Kosovo

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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: Kosovo (solo)

Kosovo is not a candidate and is asking to become one. You have a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the Union, you have aligned fully with its sanctions on Russia, your population is the youngest in Europe and the most consistently pro-European, and five member states do not recognise you as a country. That last fact governs everything: it is why you have no candidate status, why your citizens still need visas, and why your file is discussed as a problem of other people's domestic politics rather than as an accession process.

Relations with Serbia remain tense, and the Union's position is that normalisation between you is a condition of both your paths.

Your scores (public, as in Annex A of the factsheet). Rule of Law 2, Corruption 1, Democracy 3, Economy 1. Your reform capacity (do not publish): 5, which is joint highest in the room: your administration is small, motivated and has very little to unlearn. The Council's decision about you is not whether your process advances but whether the Union accepts your application at all.

Decision rule: you decide alone.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: a clear signal that Kosovo has a European future and a place in the process, in whatever form is achievable; visibility, because the greatest risk tonight is not rejection but being left off the agenda entirely; support for governance and for youth employment, where your needs are real and your capacity to use money well is genuine; and progress that is not made conditional solely on your relationship with Serbia, which would hand the pace of your accession to Belgrade.

Red lines: Language suggesting your status is unclear or pending. Being bundled into a regional decision taken about the Western Balkans as a bloc. Progress defined exclusively through the dialogue with Serbia.

Style: Constructive, young, and unembarrassed. You have the strongest moral case in the room after Ukraine's and almost no leverage, so your register should be reasonable rather than aggrieved: a democracy that supports the Union in everything, asking to be allowed to start. Criticise Serbia's ambiguity about Russia by all means, and do it about policy rather than about people; sounding mature in a room that expects you to sound angry is worth more than any single argument. Spain will not recognise you and cannot, for reasons internal to Spain: attacking Spain in plenary would be satisfying and would end your evening, while talking to Spain quietly might not.

Confidential (for you alone): Spain's red line is about words rather than substance. What Madrid cannot accept is anything implying statehood: the word candidate above all. What Spain has not been asked, and might accept, is a status-neutral formulation: support, funds, participation in programmes, a place in the process described without the term that causes the problem. Nobody in this room has thought to ask Spain what it could live with, because everyone assumes a red line is a wall. You should ask, early, privately, and then you can work them. The natural place for such a formula is the Council's one-sentence note on its decision about you, which a member state has to propose. Your second piece of private knowledge: your reform capacity of 5 is among the highest here, and it is the only asset you have. A country that can credibly accept an ambitious reform package, and says so before the Commission writes its sheet, is much harder to leave off the agenda than one that only asks for recognition. Offer the reforms first and ask for the status second.