European Commission: Reform Assessment Lead

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, including the other member 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 build the review sheet: eight countries, four areas each, thirty-two decisions. Start it early and start it from the scores, then adjust for what you learn. Your aim is a sheet that is defensible line by line and that every candidate can actually accept. You need to talk to the candidates, because the published scores tell you where a country stands and nothing at all about what its government can deliver this year. The two detailed reviews are the only hard information available to you, and the decision about which two to spend them on is yours to argue for inside the team.

Red lines: You should not recommend a reform you cannot describe concretely: if you ask for radical changes in corruption and governance, you should be able to say in one sentence what institution you mean. You should not let the sheet become a reward system, where countries the room likes receive softer demands; if that happens, the Parliament will notice and the candidates certainly will.

Style: Technical, precise, unexcited. You are the person in the room who has actually read the numbers, which is a considerable authority as long as you use it sparingly. In bilateral meetings with candidates, ask what they could do rather than telling them what they must; a candidate that volunteers a commitment will defend it in public, and one that is handed a demand will not.

Confidential (for you alone): Your own priority tonight is the candidates nobody is watching: Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia will take up most of the room's attention and most of the money, and whatever the Commission does there will be read as politics. The quiet files are where the enlargement methodology can show that reform actually delivers: a candidate that accepts a serious sheet, keeps its government and ends the year with better scores is the Commission's best argument for the next round. Three things follow. First, spend your detailed reviews on two of these countries rather than on the files everyone already talks about; some of them may be able to carry more than their scores suggest, and you will only know if you ask. Second, write their lines ambitious but within what they can carry, so that the gains are real and safe. Third, argue inside the team for single units of reform support to these countries: the first extra point of capacity costs only 1 unit, so it is the cheapest reform the budget can buy. Your colleagues will want to spend on the loud files; your job is to make sure the quiet ones leave with something that shows up in the scoreboard.