch government suspended its order on 19 November 2025.

- **ASML and Mistral**. On 9 September 2025, ASML, the Dutch maker of chipmaking equipment, invested EUR 1.3 billion in the French AI company Mistral AI, becoming its largest shareholder with about 11%. The deal was read as a step towards European tech sovereignty built by companies rather than by governments.

## Where the scenario bends reality

1. The ETCA does not exist. Its text is modelled on real programme regulations (Horizon Europe, the Chips Act, STEP).
2. Months of legislative work are compressed into two days; there are no committee or plenary stages.
3. The Council is five or six states; the qualified majority is replaced by "no more than one against".
4. Parliament groups vote as blocs; real groups split.
5. Own-resources and borrowing decisions are folded into the Council vote on the act instead of being separate procedures with national ratification.
6. The Commission is one participant; in reality it is a college of 27 Commissioners and many directorates-general with different views. Its legal powers (opposing a compromise, withdrawing the proposal) are real but simplified.

# Chapter 4
# Rules and mechanics

This chapter is the reference for every rule of the scenario. The factsheet gives participants the same rules in shorter form. When a situation is not covered, the lead facilitator rules, following the intent of the rules rather than their wording (rule zero, Volume 1, Chapter 5).

## The cast

| Institution | Role | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Council | Germany | core |
| Council | France | core |
| Council | Italy | core |
| Council | Spain | core |
| Council | Poland | core |
| Council | Netherlands | optional (13th role) |
| Parliament | EPP (188 seats) | core |
| Parliament | S&D (136 seats) | core |

| Institution | Role | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Parliament | Renew Europe (77 seats) | core |
| Parliament | Greens/EFA (53 seats) | core |
| Parliament | ECR (78 seats) | core |
| Parliament | Patriots for Europe (84 seats, plus ESN 25) | optional (12th role) |
| Commission | European Commission | core; does not vote |

Each role is played by one participant. Roles represent a government, a political group or the Commission as an institution, never a named person. The Commission does not vote, but it has its own scorecard and real powers (see “The Commission” below).

## The decision rules

### Council

A text is adopted if no more than one member state present votes against: 4 of 5, or 5 of 6 with the Netherlands. Abstention counts as not against. This replaces qualified majority voting, which cannot be modelled meaningfully with five or six states; say so in the briefing.

### Unanimity trigger

If the budget sheet of the text being voted contains any amount in the line “EU borrowing for grants” or in the line “new own resource”, the Council must decide unanimously: every member state present must vote in favour (abstention counts as against). The lead facilitator checks the sheet before every Council vote and announces the threshold before the vote starts. Borrowing for loans to member states, national contributions and reprogrammed money do not trigger unanimity.

*Why*: in reality, both a new borrowing power for grants and a new own resource need an own-resources decision adopted unanimously by the Council and ratified by every member state. Lending to member states was done in 2025 by qualified majority. The scenario folds the separate decision into the vote on the act.

*What it does to the game*: the Commission's own proposal (EUR 10 billion of borrowing for grants) gives every member state a veto from the first minute. Participants who want a large envelope have to choose between building unanimity and moving money into other lines.

### Commission opposition

Before the Council's final vote, the Commission states whether it supports the final text. If the Commission opposes it, the Council can adopt it only unanimously, whatever the budget sheet says. This follows Article 293(1) TFEU: the Council may amend a Commission proposal only by unanimity. It gives the Commission real weight in the trilogue without giving it a vote.

### Parliament

A text is adopted if the groups voting in favour together hold at least **361 seats**, the majority of the full 720-seat house. Each group votes as a bloc with all its seats. Groups that are not played (The Left, non-attached members, and ESN when Patriots are not cast) count as not voting in favour. When Patriots for Europe are cast, the 25 ESN seats vote with the Patriots.

| Coalition | Seats | Passes? |
|---|---|---|
| EPP + S&D | 324 | no |
| EPP + S&D + Renew | 401 | yes |
| EPP + S&D + Greens/ EFA | 377 | yes |

| Coalition | Seats | Passes? |
|---|---|---|
| EPP + S&D + ECR | 402 | yes |
| EPP + Renew + ECR | 343 | no |
| EPP + Renew + ECR + Greens/EFA | 396 | yes |
| S&D + Renew + Greens/EFA + ECR | 344 | no |
| EPP + ECR + Patriots/ ESN | 375 | yes (only with Patriots cast) |
| EPP + Renew + Patriots/ESN | 374 | yes (only with Patriots cast) |

With the core cast, there is no majority without the EPP, and the EPP needs at least two partners. With the Patriots in the room, the EPP gains a majority to its right.

### When votes happen

Each institution votes twice: on its **mandate** at the end of day 1, and on the **final text** at the end of day 2. Only these four votes are binding. Indicative votes during the trilogue are allowed and often useful, but they bind nobody.

### Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed

Provisional agreement on an article can be reopened until the final vote. How text is provisionally agreed is set out under “The four-column document” below.

## The budget sheet

Article 2 of the proposal refers to a one-page budget sheet annexed to the act. Every mandate and the final text must contain a complete sheet. All amounts are in EUR billion for the whole period 2026 to 2030, in steps of 0.5. The sheet has four blocks.

### Block A: Size

| Line | Meaning | Commission proposal |
|---|---|---|
| Public envelope | the EU public money of the programme; equals the sum of block B | 10 |
| Co-investment target | private and EIB Group money the programme hopes to attract; a target, not money | none |

### Block B: Sources

This block says where the public envelope comes from. The sources must add up exactly to the envelope.

| Source | How much it can bring (EUR billion) | Commission proposal |
|---|---|---|
| EU borrowing for grants | no limit | 10 |
| EU borrowing for loans to member states | no limit | 0 |

| Source | How much it can bring (EUR billion) | Commission proposal |
|---|---|---|
| National contributions | no limit | 0 |
| Reprogramming from Horizon Europe | up to 2 | 0 |
| Reprogramming from Digital Europe | up to 1.5 | 0 |
| Reprogramming from cohesion funds | up to 4 | 0 |
| Redirected Recovery and Resilience Facility money | up to 3 | 0 |
| New own resource (for example a digital levy) | up to 10 | 0 |

The limits are game numbers, roughly proportionate to what was left in the real programmes for 2026 to 2027. Do not present them as real figures.

## Rules for the sources

1. **Unanimity**. Two sources make the Council decide unanimously: EU borrowing for grants and a new own resource. If either line is above zero in the text being voted, every member state present must vote in favour (see the decision rules above).

2. **Loans count only if somebody borrows them**. Before the final vote, each member state present may declare how much it would borrow. The loan line counts only up to the sum of these declarations; the rest is struck. Italy, Spain and Poland have reasons to borrow; Germany and the Netherlands do not. Day 1 mandate sheets may include loans, pledges and redirections without declarations; declarations are taken only before the final votes.

3. **National contributions: all or volunteers**. The text must say how they are paid:

- "by GNI key": all 27 member states pay their share;
- "voluntary pledges": only amounts pledged at the table by member states present count.

4. **Cohesion and Recovery money is voluntary**. Each member state decides whether to redirect its own allocation; the text cannot force it. As with loans, member states present declare their redirections before the final vote, and only declared amounts count. In reality, Recovery money can only be redirected for commitments made before the end of 2026; that is why the line is capped at 3.

5. **Struck amounts reduce the envelope**. Whatever is struck under rules 2 to 4 is removed from block B, and the public envelope shrinks by the same amount. Declarations above a line do not raise it. The lead facilitator records the final figures by name on the declarations sheet (Annex D of the factsheet) before the final votes; scoring uses the sheet after this step. If a revised package is tabled after a failed vote, the declarations stand: no new declarations are taken, and any line above the declared total is struck again.

## GNI shares

For the debrief and for participants who ask. Germany 25%, France 17%, Italy 12%, Spain 9%, Netherlands 6%, Poland 5%, the other 21 member states together 26%. These are rounded game approximations. Example: EUR 6 billion by GNI key costs Germany 1.5, France 1.0, Italy 0.7, Spain 0.5, the Netherlands 0.4 and Poland 0.3.

## Block C: Distribution (sum = 100%)

| Line | Meaning | Commission proposal |
|---|---|---|
| Open excellence-based calls | competitive calls across the EU; the text may add a widening bonus: extra evaluation points for applicants from member states or regions with weaker research and innovation performance (Art. 4 or 6) | 100% |
| National or regional envelopes | pre-allocated money managed with member states; the text must state the key (population, GNI, or a cohesion key favouring poorer regions) | 0% |

## Block D: Thematic earmarks

Minimum shares of the public envelope for quantum, semiconductors, AI, HPC, biotech, and defence and dual-use technologies. The earmarks may not sum to more than 100%. Percentages move in steps of 0.5. The **climate tag** is a separate percentage: the share of the envelope that must also serve climate objectives, across all themes. The Commission proposal has only one earmark: quantum at least 25%.

## Feasibility check

The lead facilitator checks every sheet before it is voted. A sheet is budgetarily infeasible if:

- block B does not add up to the envelope;
- a source exceeds its limit;
- money comes from a source not in the table (for example the Common Agricultural Policy);
- block C does not add up to 100%;
- the earmarks in block D exceed 100%;
- national contributions are entered without saying how they are paid (by GNI key or voluntary pledges);
- national or regional envelopes are entered without a key.

An infeasible sheet cannot be voted on until it is corrected.

## The design logic of the budget sheet

These relations are not written in the rules; participants discover them through their handouts. They are the hidden logic between the articles.

1. **Leverage is not money**. The co-investment target satisfies roles that want leverage (Germany, Renew, EPP, the Netherlands), but it does not count towards the public envelope that France, S&D and Spain need. A text can promise EUR 100 billion “mobilised” with EUR 10 billion of public money. Expect participants to try this.

2. **Who pays decides**. National contributions give member states a strong claim to run the Board (Art. 5) and to national envelopes; EU money gives Parliament a claim to oversight (Art. 8). Handouts do not spell these claims out; participants who notice them can use them.

3. **State aid versus EU money**. Loosening state-aid rules (Art. 5(4)) lets Germany and France subsidise their own companies. Italy, Spain and Poland cannot match them. Italy's handout ties state aid to a cohesion share; Spain and Poland may make the same argument for a large EU envelope, national envelopes or a widening bonus.

4. **Grants versus loans**. Grants financed by borrowing give every member state a veto. Loans avoid the veto but only help states that want to borrow, and they leave the programme dependent on national borrowing decisions.

5. **Cohesion reprogramming is double-edged**. It is the easiest money to find, but Spain sees any use of cohesion funds as raiding solidarity money, and S&D may share that view. Because the redirection is voluntary, it counts only as a partial pain point for Spain.

## The working documents

### The Commission proposal

Eight recitals and nine articles plus the budget sheet. Its numbering is kept throughout. Participants may add new articles (for example on a talent initiative, sandboxes, a procurement preference or a tech forum), numbered 4a, 7a, and so on. The recitals are the statements of intent before Article 1; participants may amend them or add their own. Recitals do not bind and count at most as a partial score in peer scoring.

## Mandates

Each institution's mandate has, for every article: "accept", "delete", or a full replacement wording; any new articles and recitals in full wording; and a complete budget sheet (Annex A of the factsheet). The mandate template is Annex B of the factsheet. A short commentary (priorities, red lines, negotiation space) is optional and is not binding. Mandates are adopted by the institution's vote at the end of day 1.

## The four-column document

After day 1, the lead facilitator builds the four-column document: Commission proposal | Parliament mandate | Council mandate | compromise. Articles where the two mandates agree are marked green and copied into the fourth column as agreed text; like any provisional agreement they can be reopened until the final vote. The budget sheet is green only if both mandate sheets are identical in all four blocks. Where one column holds individual positions (no mandate), an article is green only if every individual position agrees with the other mandate. The rest of the fourth column is written during the trilogue. The Commission tables compromise wording, as it does in real trilogues; any role may also table wording. The lead facilitator enters every proposal tabled at the table, marked with its author, and marks text as provisionally agreed when the chair (in the final package, the lead facilitator) asks for objections and the same simple thresholds as in the final votes are met: no more than one Council member present objects, and the Parliament groups that do not object together hold at least 361 seats; groups not played count as objecting, as they count as not in favour in the final vote. The unanimity trigger and Commission opposition apply only to the binding votes, not to provisional agreement; when a provisionally agreed sheet will need unanimity at the final vote, the lead facilitator says so at once. The Commission may object, but its objection does not count; its opposition power applies to the final text only. The lead facilitator counts. Striking under the declarations

(rule 5) does not reopen an agreed sheet; the struck sheet is the one voted. Only the lead facilitator edits the document; this keeps one authoritative version. Participants work in their own copies.

### Default rule

Any article on which the trilogue has not agreed compromise wording by the end of the final package reverts to the Commission proposal. The budget sheet reverts as a whole: if it is not agreed as a whole, the Commission's sheet applies. This makes the Commission text the real status quo, and has one sharp consequence: if the money is not settled, the EUR 10 billion of borrowing for grants comes back, and with it the unanimity trigger.

## The phase structure

### Day 1: mandates (about 3 hours)

1. **Briefing (20 minutes, all together)**: rules, voting, budget sheet, scoring, etiquette and tap-out.

2. **Reading and preparation (40 minutes, institution rooms)**: participants reread their handouts and the proposal, find allies inside their institution. The Commission moves between the two rooms, explains its proposal and starts lobbying; the lead facilitator answers questions about the rules. The first lobbyist amendment card is drawn.

3. **Mandate building (100 minutes, institution rooms)**: each institution produces its mandate. Inject 1 arrives about 30 minutes in.

4. **Mandate votes (15 minutes)**: each institution votes on its mandate in its own room, lead facilitator present to check the sheet and announce the Council threshold; the Commission may attend both votes. If a mandate fails, the institution has ten more minutes to adjust and vote again. If it fails again, the institution enters the trilogue without a mandate:

its column in the four-column document shows the individual positions of its members (each sends the lead facilitator a filled mandate template the same evening), who negotiate individually. On day 2 their agreement is counted by the same thresholds as everyone else's.

### Day 2: trilogue (about 7 hours with breaks)

1. **Opening (20 minutes)**: the lead facilitator presents the four-column document and the green articles; the Commission gives its assessment of the two mandates; each role has one 60-second opening statement; the table agrees the order of the four negotiation blocks.

2. **Four negotiation blocks (45 to 60 minutes each)**: money (Art. 2 and the budget sheet, Art. 3); governance and oversight (Art. 5 and 8); access and safeguards (Art. 6 and 7); instruments, conditions and objectives (Art. 1 and 4, new articles). An amendment card is drawn at the start of each block. Blocks are chaired by the Council and the Parliament in turn, as the institution hosting the meeting; each institution chooses its chair for its blocks. The chair gives the floor and summarises; the second facilitator keeps time. The lead facilitator chairs the opening, the final package and the votes. Each institution may call two 5-minute caucuses per day.

3. **Final package (45 minutes**): the Commission presents a consolidated compromise package; remaining brackets are resolved on proposals from the table; the lead facilitator closes the budget sheet and records loan declarations, pledges and redirections on the declarations sheet.

4. **Final votes (15 minutes)**: the Commission states whether it supports the final text; the lead facilitator announces the Council threshold; the Council votes, then the Parliament, by roll call in role. The Council and the Parliament always both vote, even if the other has already rejected

the text. If either fails, the Commission may table one revised package within 10 minutes, and both institutions vote again, the Council first; a second failure is final.

5. **Peer scoring (35 minutes), then debrief (40 minutes).**

## The injects

Three injects, full text in Chapter 7.3. Inject 1 (US tariffs) on day 1; inject 2 (Nexperia) after lunch on day 2; inject 3 (ASML and Mistral) optional in the afternoon of day 2. None of them changes a rule or a score. Each gives a reason and a tool to reopen one part of the text.

## Lobbyist amendment cards

A deck of eight cards (full text in Appendix A). Each card carries a complete amendment to one article, signed by a fictional organisation with a realistic name. A facilitator key on the last page of the card set notes whom each card helps; it is not read out.

- **When**: the second facilitator draws one card at random out of the eight (a card already used is redrawn) during day 1 preparation and at the start of each of the four trilogue blocks. Five cards are used per run.
- **How**: the card is read out and posted to everyone. Any role may table it as its own amendment, unchanged or edited. If nobody has tabled it by the end of the block (or, on day 1, by the mandate votes), it lapses.
- **Purpose**: outside interests enter the room without extra roles; quieter participants get a ready-made text to champion; and the debrief can ask where real amendment texts come from.

The organisations are fictional. Do not replace them with real organisations: the cards put words in their mouths.

## Scoring

Each handout lists **three needs, three wants and two or three pain points**, each with a concrete test tied to an article or the budget sheet.

| Item | Fully met | Partly met |
|---|---|---|
| **Need** | +3 | +1 or +2 |
| **Want** | +2 | +1 |
| **Pain point (if it happens)** | -5 | -2 if only partly |

### No-deal score

If no final text is adopted, every role receives its no-deal score instead of a text-based score. For many roles it is 0. Five of the eleven core roles (seven of thirteen with both optional roles) have a special no-deal score printed in their handout:

| Role | No-deal score | Why |
|---|---|---|
| France | -2 | the President's flagship idea; failure is a domestic defeat |
| S&D | -1 | needs a visible public investment for its voters |
| EPP | -1 | as the pivot of Parliament, a failure is read as its failure to build a majority |

| Role | No-deal score | Why |
|---|---|---|
| ECR | +1 | a failed EU programme confirms its message |
| Commission | -5 | a total failure: its proposal dies, the template for the Competitiveness Fund is lost, and the College takes the blame |
| Patriots for Europe (optional) | +2 | prefers no deal to a centrist deal |
| Netherlands (optional) | +1 | no new EU spending is a result at home |

No-deal scores are printed in each handout and are confidential until peer scoring; the briefing says only that they exist and vary. There is no overall winner and no ranking. The debrief question for each role is: did the final text leave you better off than your no-deal score?

### Partial scoring guidance for peer scorers

Partial points are for real movement in the direction of the item, not for symbolic mentions. A need of “public envelope at least EUR 20 billion” is partly met at 15 to 19.5 (+2) or 12 to 14.5 (+1). A need for “binding labour conditions” is partly met by a recital or a non-binding “shall take into account” (+1) and by binding conditions with high thresholds (+2). Each item scores once, at the highest level reached. Every scorecard has a “Partly met if” column, so the scorer does not need the confidential part of the handout. When in doubt, the lead facilitator rules.

## Peer scoring

After the final votes, each participant scores the scorecard of one role from another institution against the final text (or records the no-deal score if there is none). Scoring runs in a circle, so that every role scores exactly one other role and is scored by exactly one:

Germany scores EPP; EPP scores France; France scores S&D; S&D scores Italy; Italy scores Renew; Renew scores Spain; Spain scores Greens/EFA; Greens/EFA scores Poland; Poland scores ECR; ECR scores the Commission; the Commission scores Germany.
With 12 (Patriots cast): … Poland scores ECR; ECR scores the Commission; the Commission scores Patriots; Patriots score Germany. With 13: … Poland scores ECR; ECR scores the Netherlands; the Netherlands scores Patriots; Patriots score the Commission; the Commission scores Germany. With a reduced cast, close the circle so that nobody scores a role from their own institution; the Commission may score, and be scored by, any role.

Procedure: the lead facilitator first projects the consolidated final text (compromise column with the defaults applied, and the budget sheet after striking); 15 minutes of individual scoring with that text and the scorecard; then each scorer reads the total and the one item they found hardest to judge (about 1 minute each); the scored role may contest one item; the lead facilitator rules immediately. The lead facilitator writes all totals and no-deal scores on the board.

Peer scoring has two purposes. It forces every participant to read the final text closely, which is the best text-comprehension exercise in the course. And it shows each participant what the other side actually wanted, which is the start of the debrief.

## The Commission

The Commission is a full participant role with its own handout, scorecard and no-deal score. It does not vote. Its interests (summarised here; details in the handout): an act that works and can be defended in court; a Board that advises rather than decides, so that the Commission adopts the work programmes; excellence-based allocation without large national envelopes; an architecture that can be merged into the European Competitiveness Fund from 2028; and a large "mobilised" headline number for the President.

Its powers:

- **The pen**. It tables compromise wording at any time and presents the consolidated final package. Others may table wording too, but the Commission is the only actor whose job is to propose texts both sides can sign.

- **Expertise**. It may argue that a proposal is technically unworkable or legally doubtful. This is a political argument, not a ruling: the table decides whether to listen. Only the lead facilitator rules on the rules (Chapter 7.5).

- **Opposition (Article 293**). If it opposes the final text, the Council can adopt it only unanimously.

- **Withdrawa**l. It may withdraw its proposal at any time before the Council's final vote. Withdrawal ends the scenario without agreement, and every role, including the Commission, receives its no-deal score. With a no-deal score of -5, withdrawal is almost never in the Commission's interest. The threat can still be used as a bluff, and part of the game for the other roles is to work out whether it is one.

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Partial points are for real movement in the direction of the item, not for symbolic mentions. A need of "public envelope at least EUR 20 billion" is partly met at 15 to 19.5 (+2) or 12 to 14.5 (+1). A need for "binding labour conditions" is partly met by a recital or a non-binding "shall take into account" (+1) and by binding conditions with high thresholds (+2). Each item scores once, at the highest level reached. Every scorecard has a "Partly met if" column, so the scorer does not need the confidential part of the handout. When in doubt, the lead facilitator rules.

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Germany scores EPP; EPP scores France; France scores S&D; S&D scores Italy; Italy scores Renew; Renew scores Spain; Spain scores Greens/EFA; Greens/EFA scores Poland; Poland scores ECR; ECR scores the Commission; the Commission scores Germany.

With 12 (Patriots cast): … Poland scores ECR; ECR scores the Commission; the Commission scores Patriots; Patriots score Germany. With 13: … Poland scores ECR; ECR scores the Netherlands; the Netherlands scores Patriots; Patriots score the Commission; the Commission scores Germany. With a reduced cast, close the circle so that nobody scores a role from their own institution; the Commission may score, and be scored by, any role.

Procedure: the lead facilitator first projects the consolidated final text (compromise column with the defaults applied, and the budget sheet after striking); 15 minutes of individual scoring with that text and the scorecard; then

each scorer reads the total and the one item they found hardest to judge (about 1 minute each); the scored role may contest one item; the lead facilitator rules immediately. The lead facilitator writes all totals and no-deal scores on the board.

Peer scoring has two purposes. It forces every participant to read the final text closely, which is the best text-comprehension exercise in the course. And it shows each participant what the other side actually wanted, which is the start of the debrief.

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- **The pen**. It tables compromise wording at any time and presents the consolidated final package. Others may table wording too, but the Commission is the only actor whose job is to propose texts both sides can sign.

- **Expertise**. It may argue that a proposal is technically unworkable or legally doubtful. This is a political argument, not a ruling: the table decides whether to listen. Only the lead facilitator rules on the rules (Chapter 7.5).

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## The lead facilitator

The lead facilitator is neutral and has no interests in the outcome. The lead facilitator:

- keeps the four-column document and the budget sheet as the joint secretariat of the trilogue;
- checks the arithmetic and the ceilings of every budget sheet and declares a sheet budgetarily infeasible when it breaks the rules; this ruling is final;
- rules on the budget sheet and on disputes about the scoring tests (Chapter 7.5);
- announces voting thresholds, runs the votes and counts them;
- keeps time with the second facilitator and applies rule zero.

## What counts as an outcome

- **Adopted act**: both institutions confirm the final text. Score every role against it.
- **No agreement**: either final vote fails twice. Every role receives its no-deal score.

- **Withdrawal**: the Commission withdraws its proposal. Every role receives its no-deal score.
- **Mandate failure on day 1** is not an outcome; the trilogue still happens.

There is no “partial agreement”. Articles without compromise wording revert to the Commission text; they do not disappear.

# Chapter 5
# Casting guide

Casting is a pedagogical act (Volume 1, Chapter 5). This chapter rates every role, gives cast sizes from 8 to 13, and flags the friction and comeback structure. Casting notes are recommendations: your teaching needs might justify other solutions, including giving demanding roles to quieter participants who want to stretch.

Two features make casting here different from the online scenarios. Every participant is alone in their role, so nobody can hide behind a delegation. And the work is long: two days, much of it reading and drafting. Participants who shine in fast plenaries may tire on day 2; participants who are quiet in plenary often carry the drafting.

## Role ratings

Speaking demand is plenary exposure; drafting demand is written work on the text and the budget sheet.

| Role | Speaking | Drafting | Casting notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Commission | High | High | The most demanding role in the scenario: it writes the compromises, works both institutions on day 1, and has its own interests to defend while looking like an honest broker. It cannot vote, so its power is the pen, its expertise, Article 293 and the withdrawal threat. Its -5 no-deal score makes it the room's most motivated deal-maker. Cast your most organised participant who enjoys drafting under pressure. Never cut. |
| Germany | High | Medium | The Council's brake: no debt for grants, leverage instead of money, but also climate criteria and security standards. Holds a veto as soon as borrowing for grants is on the table. Cast someone steady who can say no without needing the room's approval, and who can also find the deal (its confidential flexibility is real). |

| Role | Speaking | Drafting | Casting notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| France | High | Medium | The file's engine: big envelope, sovereignty, state aid, Buy European. Has much to lose from failure (-2), second only to the Commission (-5). A natural leader role for a confident participant; risk of dominating the room. |
| Italy | Medium | High | Cohesion, loans, fiscal-rule clause, biotech. Its demands are technical and depend on precise wording. Good for a careful participant who prepares well and works bilaterally. |
| Spain | Medium | Medium | Fresh money, climate tag, audit and anti-fraud. Sits between France's ambition and Germany's caution, natural bridge to the Greens and S&D. Good role for a constructive participant. |
| Poland | Medium | Medium | Share for Central and Eastern Europe, high-risk vendors, Atlanticism, national implementation. Often ends up as the Council's swing vote. Cast someone who enjoys trading. |

| Role | Speaking | Drafting | Casting notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Netherlands (optional) | Medium | Medium | Frugal and Atlanticist, but directly hit by the Nexperia inject and home of ASML. A second Council brake next to Germany, with its own no-deal comfort (+1). |
| EPP | High | Medium | The pivot of Parliament: no majority without it. Must choose partners and keep both options open. The most demanding Parliament role; cast your strongest negotiator. Has a small no-deal cost (-1). |
| S&D | High | Medium | Public money, labour conditions, governance with social partners, digital levy. Second-largest group; needed in every centrist majority. Has a small no-deal cost (-1). |
| Renew Europe | Medium | High | Every euro must have a source; leverage, single market, talent visa, sandboxes. The Parliament's technical liberal voice; good for a participant who likes precise text. Often the kingmaker between centre options. |

| Role | Speaking | Drafting | Casting notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Greens/EFA | Medium | High | Climate tag, do-no-harm exclusions, transparency, rights. Small group, but its 53 seats complete the EPP + S&D majority. Rewards a participant who can trade the levy for oversight. Comeback moment: whenever Renew or ECR walks away. |
| ECR | High | Low | National control, defence window, no debt, no heavy conditions. Can afford no deal (+1) and knows it. Cast someone who can play hard without disrupting the room; an ECR who only blocks makes for a dull session. |
| Patriots for Europe (optional) | High | Low | No debt, Buy European, no climate conditions, no talent visa. Opens a right-wing majority with the EPP and ECR. Can afford no deal (+2). Add only if your cohort can handle a role whose best outcome may be failure. |

## Cast sizes

| Participants | Commission | Council | Parliament |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13 (maximum) | Commission | Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Netherlands | EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR, Patriots |
| 12 | Commission | Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland | EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR, Patriots |
| 11 (designed) | Commission | Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland | EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR |
| 10 | Commission | Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland | EPP, S&D, Renew, ECR |
| 9 | Commission | Germany, France, Italy, Poland | EPP, S&D, Renew, ECR |
| 8 (minimum) | Commission | Germany, France, Poland | EPP, S&D, Renew, ECR |

The Commission is never cut. With reduced casts, the Parliament threshold stays at 361 seats; groups not played still count as not voting in favour. Without the Greens/EFA, EPP + S&D needs Renew or ECR. The Council rule stays “no more than one against” (3 of 4, 2 of 3). Cut order: Greens/EFA, then Spain, then Italy. At 12, the Patriots are the default twelfth role; with a cohort that would struggle with a role whose best outcome may be failure, take the Netherlands instead. Do not merge roles: one participant with two incompatible scorecards learns less than two participants with one each.

With 14 or 15 participants, run one table of 13 and give the remaining one or two participants an observer task, for example as journalists who publish a short press release after each block and score the final text for the debrief. From 16 participants, run two tables in parallel (8 + 8 up to 13 + 13), each with its own lead facilitator; one second facilitator can run the clock, injects and cards for both. Draw the same amendment cards at both tables. The joint debrief compares the two final texts.

## Friction, boxed-out risks and comeback moments

**Designed frictions:**

- The Commission against the Council on control: an advisory Board and Commission work programmes against national envelopes and a deciding Board.
- The Commission against the Parliament on oversight: Parliament wants a say in implementation; the Commission wants to implement.
- Germany against France on money (debt and state aid), the oldest fault line of EU industrial policy.
- France against Poland and the Netherlands on Buy European versus the United States; sharpened by inject 1.
- Italy and Spain against Germany on cohesion money (Italy also on national envelopes), and against each other on the HPC flagship.

- EPP against S&D on who controls the programme, and inside the EPP on whether to govern with the centre or the right.
- Greens/EFA against ECR (and Patriots) on climate and social conditions, with Renew in between.
- Every Council member against the unanimity trigger: whoever puts debt-financed grants on the table hands every other state a veto.

**Boxed-out risks:**

- **ECR** in the core cast: if EPP, S&D and Renew form a comfortable majority early, ECR has nothing to do. Its comeback: the EPP needs ECR as soon as Renew or the Greens walk away, and ECR's +1 no-deal score gives it leverage in the Council-Parliament endgame. On day 2, a private reminder from the second facilitator ("Italy's governing party sits in your group") can open a channel to the Council.
- **Greens/EFA** if the centre-right forms around EPP, Renew and ECR (343, not enough): the Greens are the cheapest way to 361. Make sure they notice that.
- **Patriots** (optional): if the EPP refuses to deal with them, they have only their no-deal score. That is a realistic and legitimate outcome; make sure the debrief treats it as a strategy, not a failure.
- **The Commission** risks becoming the room's typist. If it only writes down what others agree, remind its player privately that the pen is power: a compromise text that quietly serves its own scorecard is legitimate play.

**Comeback moments**: the final package (any single member state can block when the unanimity trigger is live); the amendment cards (any role can table one); the injects (each favours different roles); the loan declarations.

# Chapter 6
# The handout set: who gets what

| Document | Who gets it | When |
|---|---|---|
| General factsheet (rules, budget sheet template, mandate template, four-column template, declarations sheet, context) | Everyone | about one week ahead |
| Commission proposal (ETCA text and budget sheet) | Everyone | about one week ahead, printed on day 1 |
| Role handout (position, needs, wants, pain points, confidential, allies and opponents, trade goods, no-deal score, scorecard) | each participant, own role only | about one week ahead (at the latest 3 days before) |
| Scorecard | each participant, own role; a copy of one other role's card for peer scoring | own card in the handout; the other card after the final votes |
| Inject texts | read out and posted | during play |
| Lobbyist amendment cards | read out and posted | during play |
| Facilitator notes, run-sheet | facilitators only | |

Each role handout is structured the same way:

1. Your position in October 2025.
2. Needs (3), wants (3), pain points (2 or 3), each with an article reference and a concrete test.
3. Confidential: one hidden flexibility or objective.
4. Who you need and who is in your way, per topic.
5. What you can give away cheaply.
6. Your no-deal score.
7. Scorecard.

# Chapter 7
# Facilitator guide

## 7.1 Before the session

**Brief the lead facilitator**. The lead facilitator should read Chapters 3 and 4 twice and know the budget sheet rules by heart. Agree with the second facilitator how you will signal each other (time calls, inject timing, “I need five minutes to update the document”).

**Brief the Commission player**. The Commission handout is the longest. Offer its player a 15-minute conversation before day 1 about the role’s powers (pen, Article 293, withdrawal) and the four-column document. Do not discuss strategy.

**Prepare the room**. One table for everyone on day 2, institution rooms for day 1 and caucuses. The budget sheet on a poster or second screen where everyone can see it.

**Prepare the documents**. The four-column document with the Commission proposal in the first column. Two empty mandate templates (Council, Parliament), copied from Annex B of the factsheet. The declarations sheet (Annex D of the factsheet) for day 2. The amendment cards printed and shuffled.

**Check the cast**. Apply the cut order if needed. Check that the right scorecards are printed for peer scoring.

**Name the out-of-game contact**. One organiser is the point of contact for anything that happens outside the game during the two days, including the evening programme (Volume 1, Chapter 7). Say who it is in the briefing.

## 7.2 The timeline

### Day 1 (about 3 hours)

| Time | Block | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 0:00 | Briefing (all) | name the out-of-game contact; rules, voting thresholds with the coalition table, budget sheet, scoring and the no-deal principle, etiquette (including no recording) and tap-out |
| 0:20 | Reading and preparation (institution rooms) | the Commission moves between rooms; first amendment card drawn (at random) at about 0:30 |
| 1:00 | Mandate building | inject 1 at about 1:30 |
| 2:40 | Mandate votes | lead facilitator checks both sheets and announces the Council threshold; one retry allowed |

| Time | Block | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 2:55 | Close | announce day 2 start time; mandates frozen; a retry of a mandate vote pushes the close to about 3:10, two retries to about 3:20 |

Between the days, the lead facilitator builds the four-column document and marks green articles. It is posted to everyone the same evening; the Commission player may prepare compromise wording.

**Day 2 (about 7 hours)**

| Time | Block | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 9:00 | Opening | four-column document presented; Commission assessment; 60-second statements; the table agrees the order of the blocks and who chairs which block |

| Time | Block | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 9:20 | Block 1 | amendment card |
| 10:20 | Break | |
| 10:30 | Block 2 | amendment card |
| 11:15 | Lunch | lead facilitator up-dates the com-pro-mise column |
| 12:15 | Inject 2, then Block 3 | amendment card |
| 13:00 | Block 4 | amendment card |
| 13:45 | Coffee | inject 3 (optional) as people return |
| 14:00 | Final package | brackets resolved, budget sheet closed, loan dec-larations, pledges and redirections recorded |
| 14:45 | Final votes | Commission states its position; Council threshold announced; Council, then Par-liament; one retry allowed |
| 15:00 | Peer scoring | lead facilitator projects the con-solidated final text first |

| Time | Block | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 15:35 | Debrief | |
| 16:15 | End | |

Critical blocks: the briefing, the mandate votes, the final package, the final votes and the debrief. If you lose time, shorten Blocks 3 and 4 and skip inject 3; never skip the debrief. A failed final vote and its retry take up to 30 minutes; take the time from peer scoring (shorten the individual round to 10 minutes and the reading round to totals only) and let the end slip to about 16:30; never from the debrief. If the opening overruns, Block 1 shortens. If players leave money for last, do not intervene; it is a common real pattern and a good debrief question.

## 7.3 The inject pack

Read each inject aloud and post the text. Injects 1 and 2 are recommended; inject 3 is optional. None of them changes a rule or a score.

**Inject 1: Washington's letter**

*When*: day 1, 30 minutes into mandate building (at 1:30). Fixed time.

*Purpose*: force both institutions to take a line on procurement preferences and third-country access before mandates close.

*Text*:

**BREAKING, Brussels**. The United States mission to the EU has sent a letter to the Commission and to the capitals of the largest member states. It says that a "Buy European" preference in public procurement, or the exclusion of US companies from programmes funded by the European Tech Champions Act, would be "inconsistent with the spirit" of the US-EU framework agreed in August, under which US tariffs on EU semiconductors and other goods are capped at 15%. The letter warns that Washington "will review all op-

tions" if American firms are discriminated against. The Commission spokesperson says the Commission "takes note" and that the act is "fully compatible with the EU's international obligations".

*Facts and fictio*n: the August 2025 framework and the 15% ceiling are real. The letter is fictional.

*Likely effects*: France doubles down on sovereignty; Poland, the Netherlands, Renew and EPP look for "trusted partner" language; S&D and Greens may frame it as foreign interference.

**Inject 2: Nexperia**

*When*: day 2, as participants return from lunch, before Block 3. Fixed time.

*Purpose*: bring supply security and foreign ownership into Articles 6 and 7, and ask who should act in a crisis: the EU or a member state.

*Text*:

**BREAKING, The Hague and Beijing**. The Dutch government has invoked the Goods Availability Act, a 1952 emergency law never used before, against the Nijmegen-based chipmaker Nexperia, owned by China's Wingtech. Under the order, Nexperia cannot move assets, dismiss executives or take major decisions without the Dutch government's approval for one year. An Amsterdam court has already suspended the company's Chinese chief executive. Beijing has responded by banning exports of Nexperia products made in China. European carmakers warn that production lines could stop within weeks. Journalists are asking: would the European Tech Champions Act have protected Nexperia, and who should decide in such a case, The Hague or Brussels?

*Facts and fiction*: all facts in the text are real (order of 30 September, announced 12 October 2025; court decision of 7 October; Chinese export ban from 4 October). The journalists' question is the only invented element.

*Likely effects*: stronger acquisition screening and supply-security language in Article 7; Poland and the Netherlands (if cast) push for national powers with EU cover; Renew may name China; the Commission may be asked for an emergency mechanism. If the Netherlands is cast, hand its player a private note: "The Hague needs EU political cover, not EU control."

**Inject 3: ASML and Mistral (optional)**

*When*: day 2, after the coffee break, before the final package. Conditional: use it if the final package risks being a pure money deal with no thought about who actually gets the money, or if the room needs energy. Skip it if time is short.

*Purpose*: raise the question whether public money should follow private champions or spread to SMEs and regions.

*Text*:

**BREAKING, Veldhoven and Paris**. ASML, the Dutch maker of chipmaking machines, and the French AI company Mistral AI, in which ASML invested EUR 1.3 billion in September to become its largest shareholder, have announced a joint project for a European AI compute facility. The two companies say they will apply for funding "as soon as the European Tech Champions Act is in force" and that they expect to be "exactly the kind of champion the act was written for". A coalition of start-up associations replies that if the first big grant goes to two of Europe's most valuable companies, "the act should be renamed the European Incumbents Act".

*Facts and fiction*: the September 2025 investment (EUR 1.3 billion, about 11%) is real. The joint compute project, the funding application and the start-up reaction are fictional.

*Likely effects*: France and EPP welcome it; Italy, Spain, Poland and S&D ask about SMEs, envelopes and the widening bonus; Renew and Greens ask about competition and concentration; somebody proposes a cap per beneficiary.

## 7.4 Running notes

These are maximalist running notes for facilitators who want close control. It is fully possible to let the scenario run. Too active intervention is also a failure.

**Day 1, briefing**. Do not skip the voting thresholds: put the coalition table on the screen and let people count. Explain the unanimity trigger with the Commission proposal itself as the example ("the proposal you are reading would need all of you"). Read the etiquette rules, including no recording, name the out-of-game contact and announce the tap-out.

**Day 1, mandate building**. The two rooms work very differently. The Council usually starts with money; the Parliament usually starts with objectives and conditions and discovers the budget sheet late. Watchpoints: by about 1:45, both rooms should have a draft budget sheet. If one does not, the lead facilitator can visit and ask for "a preliminary sheet so that we can check feasibility". Watch the Commission too: if it stays in one room the whole time, the other institution will build a mandate the Commission cannot live with. That is legitimate, but worth a note for the debrief. In the Parliament room, watch whether the EPP builds a majority or just a text: a mandate that the EPP likes but that only reaches 343 seats will fail at 2:40. In the Council room, watch for the unanimity trigger: a Council mandate with borrowing for grants needs all five; if Germany is quietly unhappy, it will fail at the vote. Let it fail once: the retry is part of the learning.

**Between the days**. Build the four-column document carefully. Mark green articles (where both mandates are the same or compatible), and write a one-line summary of the main divergence at the top of each other article. Do not draft compromises: that is the Commission's job.

**Day 2, opening**. Hold the 60-second rule. Let the table choose the order of blocks and agree who chairs which block. If it cannot agree in five minutes, the Commission proposes an order and the lead facilitator puts it to an indicative vote.

**Day 2, blocks**. One table, everyone speaks. The chair of each block (Council or Parliament) gives the floor and summarises; the Commission tables wording when positions are close; the lead facilitator enters proposals and agreed text. Watchpoints: the budget sheet is the bottleneck; if a block on another topic keeps returning to money, the chair or the Commission can park the issue for the money block. If the Commission is drowning in drafting requests, the lead facilitator can take dictation, but should not write wording on their own. If the EPP is negotiating with only one side, the second facilitator can note it for the debrief. If one participant has been silent for a whole block, route a task through the game: the second facilitator asks the chair to give them the floor first on the next amendment card, or on a specific paragraph.

**The amendment cards**. Read each card neutrally. Do not suggest who should pick it up. If a card is tabled, it goes into the compromise column as a proposal like any other.

**Day 2, final package**. The Commission presents its package; then the lead facilitator, chairing the final package, lists the open articles, the open budget lines and the default that applies if they stay open. Make sure everyone understands the default rule: an open budget sheet means the EUR 10 billion of borrowing for grants returns, with the unanimity trigger. Record loan declarations, voluntary pledges and cohesion and Recovery redirections by name on the declarations sheet (Annex D of the factsheet).

**Final votes.** Formal, in role, on the record. First ask the Commission whether it supports the text; then announce the Council threshold. Count Parliament seats aloud. If the Commission withdraws, do not argue: the scenario ends without agreement and goes straight to peer scoring.

**Failure modes**, mapped from Volume 1, Chapter 5:

- **Deadlock**: first do nothing; the Commission has every reason to table a compromise; then the chair can narrow the agenda ("let us settle only the budget sheet now").
- **Premature consensus**: usually around a big "mobilised" number with little public money. Let the scorecards do the rest at peer scoring; the lead facilitator only checks that the sheet adds up.
- **One participant dominating**: the lead facilitator asks the chair to give the floor in a round, in order of the table.
- **Rules-lawyering** (for example on what counts as "borrowing for grants"): where the budget sheet is concerned, rule at once (Chapter 7.5); otherwise this can be an interesting in-scenario situation where the participants might want to draft an explanatory memo.
- **Comedy collapse**: let it run briefly, then a meta-pause.
- **A checked-out participant**: an amendment card handed to them first, a private note from their capital or group leadership, or a question about their scorecard.

## 7.5 Rulings and disputes about the tests

The lead facilitator rules on the rules, never on the politics. Whether a proposal is wise is for the table and the Commission to argue; whether it fits the budget sheet is for you to rule.

### Budget rulings

Situations that come up regularly, and recommended rulings:

| Situation | Recommended ruling |
|---|---|
| Money “from unused NextGenerationEU capacity” | Not a source. Only voluntary redirection of member states’ own RRF allocations, up to 3, counts. |
| Money from the Common Agricultural Policy or any other programme not in the table | Budgetarily infeasible. |
| Amounts promised for 2028 to 2030 “from the next MFF” | Not a source in the sheet. May appear in a recital as an intention. |
| A digital levy described as “a contribution by large platforms” without the words “own resource” | It is still a new own resource; unanimity applies. |
| Borrowing described as “an EIB facility” | If the EIB lends from its own balance sheet, it is co-investment (block A target), not public money. If the EU borrows and passes money to the EIB, it is EU borrowing. |

| Situation | Recommended ruling |
|---|---|
| A co-investment target above five times the public envelope | Feasible; it is a target, not money. Anyone may of course call it unrealistic. |
| A new EU agency or any other body with a cost | Possible, but its cost must appear in the sheet as a share of the envelope. |

## Everything else is politics

Whether a text is legal, realistic or compatible with the Union's international obligations is an argument for the participants, not a ruling. When the Commission says a proposal is "legally impossible", that is its argument, and often a strong one. If the table asks you directly, say: "That is the Commission's legal opinion. The rules of the game allow the text; the institutions decide."

## Disputes about the tests

The needs, wants and pain points are tests on the final text, and the text will rarely match a test word for word. When a peer scorer and the scored role disagree whether an item is met, decide following the intent of the item, and apply the same reading to every role affected. For participants, this is a useful exercise in reading and interpreting a legal text: let the two sides argue their reading briefly before you decide. One reading to settle in advance: the examination procedure in Article 5(3) of the proposal does not count as the Board approving the work programmes; only an explicit Board approval or a binding opinion does. A decision about a test concerns only the scoring, never what may be written into the act.

## 7.6 Debrief kit

The four-step structure of Volume 1, Chapter 5, with peer scoring as a lead-in. About 40 minutes, immediately after peer scoring; the written reflection continues.

1. **Decompression (5 minutes)**. One round: “What happened from your seat?” Ask participants to speak about the game reality, not to give technical feedback.

2. **Shared reality (10 minutes, never skip)**. Ask the room to describe the outcome: is there an act? How big is the public envelope, where does the money come from, who controls it? What would it mean in the world of October 2025: would anybody actually get money in 2026? Then compare with the scores on the board: who is above their no-deal score, who is below, and why did those below still vote yes (or not)? Name the bends from Chapter 3.

3. **Institutional lessons (15 minutes, choose three or four questions)**:

   — Where in the text was the real decision made? (Usually the budget sheet; sometimes the default rule.)

   — Which number did you fight hardest for, and was it public money or a mobilised target?

   — Who held a veto, and when did they use it? What did the unanimity trigger do to the money?

   — EPP: which majority did you build and why? Others: when did you realise there is no majority without the EPP?

   — What did your mandate cost you on day 2? Was it a strength or a cage?

— Which amendment card made it into the text, who tabled it, and why? Where do real amendments come from?

— What did the injects change, and what did they not change?

— Commission: which compromise texts were yours, and whose interests did they serve? Did you use Article 293 or the withdrawal threat? Others: did you trust the Commission as an honest broker?

— Compare your envelope with the Chips Act (EUR 3.3 billion), STEP (EUR 1.5 billion of fresh money) and the proposed Competitiveness Fund (EUR 409 billion for seven years). Was your result realistic?

4. **The reality bridge (10 minutes, or at the start of the next session**). Use Appendix B: what the EU actually did in 2025 and 2026. The key points: no stand-alone act; real money through reprogramming, national contributions, the EIB and the next long-term budget; borrowing only for loans; Nexperia handled nationally; Parliament's two majorities on 13 November 2025.

A reveal of confidential objectives is possible, not needed. A short round of "one thing in your handout nobody knew" works well after peer scoring.

**Homework.** The post-simulation reflection (Volume 1, Chapter 6, archetype B), with question 1 adapted: compare the room's act with the real instruments listed in Appendix B. Who would benefit, who would lose? If you are ending the course with this scenario, you might want to aim for a wider reflection on the whole cycle.

## 7.7 Variants

**Two parallel tables (16 to 26 participants)**. Two casts of 8 to 13, each with its own lead facilitator and its own Commission player. Run day 1 in four rooms (two Councils, two Parliaments); each Commission works its own table's rooms. Draw the same amendment cards at both tables at the same time. In the debrief, put both budget sheets side by side; the differences are usually the most instructive moment of the debrief.

**One-day fallback (emergency only, energy-intensive)**. Both mandate preparation and the trilogue happen in the same day. This is very taxing for the participants.

**Mandates online, day 2 in person**. If needed, the mandates can be prepared as homework in institution channels during the week before, with a deadline and an online mandate vote the evening before. This makes a weaker and less engaging simulation: participants struggling with a mandate they wrote a day earlier is much of the teaching value. The day then runs: briefing (20 minutes), three trilogue blocks of 45 minutes (money first, then two blocks combining the rest), final package (30), final votes (15), peer scoring (20), debrief (30). Use inject 2 only and draw three amendment cards.

# Chapter 8
# Communication templates

Adapt dates, places and channels. Do not include links to the facilitator

## 8.1 Role-assignment email

*Subject: Pirate Academy: your role for the in-person simulation*

Dear [first name],

for the in-person simulation on [dates] you will play [role] in the **[European Commission / Council of the EU / European Parliament].**

Attached you will find your role handout. Please read it carefully, together with the general factsheet and the Commission proposal we sent on [date]. Your handout is confidential: please do not share it with other participants, not even with members of your own institution. You may of course tell them what you want, in character.

What to prepare:

read the Commission proposal article by article and mark where your needs, wants and pain points sit;

look at the budget sheet and decide what numbers you can live with;

think about who you need inside your institution and in the other one.

You do not need to prepare a speech or extra research. Everything you need is in the three documents. Real-world knowledge about your country or group is welcome, but your handout takes priority.

Day 1 starts at [time] in [place]; day 2 at [time]. Please bring a laptop or tablet if you have one.

See you there, [signature]

## 8.2 Pre-session announcement

Posted one or two days before day 1.

Hello everybody,

the simulation starts on [day] at [time] in [place]. A few practical points:

Day 1 is about three hours: briefing, then each institution prepares its mandate. Day 2 runs from [time] to about [time] with breaks and lunch.

Bring the Commission proposal (printed copies will also be available) and your handout.

[Lead facilitator] is the neutral referee and keeps the shared documents. [Second facilitator] runs the clock and the outside world.

If you need to step out of the game at any moment, use the tap-out signal we will explain at the start. No questions asked.

Looking forward to it, [signature]

## 8.3 Post-session message and homework

Posted within 24 hours after day 2.

Dear all,

thank you for two intense days. [One or two sentences on the outcome: the act was / was not adopted; the public envelope was EUR X billion financed by …]

As promised, the homework is a post-simulation reflection, maximum two pages, due [date]:

1. Compare the act you negotiated (or its absence) with what the EU actually did in this field in 2025 and 2026: the Chips Act, the European Tech Champions Initiative, STEP, InvestAI, SAFE, the Scaleup Europe Fund and the proposed European Competitiveness Fund. Who would benefit from your act, and who would lose? (half a page to one page)

2. What could you have done differently to achieve a better result for your role? (a few sentences)

3. Take your act as real and in force from 2026. How would European technology policy and politics evolve differently? (half a page to one page)

AI tools are allowed for editing and research with a one-line disclosure.

[signature]

# Appendices

## Appendix A - Lobbyist amendment cards

Print each card on a separate sheet or card. Organisations are fictional. Numbers refer to the Commission proposal.

**Card 1: European Digital Industry Alliance**

*Represents*: large technology and industrial companies. Helps: incumbents, EPP, Germany, France; opposed by S&D, Greens/EFA.

Amendment: Article 7(1), add at the end: “Private co-investors in actions supported under the Programme shall have a right of first refusal to license, on commercial terms, the intellectual property resulting from those actions.”

**Card 2: Transatlantic Technology Council**

*Represents:* US companies with operations in Europe. Helps: Poland, the Netherlands, Renew, EPP; hurts France, Patriots.

Amendment: Article 6(1), add a second subparagraph: “Legal entities established in the Union that are controlled by entities from countries with which the Union has concluded a trade and technology cooperation framework shall be treated as Union entities for the purposes of this Regulation.”

**Card 3: EU-Asia Trade and Technology Association**

*Represents*: Asian companies operating in Europe. Helps: nobody openly; useful for anyone who wants to water down screening quietly; hurts the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Renew, EPP.

Amendment: Article 7(3), replace the first sentence with: “The Commission shall monitor acquisitions of beneficiaries of the Programme where the value of the transaction exceeds EUR 1 billion and the beneficiary is active in the defence sector.”

**Card 4: European Startup Coalition**

*Represents:* start-ups, scale-ups and venture capital funds. Helps: Renew, Italy, Spain; hurts large incumbents, France.

Amendment: Article 4(2), add: “At least 30% of the funding awarded through open calls shall go to enterprises employing fewer than 250 persons. No single beneficiary shall receive more than 5% of the Programme’s envelope.”

**Card 5: EuroChip Manufacturers Association**

*Represents*: semiconductor manufacturers. Helps: Germany, France, the Netherlands; opposed by the Commission (quantum), Renew, Italy.

Amendment: Article 3(2), replace “quantum technologies” with “microelectronics and semiconductors” throughout; in block D, replace the quantum earmark with a semiconductors earmark of at least 25%; and add to Article 5(4): “State aid for projects in microelectronics and semiconductors selected under the Programme shall be deemed compatible with the internal market.”

**Card 6: European Federation of Digital Workers**

*Represents*: trade unions in the technology sector. Helps: S&D, Spain, Greens/EFA; opposed by ECR, Patriots, Renew, EPP.

Amendment: Article 4, new paragraph 3: “Beneficiaries receiving more than EUR 50 million under the Programme shall apply a collective agreement or equivalent working conditions to the staff employed in the supported action,

and shall inform and consult workers' representatives on the introduction of artificial intelligence systems in the workplace."

**Card 7: Digital Rights Watch Europe**

*Represents*: civil-society organisations for digital rights. Helps: Greens/EFA, S&D, Spain; opposed by EPP, Poland, ECR, Patriots.

Amendment: Article 4, new paragraph: "No funding shall be awarded to actions developing biometric identification systems for use in publicly accessible spaces. An independent ethics board, including representatives of civil society, shall review all actions above EUR 20 million and may recommend their rejection."

**Card 8: Southern Regions Innovation Network**

*Represents*: regional governments in southern and eastern Europe. Helps: Italy, Spain, Poland, S&D; opposed by Germany, the Netherlands, Renew, the Commission.

Amendment: Article 6(3), add: "Each Member State shall receive at least 1% of the Programme's envelope, through open calls or national envelopes. Proposals involving partners from regions with a GDP per capita below 75% of the Union average shall receive a bonus in evaluation."

## Appendix B - The real outcome: debrief sheet

*For the reality bridge in the debrief. Facts as of autumn 2026.*

**There was no Tech Champions Act**. The EU addressed the same problem with a set of smaller instruments and a proposal for the next long-term budget:

- **Chips Act (2023)**: EUR 3.3 billion of EU budget money for the Chips for Europe Initiative to 2030, reprogrammed from Horizon Europe and Di-

gital Europe; “more than EUR 43 billion” of policy-driven investment expected.

- **European Tech Champions Initiative (2023)**: a EUR 3.75 billion fund of funds from Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium and the EIB Group, managed by the European Investment Fund. A real example of national contributions.

- **STEP (2024)**: the Commission asked for EUR 10 billion of fresh money for a Sovereignty Fund; member states agreed EUR 1.5 billion, all for the European Defence Fund. The rest was reprogramming.

- **InvestAI (February 2025)**: EUR 200 billion to be mobilised for AI, of which EUR 20 billion for AI gigafactories, financed from existing programmes.

- **EIB TechEU (2025)**: EUR 70 billion of EIB Group financing for innovation, aiming to mobilise about EUR 250 billion by 2027.

- **SAFE (May 2025)**: EUR 150 billion borrowed by the EU and lent to member states for defence. The only large new EU borrowing of 2025, and it was for loans.

- **European Competitiveness Fund (proposed July 2025):** EUR 409 billion for 2028 to 2034, including Horizon Europe, with about EUR 54.8 billion for digital leadership. Part of the next long-term budget, still under negotiation.

- **Scaleup Europe Fund**: announced in September 2025; private founding investors joined in October 2025; EUR 1 billion from Horizon Europe towards a EUR 5 billion target; EQT selected as manager in 2026; legal set-up completed in August 2026.

**Nexperia** was handled nationally. The Dutch government used a national emergency law; China retaliated with an export ban; the Dutch government suspended its order on 19 November 2025 to restore supply. No EU instrument was used.

**Parliament** adopted two major positions on 13 November 2025 with two different majorities: the 2040 climate target with the centrist parties, and the Omnibus I simplification package with the EPP and the groups to its right.

**Questions for comparison:**

- Is your public envelope closer to the Chips Act, to STEP, or to the Competitiveness Fund?
- How much of your money is fresh, and how much reprogrammed or "mobilised"?
- Did you borrow for grants? Would that have survived a unanimous Council and 27 national ratifications?
- Would your Article 7 have changed anything in the Nexperia case?

## Appendix C - Facts versus game design

*The register boundary (Volume 1, Chapter 2), so that you never present an invented number as fact.*

**Real (register 1, sources in Appendix D)**: the Draghi report and its investment estimate; the Chips Act, ETCI, STEP, InvestAI, TechEU, SAFE, Scaleup Europe Fund and Competitiveness Fund figures in Chapter 3 and Appendix B; the seat numbers of the Parliament groups at constitution; the votes of 13 November 2025; the US-EU joint statement of 21 August 2025 and the 15% ceiling for semiconductors; the Nexperia order, court decision, Chinese ex-

port ban and later suspension; the ASML investment in Mistral AI; the unanimity and ratification requirement for own-resources decisions; the rule that the Council can amend a Commission proposal only unanimously (Article 293(1) TFEU) and the Commission's right to withdraw a proposal; the use of loans for SAFE.

**Fictionalised positions (register 2)**: the positions, needs, wants and pain points of all roles as stated in the handouts; the US letter in inject 1; the joint compute project and the start-up reaction in inject 3; the lobbyist organisations and their amendments.

**Game design (register 3)**: the European Tech Champions Act and its text; the EUR 10 billion envelope and its financing; the budget sheet and its reprogramming ceilings; the rounded GNI shares; the Council rule "no more than one against"; the unanimity trigger as part of the vote on the act; the Commission as a single player with a scorecard; bloc voting by Parliament groups; the no-deal scores; all scores, thresholds and partial-score ranges in the handouts.

# Appendix D - Sources and further reading


- European Commission: EU budget bolsters Europe's technological leadership: the European Chips Act
- European Investment Fund: Launch of new fund of funds to support European Tech Champions (February 2023)
- Science|Business: EU's plan for critical technologies ends in the shadow of the promised sovereignty fund (2024)
- Euronews: EU to mobilise 200 billion for AI investment (11 February 2025)
- European Investment Fund: TechEU
- Council of the EU: SAFE, Security Action for Europe
- European Parliamentary Research Service: European competitiveness fund (2025)
- European Commission and investors: Commission partners with private investors to set up multi-billion Scaleup Europe Fund (28 October 2025)
- eucrim: End of the Recovery and Resilience Facility is approaching
- European Parliamentary Research Service: Size of political groups in the European Parliament (2024)
- Eunews: Centre or right, the EPP calls the shots in the European Parliament (13 November 2025)
- Thompson Hine: Details emerge on the U.S.-EU trade deal announced in July (August 2025)
- Nexperia: Update on company developments (October 2025)
- Taylor Wessing: Nexperia: international trade wars taking place with the Netherlands as the battleground (December 2025)
- ASML: ASML and Mistral AI enter strategic partnership (9 September 2025)
- Mario Draghi: The future of European competitiveness (European Commission,

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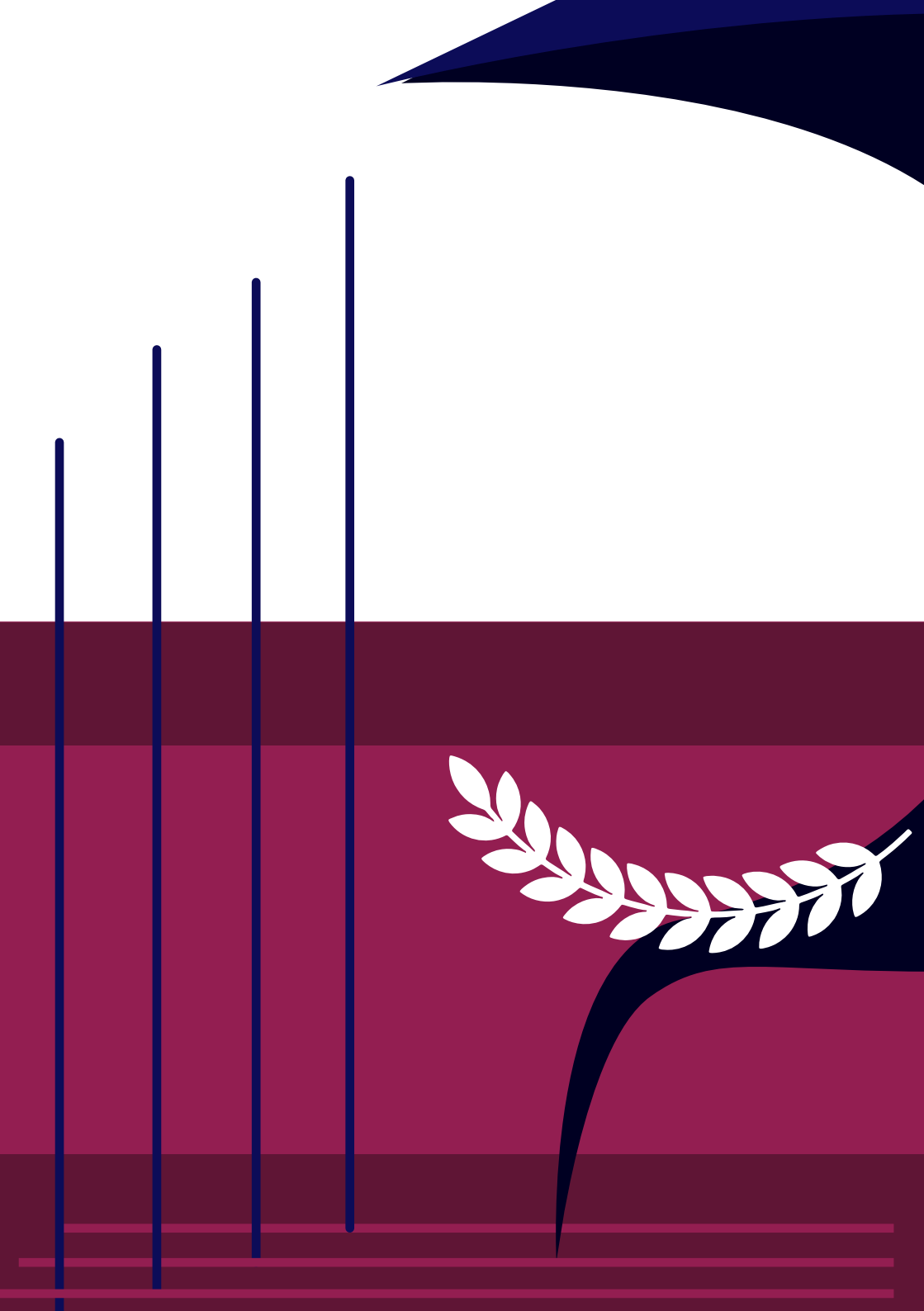
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