The Waiting Room: EU Enlargement 2022 Simulation, General Factsheet

The Pirate Academy was made possible by the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament.

Positions in this scenario are fictionalised for educational purposes and inspired by, but not identical to, publicly reported positions. Roles are institutional functions, never named living individuals.

Background

Enlargement of the European Union had been stalled since Croatia joined in 2013. The countries of the Western Balkans had been promised a European future in 2003 and were still waiting. Montenegro had been negotiating since 2012, Serbia since 2014, both slowly. North Macedonia changed its name in 2019 to settle a dispute with Greece, and was then blocked by Bulgaria over language and history. Albania's process was tied by the Council to North Macedonia's, so it waited too. Bosnia and Herzegovina had applied in 2016 and been given fourteen priorities it had not met. Kosovo had an association agreement with the Union and five member states that do not recognise it as a country.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 changed this in a matter of weeks. Ukraine applied for membership on 28 February, Moldova and Georgia on 3 March. On 23 June the European Council granted candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova. What had taken the Western Balkans between six and nineteen years took Ukraine four months.

The reaction in the region was mixed at best. The common observation was that the Union could move quickly when it chose to, and that every earlier delay had therefore been a choice. By the autumn the Union faced all of these questions at once: what to promise Ukraine and Moldova, how to keep the Western Balkans in the process, whether to give Bosnia and Herzegovina candidate status, what to do about a Kosovo that five members do not recognise, and what to do about Serbia, which wants to join and will not align with the Union's sanctions on Russia. At the same time the Commission was proposing to suspend billions of euros of one member state's own funding over the rule of law, a reminder that the Union had rule-of-law disputes of its own.

This simulation puts you in Prague on **6 October 2022**, on the margins of the first European Political Community summit, at an extraordinary conference convened by the Czech Presidency of the Council. Unusually, and unlike anything that happens in reality, the candidate countries are in the room. The conference has to produce the Union's enlargement decisions for the year: which processes advance, on what conditions, and with what money. The scenario is a fictional compression of years of negotiations into one sitting, for educational purposes.

You enter the scenario as one of the stakeholders in the process. The candidates have limited resources and problems of their own to solve. The Commission has to prepare its recommendations and its allocation of funds and win approval for them from the Council and the Parliament. The Council and the Parliament have their own agendas and have to find the compromises where those agendas overlap.

This factsheet gives you only the general situation. You must also study your personal role handout and the player aid.

Educational purpose

This simulation is not a reconstruction of any real meeting. It exists to show how an enlargement decision is assembled: by three institutions with three different decision rules, under time pressure, among actors of very unequal power. You will practise:

- **Negotiating without a vote**. If you play a candidate country you have no procedural power at all. What you have is the only thing the Union actually wants from you, which is a credible commitment to reform. Working out what that is worth is your job.
- **Spending a scarce resource**. Candidates have limited capacity for reform. The Union has a limited number of fund units. Neither fully covers what is being asked.
- **Working several files at once**. There is no single text to negotiate here. There are eight countries, each with its own question, and you cannot be in every room.
- **Living with unanimity**. Every member state can block a decision about any candidate. That power has a price, and the price is usually paid somewhere else.
- **Orienting yourself quickly with incomplete information**. You will not know how much reform another country can really deliver, or what a member state is being offered elsewhere. Being uncertain and having to act anyway is part of the design.
- **Knowledge of the limits and prospects of enlargement**. Enlargement is one of the most complicated processes in the Union and is full of conflicts that are hard to resolve.

Roles and delegations

Participants are divided into four groups.

Group	Who	In one line
Czech Presidency	1	Chairs the conference and the Council; no vote of its own
European Commission	up to 3	Assesses the candidates, recommends reforms, proposes the money
European Parliament	up to 4 political groups	No formal power at this stage, some political weight, room for mediation
Council	up to 9 member states	Decides, by unanimity, whether each candidate advances
Candidate countries	up to 9 roles in 8 delegations	Countries seeking to join the Union; no vote

The member states are Germany, France, Poland, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Spain and Austria. The candidates are Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are not candidates at the start of the simulation: for them, the question is whether they become one.

Every participant receives an individual role handout with a **delegation section** (shared with the other members of your delegation, where you have any) and an **individual brief** with your motivations, red lines and negotiating style, part of which is confidential to you alone. All roles are **functions, not named individuals**: you are "Bulgaria's representative in the Council" or "the Commission's Funds Lead", never a real person.

The reform scoreboard

The Union's assessment of each candidate is simplified into four areas, each scored from 1 to 5, where 5 means alignment comparable to the Union's own average and 1 means very little alignment:

1. **Rule of Law**: independence of courts, access to justice, protection of rights.
2. **Corruption and Governance**: anti-corruption capacity, transparency, state capture.
3. **Democracy and Institutions**: functioning institutions, elections, media freedom.
4. **Economic Readiness**: market economy, public finances, competitiveness inside the single market.

These scores are public. They are in Annex A and in the shared document, and everyone can see everyone's. Annex B says what each level means, so that the numbers are not a matter of opinion.

What is **not** public is each candidate's **reform capacity**: how many reform points that government can safely deliver this round, given its parliament, its administration, its money and its public. Only the candidate itself knows this number. The Commission may call for a detailed review of two candidates during the negotiation and will then be told theirs.

This is a heavy simplification of reality, and a deliberate one: the distance between what a country should do, what it can do and what it actually does is one of the key dynamics of the scenario. At the same time, the scenario is not only about optimising reforms. Relations between the stakeholders are complicated, and there are frozen and open conflicts that need a political solution.

The Final Act

At the end of the conference, six things happen in this order.

1. **The Commission tables its recommendations and its funds package**. For each candidate, in each of the four areas, it asks for one of: no change (costing 0), changes needed, meaning new laws (+1), radical changes, meaning new institutions (+2), or fundamental changes, meaning a rebuilt system (+3). The number is what that reform costs the candidate in capacity. At the same time the Commission publishes its allocation of funds. The Commission's members must all agree before it tables anything.

2. **The funds package is voted**. The Council approves or rejects it by **qualified majority** (the facilitator will state tonight's number), and the Parliament by simple majority. It is voted as a whole. If either rejects it, no money moves at all.

3. **Each candidate responds**, accepting or declining each recommendation, knowing by now whether the funds were approved. Reforms up to your capacity, including any capacity added by reform support, are safe. You may accept more, at a risk (see below). You may also **leave the process**, which is a real option and has been taken before in this simulation.

4. **The Parliament signals**. Each political group votes to approve or not approve the package for each candidate, by simple majority. This does not block anything, but it is a public verdict that every capital reads.

5. **The Council decides on each candidate**: the process advances, or it goes under review. **Unanimity**: every member state has to agree, and a state that blocks says so on the record. Each decision can carry **a note**: one sentence, proposed by any member state and entered unless another member state objects. This is where conditions, reassurances and compromise formulas are written down.

6. **Outcomes**. After a short technical break, at the start of the debrief, the facilitators announce what the following year brings. A candidate whose government holds delivers the reforms it accepted: each accepted recommendation raises that score by its cost, up to 5. A government that falls delivers none of them. Each candidate's own situation is resolved at the same time, and some of the other stakeholders may get endings of their own.

Over-reform

A candidate may accept more reform than its capacity allows. Governments that promise more than they can carry sometimes deliver and sometimes collapse. For every point accepted over capacity, the risk that the government falls before the reforms are delivered grows:

Points over capacity	Chance the government falls
1	25%
2	50%
3	75%
4 or more	90%

The facilitators resolve this in step 6. Reform support counts towards capacity, so points covered by funds are not over capacity.

The funds

The Union has a limited number of fund units: twelve with a full cast. The facilitator states tonight's number, which is smaller in a smaller room. The Commission allocates the units; the Council and the Parliament approve or reject the allocation as a whole. Units can be used in three ways.

Reform support expands a candidate's reform capacity. It is the only way a country can reform more than it could manage alone without risking a crisis. The cost rises with each point given to the same country: the first extra point of capacity costs 1 unit, the second 2, the third 3 and the fourth 4. Raising one country's capacity by four points therefore costs 10 units (1 + 2 + 3 + 4). Pouring the whole budget into one country buys much less than spreading it.

Stabilisation prevents a specific problem that a specific country is facing: an energy crisis, a fragile coalition, or a war. Each candidate knows its own price. There are more demands than funds.

Reward does nothing mechanically and is a public signal.

Units can also be given to a member state, or left unallocated.

The Commission may show draft allocations at any point in the negotiation, to test how others react. Only the package approved by the Council and the Parliament in the Final Act applies. If it is rejected, nobody receives anything, and the candidates respond to their recommendations without it.

No decision is a valid outcome. A conference that ends with a chair's statement and nothing else is a real result, and it has happened in Europe more than once.

Rules of diplomacy and etiquette

(Read aloud at the start of the session.)

- **Stay in character**: negotiate as your function, in a diplomatic register. Focus on positions and interests, never on the person playing the role. No personal remarks or insults; in-character sharpness must never land out of character.

- **Respect the floor**: in plenary, speak when recognised by the chair. The chair manages the speaking order so that everyone is heard. No interruptions.

- **Time discipline**: opening statements are strictly **30 seconds** per delegation. The chair will cut you off and it is nothing personal. Plan what matters most.

- **Online decorum**: camera on, microphone muted when not speaking, profile renamed to your function with your flag or institution's logo before the session starts. With this many roles, this is the only way anyone knows who is speaking.

- **Chat**: the text chat is for procedural and technical issues, not side negotiations. Private coordination belongs in your delegation channel or a negotiation room.

- **The tap-out**: at any moment, any participant may pause or step out of the simulation, no questions asked. Message the facilitator or simply say "tap-out". Simulations run on pressure; the tap-out is what makes the pressure safe. You may also use the facilitator back-channel for a brief private consultation if you are lost.

- **Rule zero**: the facilitator's ruling is final and follows the spirit of the rules rather than their letter.

- **Stay in the simulation**: the activity runs for a limited time and only works if you bring energy to it. There is one break; on either side of it, be present.

Technical logistics

The simulation runs online (our platform: Discord, with a shared Google Doc).

- A **plenary room** hosts all chaired sessions. Each delegation has a private **delegation channel**. There is an **EU channel** for the Council, Commission and Parliament, which candidates cannot enter, and a **Candidates channel**, which the EU side cannot enter. Several numbered **negotiation rooms** are open throughout: it is up to you to decide what each is for.

- You may move between rooms freely. This freedom exists to make diplomacy fast, not to listen in; please do not abuse it.

- The **shared document** holds the scoreboard, the Commission's review sheet and the Council's record. Everyone can read it. The Commission edits the scoreboard and the review sheet; the chair keeps the record. You may make your own copies.

- **Time is managed by the facilitator**, with announcements in the broadcast channel. Appoint your own timekeeper in the rooms.

- Log in a few minutes early. If you disconnect, rejoin and catch up from the shared document.

- Once the simulation starts, even the facilitators will not have full information about what is happening where. Managing that fog is part of the exercise.

Schedule

The exercise runs in **three blocks** with one 10-minute break, preceded by a briefing (this factsheet, the player aid and your role handout, sent about a week ahead) and a short welcome, and followed by a first debrief. The full debrief continues in the next course session.

Block 1, Positions (20′). The chair opens with the situation as of 6 October 2022. Each delegation makes a 30-second opening statement: candidates first, then member states, then Parliament, then the Commission. Then the rooms open for first contacts. No decisions are taken in this block.

Block 2, Negotiation (70′). The core of the simulation, and deliberately unstructured. There are no requirements for you here. The Commission has to build its recommendations and its funds package; the member states have to find out what they can agree on; the candidates have to work out what they can promise, what they will refuse, and whether to coordinate with each other. Near the end of the block, the chair will call a short state of play and the facilitator will collect any special actions in writing.

The break (10′). The Commission finalises its recommendations and its funds package. Expect news from the outside world around this time.

Block 3, The Final Act (30′). Steps 1 to 5 above, in order, in plenary.

Debrief. After a short technical break, the facilitators announce the outcomes (step 6) and the fates of the stakeholders, and the debrief begins.

Before the simulation, do not discuss the scenario with participants outside your own delegation unless you mean it as part of the game. Pre-negotiation is allowed and encouraged: your delegation channel is the place to prepare.

Key principles in brief

- **Know your own numbers**. If you play a candidate, your capacity decides what you can safely promise, and everything above it is a gamble. Work out in advance which reforms you would accept and which you would refuse, and what you would want in exchange.

- **Nothing is agreed until it is written**. Verbal understandings do not exist until they are in the review sheet, the Council record, or a written side agreement supported by the parties to it.

- **Think in packages**. The money moves on a different axis from the politics. Anything can be traded against anything, including issues that have nothing to do with enlargement.

- **Credibility**: do not promise what your role could not deliver. A government that accepts reforms it cannot implement will be found out, in this simulation as in reality.

- **Side agreements** between any parties are allowed. They should be written down and clearly supported by everyone in them, and they are published only after the scenario.

- **Winning**: there is no win state. There is what your delegation wanted, what the room produced, and the distance between them. We will debrief on that.

Recommended preparation

- Read Annex A and Annex B, and your own handout, carefully. Fifteen minutes spent working out what your country's scores actually mean will make you noticeably more effective.
- Look up the basic situation of your country or institution in 2022. You do not need to become an expert.
- We recommend that you read about the *outcome* of 2022 **after** the session rather than before. The point is to find out what your room does with it.

Annex A - The scoreboard at the start

Public. Scores are the Union's simplified assessment as of October 2022, invented for this simulation.

Country	Rule of Law	Corruption	Democracy	Economy	Status
Ukraine	3	2	3	2	Candidate since June 2022
Moldova	3	2	2	1	Candidate since June 2022
Serbia	2	1	2	3	Negotiating since 2014

Country	Rule of Law	Corruption	Democracy	Economy	Status
Montenegro	4	3	3	3	Negotiating since 2012
North Macedonia	4	4	4	3	Negotiations opened July 2022
Albania	3	2	3	3	Negotiations opened July 2022
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	2	1	2	Applied 2016, not a candidate
Kosovo	2	1	3	1	Association agreement, application pending

Each candidate also has a **reform capacity**, known only to itself, and each is facing something specific that is not on this table.

Annex B - What the scores mean

Public. Use this to judge what a recommendation would actually require.

Rule of Law

1. Courts serve whoever holds power; no meaningful judicial review.
2. Independence exists on paper; political control in practice; senior cases go nowhere.
3. Courts independent in law and mostly in practice; enforcement uneven, backlogs large.
4. Independent judiciary with functioning review; isolated political pressure; proceedings slow.
5. Judicial independence and access to justice comparable to the Union's average.

Corruption and Governance

1. State capture: procurement and senior appointments run through informal networks.
2. Anti-corruption bodies exist but do not reach the powerful; transparency is nominal.
3. Independent anti-corruption institutions functioning; convictions at middle level, rarely at the top.
4. Prosecutions reach senior officials; procurement and asset declarations largely transparent.
5. Corruption is episodic and prosecuted; governance comparable to the Union's average.

Democracy and Institutions

1. Institutions blocked or bypassed; government formation or elections do not function properly.
2. Elections held but the field is uneven; media ownership concentrated; checks weak.
3. Competitive elections and a working parliament; media pluralism under pressure.
4. Institutions work; opposition and media operate freely; occasional serious disputes.
5. Democratic institutions and media freedom comparable to the Union's average.

Economic Readiness

1. Economy dependent on external support; no functioning market framework in key sectors.
2. Market economy in place but fragile; high unemployment; weak competition.
3. Functioning market economy; limited competitive capacity; infrastructure gaps.
4. Able to cope with competitive pressure in the single market in most sectors.
5. Convergence comparable to recent member states at the moment of their accession.