North Macedonia

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: North Macedonia (solo)

No country at this table has given up more for the European Union. You changed the name of your state in 2019 to settle a dispute with Greece, which cost a government and a referendum and left a wound in your politics that has not closed. You were then blocked by Bulgaria over language, history and the recognition of a Bulgarian minority. That block was lifted this summer under a compromise drafted in Paris, which requires you to amend your constitution. Negotiations opened in July. The amendment requires a two-thirds majority in a parliament where the opposition has promised never to give it, and this summer the streets of Skopje filled with people who regard the compromise as an ultimatum.

Your reform record is the best in the room. It has bought you nineteen years of waiting.

Your scores (public, as in Annex A of the factsheet). Rule of Law 4, Corruption 4, Democracy 4, Economy 3. **Your reform capacity (do not publish):** 2. You are also **exhausted:** after the session, one of your scores, chosen by you, drops by 1, unless you receive **2 fund units.** This happens whatever reforms you accept.

Decision rule: you decide alone.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: recognition that you have delivered, in a form that can be quoted at home, because your government's survival depends on being able to show something for the compromise; movement on the accession process itself, meaning the first cluster opened, rather than another statement of support; and an end to bilateral disputes being allowed to obstruct a European decision, ideally through a mechanism that stops the next one before it starts. You should be working on Bulgaria, which is the only delegation that can release you, and on France, which brokered the summer arrangement and has an interest in it holding.

Red lines: Being treated as part of an undifferentiated regional package, when your scores are the highest of any candidate here. Another delay justified by the Union's internal problems. New conditions added to the ones you have already accepted.

Style: Bitter, and diplomatic about it. The register that works is restraint visibly maintained: you can say that you have kept every promise and are still waiting, without raising your voice, and let the room supply the indignation. If Ukraine is in the room, be careful: attacking a country at war for moving faster than you will cost you every ally you have. The argument to make is not that Ukraine should be slowed down but that speed was evidently always possible.

Confidential (for you alone): The constitutional amendment cannot pass. Not tonight, not this year; the arithmetic in your parliament does not exist and your government knows it. What you need is therefore not more time but a different form of words: something that keeps your process moving while the amendment remains outstanding, which means Bulgaria has to be given something it can take home instead. A joint declaration restating the summer commitments would probably do it, and Bulgaria is quietly looking for exactly that, though neither of you will say so first. Somebody has to draft it; consider asking France. You should also decide early what you will do about the slide. Two fund units prevent it, and you will be competing for those units against a country at war and a country facing an energy blockade, which is an argument you will lose on merit and might win on principle: if the best reformer in the room visibly goes backwards tonight, the Union's entire conditionality argument goes backwards with it. That sentence is your strongest card. Use it once, in plenary, at the right moment.