European Commission: Enlargement Lead

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

The Commission in this scenario. Your team speaks with one voice: everything the Commission tables, the review sheet and the funds package alike, needs the agreement of all of you. You assess the candidates, you recommend what each should reform, and you propose how the fund units are spent (twelve with a full cast; the facilitator states tonight's number). You do not vote in the Council. Two levers are yours alone. First, you may call for a **detailed review of two candidates** at any point during the negotiation, and the facilitator will then tell you those two countries' real reform capacity and the specific problem each is facing; you get two, not three. Second, the funds package is voted as a whole and cannot be amended from the floor, so what goes into it is decided by you and nobody else. You may show drafts whenever you like, to test reactions; only the version you table at the start of the Final Act counts, and it is voted before the candidates answer your recommendations. Units may also be left unallocated. Candidates may accept more than their capacity at a risk to their governments; reform support is the only way to make an ambitious sheet safe, and its cost rises for each point given to the same country (1, then 2, then 3, then 4 units). The package needs a qualified majority in the Council and a majority of groups in the Parliament (a tie means no); if either fails, no money moves at all.

Your delegation: the European Commission (up to three)

You are the guardian of the process and the only actor in the room with an institutional interest in the enlargement methodology surviving the year. The Union has just moved faster for Ukraine and Moldova than it ever moved for the Western Balkans, and your problem is to make that look like a process rather than a favour. Your three members should divide the work early: one holds the overall line and speaks in plenary, one builds the review sheet, one builds the funds package. You will not have time to do this sequentially.

Decision rule: consensus. If your three cannot agree, the Commission tables nothing, and a Commission that tables nothing has handed the session to the Council.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: You hold the Commission's overall position and you are its voice. Your aims: table a review sheet that every candidate can accept, because a candidate that refuses its package makes you look either unreasonable or irrelevant; keep the Council on board, because a package the Council rejects is worse than a modest one it adopts; and keep the Parliament behind your funds package, because a Parliament majority against it means no money moves at all. You should be in contact with the chair and with the two or three member states that will decide the unanimity votes. Your instinct will be to spend the negotiation in bilateral meetings; resist it enough to make sure your own team has actually produced a sheet by the break.

Red lines: No recommendation of "no change needed" in an area where a country scores 2 or below: that would be indefensible in public and the Parliament would say so. No funds allocation you cannot justify with a reason other than politics, in public, in one sentence. No package that treats Ukraine and Moldova as a separate class from the Western Balkans in its structure, however different the numbers end up.

Style: Institutional and calm. Use the register of assessment rather than of preference: "the Commission's assessment is", "on the basis of the criteria". You are the one actor who can say something is a technical question and be partly believed, which is worth spending carefully. In the Final Act you explain your sheet in four sentences, not fourteen; the room has read it.

Confidential (for you alone): You know something the rest of your team is not focused on: the sheet that is technically correct is politically impossible. If you recommend on the basis of the scores alone, Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo will each receive demands that exceed anything they can carry, and at least one of them will refuse the whole package in public, or accept it and collapse a year later, which is worse. Either is damaging to the Commission. The two detailed reviews are your only instrument for avoiding this, so choose them for the countries where you are most likely to be surprised rather than the ones you are most curious about. You also have a quiet preference you should not admit: you would rather have a modest package adopted by everyone than an ambitious one that fails, because the Commission's authority in the next enlargement cycle depends on this one working at all. If a member state offers you its vote in exchange for softening a recommendation, that is a trade you are institutionally not supposed to make and politically very likely to consider.