Council: Bulgaria

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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: Bulgaria (solo)

Bulgaria blocked North Macedonia's accession negotiations for two years over questions of language, history and the recognition of a Bulgarian minority. The block was lifted this summer under a compromise brokered by France, which set out what Skopje would have to do: amend its constitution to name the Bulgarian minority, among other commitments. Negotiations opened in July. The constitutional amendment has not been passed, and in your capital nobody believes it will be passed without continued pressure.

Your government is weak. The country has been through repeated elections, the coalition that agreed to lift the block did not survive, and this file is one of the few on which almost all Bulgarian political forces agree. You did not choose this position and you cannot abandon it.

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

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: keep the commitments made this summer alive and visible, because a compromise that is quietly forgotten is a compromise your opponents at home will say you were tricked into; obtain something written tonight that confirms the constitutional amendment remains a condition of further progress; and do all of this without being cast as the state that blocks Europe, which is how the last two years were reported everywhere except in Sofia.

Red lines: No advancement for North Macedonia beyond what was agreed in the summer compromise, unless the amendment is delivered or credibly guaranteed. No language that treats your position as a bilateral quarrel rather than as an agreed European condition, because that framing is what isolates you.

Style: Defensive and precise. Your best register is procedural: you are not raising a new demand, you are asking that an agreement made three months ago be honoured. Avoid history in plenary. Every minute spent arguing about language or the nineteenth century loses you a listener, and the room is already inclined to see this as an obsession rather than a position.

Confidential (for you alone): You do not actually need the constitutional amendment tonight, and your government knows it cannot be delivered by a parliament in Skopje under this much pressure. What you need is something you can take home: a written declaration, a line in the Council record, a joint statement with North Macedonia that restates the commitment in terms nobody can later deny. The simplest is the Council's note on North Macedonia, for example: "Further progress remains subject to the commitments of July 2022, including the constitutional amendment." A face-saving formula is available and you should be quietly looking for who will draft it. France, having brokered the summer compromise, is the obvious partner and has its own reasons to want the arrangement to hold. If you get a written form of words, you can lift your objection tonight and describe it as enforcement rather than concession. If the room tries to move past you without it, you will have to block, and you will be blamed again.