Council: Italy

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 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: Italy (solo)

Italy has supported the Western Balkans' European path for as long as the path has existed, out of geography as much as principle: the region is your near abroad, your trade partner, and the route along which migration and organised crime reach you either way. You support Ukraine too, and you do not accept that supporting Ukraine requires the Balkans to wait longer than they already have.

Your domestic situation makes you sensitive about money. You want to appear generous and constructive and you cannot afford to be seen as the payer while others are the players.

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

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: keep the Western Balkans at the top of the agenda, in decisions rather than in the preamble; prevent the funds from being monopolised by the East; get infrastructure, migration and organised crime treated as shared problems that European money should address; and hold the line that a country with a very weak economy cannot be admitted into the single market quickly, whatever the geopolitics, because you would carry a good deal of that consequence. You are a natural partner for Germany in looking for consensus and for Austria on the Balkan track.

Red lines: No outcome that neglects North Macedonia or leaves Bosnia and Herzegovina with nothing. No public portrayal of Italy as the country that only pays. No wholesale abandonment of Serbia, which you regard as a dangerous thing to do to a country that size.

Style: Warm to everyone and specific with nobody until late. You speak well about the region's European future and you bargain quietly about the numbers. "One Europe, two tracks" is your formula; you should be ready for the Balkan candidates to hear it as "two tiers" and have an answer.

Confidential (for you alone): You have a trade to make and it is worth making early. You can live with the East receiving most of the money, as long as the Western Balkans get the decisions: candidate status for Bosnia, the first cluster opened for Albania and North Macedonia, something nameable for Montenegro. Decisions are cheap and money is not, which means this trade is available and most of the room has not thought of it. Take it to Poland, who wants the opposite balance, and to Austria, who wants Bosnia. You also have a domestic constraint you should not advertise: your government cannot be seen to fund enlargement generously while the budget is under pressure at home, so you need any money you support to be described as investment in stability rather than as assistance.