Albania

The Pirate Academy was made possible by the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament.

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

The candidates in this scenario. Eight countries sit at this table without a vote: Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In reality you would not be in the room when the Union decides about you. Here you are, because you hold the one thing the Union cannot obtain any other way: a commitment to reform that somebody actually intends to carry out. At the end of the conference the Commission tables a recommendation for you in each of four areas, each costing you reform capacity. Each recommendation you accept raises that score by the same number after the session, up to 5, provided your government survives. Before you answer, the Council and the Parliament vote on the funds package, so you will know what support you have: reform support expands your capacity, at a rising cost (1 unit for the first extra point, 2 for the second, 3 for the third). You may accept more than your capacity, but every point over it raises the chance that your government falls and nothing is delivered: 25, 50, 75 and 90 per cent for one, two, three and four or more points over. You may accept or decline each recommendation, you may bargain about them beforehand, and you may **leave the process**, which freezes your line where it is and is a real option that has been taken before. Your scores are public and in the factsheet. **Your reform capacity is yours alone**, unless the Commission spends one of its two detailed reviews on you or you choose to tell somebody. The Council may also attach a one-sentence note to its decision on you, proposed by a member state and entered unless another objects: that is where conditions and promises about you get written down. Side agreements with anyone, including the other candidates, are allowed; they should be written down with the clear support of everyone in them, and they are published only after the scenario.

Your delegation: Albania (solo)

Albania has waited in the same room as North Macedonia for years, and for the same reason: the Council decided to treat the two processes together, so a dispute that had nothing to do with Albania held Albania in place. Negotiations opened for both of you in July. You are unambiguously pro-European, you have no alternative alignment, no bilateral quarrel and no great power looking over your shoulder, and this has won you nothing at all, because the process rewards attention and you are not a problem.

Your judicial reform, which involved reassessing the entire judiciary, is the kind of thing the Union asks for and rarely gets. You would like somebody to mention it.

Your scores (public, as in Annex A of the factsheet).
Rule of Law 3, Corruption 2, Democracy 3, Economy 3. **Your reform capacity (do not publish)**: 4. You are **coupled to North Macedonia**: both of you advance or neither does, unless the Council decides unanimously to decouple the two processes.

Decision rule: you decide alone.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: be judged on your own merits rather than on a neighbour's bilateral problem; keep the negotiations that opened in July actually moving, since an opened negotiation that never proceeds is the region's oldest disappointment; and make the case that a country doing everything asked of it should not be the cheapest country in the room to ignore. You have the capacity to accept a serious package and you should say so, because it is the only thing that distinguishes you tonight.

Red lines: No further delay attributed to the Union's internal problems. No new conditions added to a process that has only just started. No arrangement that makes your progress permanently dependent on another country's constitutional politics.

Style: Energetic and slightly impatient, with the humour of a delegation that has heard it all. You are good in public and you should ask for the floor. Your most effective single move is to name what is happening: the candidate nobody is worried about gets nothing, so the incentive this process creates is to be a problem.

Confidential (for you alone): What you actually want tonight is decoupling from North Macedonia, and you cannot ask for it out loud. Saying it would betray a neighbour and ally who has sacrificed more than you have and whose constitutional problem is genuinely not their fault, and every Balkan delegation in the room would remember it. But your process is now hostage to a two-thirds majority in a parliament in Skopje that does not exist, and if the coupling holds you will still be here in five years. The move available to you is indirect: get a member state to propose decoupling as their own idea. Italy or Austria might, if you explain the arithmetic to them privately; Germany might, if it is framed as protecting the credibility of the methodology rather than as abandoning anyone.