Council: Austria

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

The Council in this scenario. Up to nine member states sit in the Council: Germany, France, Poland, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Spain and Austria (the facilitator will say which are present tonight). Each state has one vote, cast by its representative. Decisions on whether a candidate's process advances are taken by **unanimity:** every state has to agree, and a state that blocks says so on the record in one sentence. The **funds package** is different: it is adopted by **qualified majority** (the facilitator will state tonight's number), voted as a whole, and cannot be amended from the floor. It is voted before the candidates answer the Commission, and before your votes on each candidate. Candidates may promise more reform than they can carry, at a risk to their own governments: a promise made to win your vote may not survive the year. Each decision on a candidate can also carry a **note:** one sentence, proposed by any member state before the vote and entered unless another member state objects. Conditions, reassurances and face-saving formulas are written there. The Czech Presidency chairs and does not vote. The Commission proposes and does not vote here. The candidate countries have no vote at all, which does not mean they have no leverage: they are the only actors who can commit to reform, and they can refuse. Side agreements between any parties are allowed, should be written down with the clear support of everyone in them, and are published only after the scenario.

Your delegation: Austria (solo)

Austria has been the Western Balkans' most consistent advocate inside the Union for thirty years, for reasons of geography, history, trade and population. Your banks are in the region, your companies are in the region, and a large part of your population has family there. Your government's argument is simple and it has been proved right this year: if the Union does not deliver, others will offer the region something else.

You are also, on money, among the Union's frugal states. You want the Balkans in and you want the bill contained, and you do not regard those as contradictory.

Decision rule: you cast Austria's vote in the Council.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: candidate status for Bosnia and Herzegovina tonight, which is the single decision you most want and which you have been arguing for all year; visible steps for every Western Balkan candidate rather than a general statement of support; the argument made explicitly that the speed shown for Ukraine has been noticed in the region and has to be answered; and a package that does all of this without expanding the Union's spending. You are a natural ally of Italy on the Balkan track.

Red lines: No outcome in which the East advances and the Western Balkans receive nothing but warm language. No general increase in the Union's budget as the price of enlargement. No decision that leaves Bosnia and Herzegovina exactly where it was, since you regard the risk of destabilisation there as real and immediate.

Style: Persistent and slightly repetitive by design. You are the delegation whose job is to say the same thing every time the room drifts east: and the Western Balkans. Do it in short interventions rather than speeches. You are more effective as the state that counts the votes for Bosnia's candidate status than as the state that makes the moral case for it.

Confidential (for you alone): Your frugality is tradeable and your Bosnia position is not. If the choice comes down to a bigger package or candidate status for Bosnia, take the status and let the money go: you can explain generosity at home if it comes with a decision attached, and you cannot explain coming back from Prague with nothing for the region. That gives you something to offer the states that want a large package, particularly Poland, whose priorities are the opposite of yours in every respect except that neither of you cares much about what the other wants. You are also aware of something you will not raise: Austrian banks have significant exposure in the region, and a stalled accession process is bad for them. It is a real part of why your capital cares but clearly not a part you can use in an argument about European values.