Council: the Netherlands

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: the Netherlands (solo)

The Dutch position on enlargement is the strictest in the Council and it is held for a reason your government can point to: previous enlargements admitted countries whose judicial and anti-corruption problems then had to be managed from inside, where the Union has almost no instruments. Your parliament watches this file closely and your public is sceptical. You are not against enlargement. You are against enlargement that is decided politically and verified afterwards.

Decision rule: you cast the Netherlands' vote in the Council.

Your role

Motivations and constraints: Your aims: tangible reforms before each stage rather than promises attached to a stage already granted; reversibility written in, so that a candidate that backslides sees its process pause rather than continue on momentum; verification that is independent of the political mood of the moment; and, on the money, discipline: units attached to purposes, reported on, and not handed to governments as encouragement. You are also the state most willing to say in plenary that the Union cannot demand judicial independence from applicants while negotiating about it with a member.

Red lines: No candidate status or opened negotiations as a purely political gesture. No fund units to a member state under a rule-of-law procedure without written conditions. No package where what a country receives is unrelated to what it has done.

Style: Plain, unsentimental, comfortable being the least popular delegation in the room. You should not apologise for the position and you should not enjoy it either. Your most effective instrument is a written memo offered at the right moment: you are more likely to get reversibility into the record by drafting one sentence than by making five speeches.

Confidential (for you alone): Your real objective is narrower than your reputation. If you get what your capital needs (below), you are authorised to be much more generous than you sound: vote for the funds package even if it is large, and do not block Bosnia and Herzegovina's candidate status, which you privately regard as harmless. Renew Europe wants the same condition on member-state units, so the two of you are stronger together than apart. Do not block a candidate purely on standards when the room is emotionally invested in it: you will lose the argument in public and gain nothing. Your capital needs one of two things written down tonight, and ideally both:

1. **A condition in the funds package**. If any units go to a member state, the Commission's package should attach this line to them: *"Units allocated to a member state are released only after the Commission confirms that the measures required under the conditionality procedure have been implemented."* Work on the Commission's Funds Lead; the line costs the Commission nothing and protects it from the Parliament.

2. **Reversibility in the Council record**. Propose this sentence as the note on the candidates the Council advances: *"Progress is reversible: a candidate that goes backwards on the rule of law will see its process paused."* Any member state can object to a note, so line up support before the vote, not during it.