Serbia

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: Serbia (solo)

Serbia has been negotiating membership since 2014 and has moved slowly. The Union criticises your rule of law and your media environment. The sharper problem is foreign policy: Serbia has not aligned with the Union's sanctions on Russia and does not intend to, and relations with Kosovo remain tense. You are the largest country in the Western Balkans, too significant for the Union to write off and too ambiguous for it to trust.

Your government's position has been consistent and, on its own terms, successful: a European future, traditional friendships, and no requirement to choose between them. That position is becoming more expensive to hold every month, and you are here to find out how much more.

Your scores (public, as in Annex A of the factsheet). Rule of Law 2, Corruption 1, Democracy 2, Economy 3. **Your reform capacity (do not publish):** 5. At the end of the negotiation you may declare publicly that Serbia is **cutting its ties with Russia**, at a cost of **3 capacity**. You may also **leave the process** entirely, at any point in the Final Act.

Decision rule: you decide alone.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: avoid being overtaken by countries that applied this year, since your accession began eight years ago; keep your process moving without making concessions that cost you at home; avoid being publicly isolated or named as the Union's problem, which is the one thing that would force your hand; and preserve the position you have built, in which Belgrade receives something from both directions. You have three natural interlocutors: Hungary, which will advocate for you; Italy, which will not abandon you; and the Commission, which needs your process to look alive.

Red lines: No recognition of Kosovo as a condition of progress. No immediate alignment with sanctions on Russia as a condition of progress. No language in the record freezing Serbia's accession, which you would have to treat as the end of the process rather than a pause in it.

Style: Composed, reasonable, and slightly wounded. Your best register is the one that puts the burden back on the room: Serbia has been in this process for eight years, has done what was asked, and is now watching newer applicants move faster. Do not be defensive about Russia; be matter-of-fact. Every minute the room spends arguing with you about Moscow is a minute it is not spending on your rule-of-law scores, which are your real weakness.

Confidential (for you alone): You have two levers and you should not use both. The first is the declaration on Russia, which costs 3 of your 5 capacity and would transform how the room sees you; it is worth making only if you are paid for it in advance, in promises and in money, and the payment has to be agreed before you declare, because afterwards you will have nothing left to trade. The second is leaving the process, which sounds like a defeat and is not: a Serbia that walks out costs the Union its entire Western Balkans policy, and everyone at this table knows it, including the states that are being hard on you. Threatening it once, quietly, to the right delegation, is worth more than any speech. Carrying it out is available and should be a decision rather than a tantrum. What you should be clear about privately: the Commission's sheet for a country with your scores will ask for more than 5 points of reform. You cannot accept it in full safely. If you decline, the room will call it bad faith; if you accept beyond your capacity, you gamble your government; if you want it paid for, somebody has to put units on Serbia in front of everyone. Choose in advance which of these you are willing to defend.