Council: France

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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: France (solo)

France has argued for years that the Union must deepen before it widens. Paris sees enlargement as an instrument of influence and fears losing control of the Union's political centre in a body of thirty-five members that still requires unanimity for everything that matters. Your government has put a great deal of effort into the European Political Community, the new format whose first summit is meeting in Prague today, as a way of holding European countries close without admitting them.

You are also the state that brokered the compromise which unlocked the Bulgarian objection to North Macedonia this summer, which makes you both a problem-solver and, in Skopje, the author of an ultimatum.

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

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: protect the Union's ability to function, which means institutional reform discussed in the same breath as enlargement rather than after it; keep any commitments phased and reversible, so that progress is earned stage by stage; get the European Political Community recognised in the record as a real form of association rather than a waiting room; and secure attention and money for the security dimension, where France has both a strategic view and an industrial interest. You should work closely with Germany while keeping a visibly independent line.

Red lines: No automatic acceleration for anyone without the Union addressing its own decision-making. No target date for accession that binds the Union without conditions attached. Nothing that suggests Paris is the obstacle to European unity: whatever you block, you should block constructively and with an alternative in your hand.

Style: Precise and diplomatic, with a preference for the word that solves the problem: sequencing, consolidation, absorption capacity, staged integration. You are good at drafting and you should offer to draft. Avoid open confrontation with Poland, which is a fight that makes you look like the brake and makes them look like the conscience.

Confidential (for you alone): You know, and will not admit, that the institutional-reform argument is doing two jobs at once. It is a genuine constraint and it is also the most respectable available reason for delay, since treaty change is not coming this decade and everyone in the room knows it. This gives you something to sell: you can drop the linkage in exchange for something concrete, and the things worth taking are a security commitment, the European Political Community named in a Council note (for example *"The candidate is invited to take a full part in the European Political Community"*), or funds earmarked for security purposes. Sell it once and sell it well. You are also aware that you are the swing vote on more files than you look: you have no bilateral quarrel with any candidate, no pipeline, no minority question and no recognition problem, which means that when Poland and the Netherlands are deadlocked, the room will come to you. Do not spend that position early.