European Tech Champions Act Simulation: Role Handout

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

Council: France

Confidential: for the assigned participant only. Do not share with other participants, including members of your own institution. Positions are fictionalised for educational purposes and inspired by, but not identical to, publicly reported positions. Roles are institutional functions, never named living individuals.

The Council in this scenario

Five or six member states sit in the Council: Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Poland, plus the Netherlands if cast (the facilitator will say who is present). Each state has one vote. A text is adopted if **no more than one member state present votes against**. If the budget sheet contains any **EU borrowing for grants** or a **new own resource**, the Council has to decide **unanimously**, and abstention then counts as against. If the Commission opposes the final text, unanimity applies as well. On day 1 you build a Council mandate with the other member states; on day 2 you defend and trade it in the trilogue against the Parliament. Only member states present can declare loans, pledge voluntary national contributions or redirect their cohesion and Recovery money. The rules in full are in the general factsheet.

Your position in October 2025

For your President, European technological sovereignty is a signature idea, and the European Tech Champions Act is the closest the Union has come to it. Paris hosted the AI Action Summit in February 2025, where EUR 109 billion of private investment in French AI was announced. French companies such as Mistral AI are the proof, in your view, that Europe can build champions if it decides to back them with real public money and to prefer European suppliers.

France wants a large programme financed in common, ideally by EU borrowing as for NextGenerationEU. It wants freedom for member states to support their own champions with

state aid, and it wants the act to say clearly that its purpose is sovereignty, not just competitiveness.

Your problem is at home. France's public deficit was close to 6% of GDP in 2024, the country is under the EU's excessive deficit procedure, and the autumn of 2025 has brought another government crisis in Paris. You cannot promise large national contributions. What you need is European money, and you need it visibly.

The August 2025 trade framework with the United States made many governments cautious about "Buy European". France was not among them.

Your needs, wants and pain points

Needs (+3 each if fully met)

1. **A real European effort (budget sheet, block A).** Fully met: public envelope at least EUR 20 billion. Partly met: 15 to 19.5 (+2), 12 to 14.5 (+1).
2. **Freedom for state aid (Article 5(4)).** Fully met: national aid to projects selected under the programme gets a fast-track approval with a fixed deadline, or a presumption of compatibility. Partly met (+1): priority or accelerated assessment of such aid, without a fixed deadline. The Commission's wording as proposed does not count.
3. **Sovereignty is the purpose (Articles 1 and 7).** Fully met: technological sovereignty stays the first objective in Article 1(2), and the headquarters and relocation safeguard in Article 7(2) is kept or strengthened. Partly met (+1): only one of the two.

Wants (+2 each if fully met)

1. **Buy European (Article 4 or a new article).** Procurement financed by the programme gives preference to European products and components. Partly met (+1): preference only as a tie-breaker or only for "trusted" suppliers.
2. **Defence and dual-use (block D).** The defence and dual-use earmark is at least 10%. Partly met (+1): 5 to 9.5%.
3. **Nuclear counts (Article 4 or a new article).** The text states that low-carbon energy, including nuclear, counts as climate-compatible for powering funded infrastructure such as data centres and supercomputers. Partly met (+1): "low-carbon" without naming nuclear.

Pain points (-5 each if they happen)

1. **A token programme (block A).** Public envelope below EUR 12 billion. No partial.
2. **The door left open (Article 6).** Companies controlled from third countries are treated as Union entities (for example all companies from countries with a trade and technology framework with the Union). Partly (-2): only for named partners and only with conditions on control and security. Article 6(1) as proposed, which admits companies established in the Union, does not trigger this.

Confidential (for you alone)

Your President wants a **European AI compute flagship**, ideally hosted in France: a large public computing facility for European AI companies. You may propose it as a new article without naming a country; the siting would come later. You may trade the defence earmark or Buy

European for it. Also: Paris cannot pay much. National contributions by GNI key above EUR 6 billion (France would pay more than 1) are a serious problem in the current budget crisis. You prefer EU borrowing, or money from others.

Who you need and who is in your way

- **Money:** Spain, Italy and S&D want a large envelope too. Germany and the Netherlands (if cast) are in your way on borrowing, and as long as borrowing for grants is on the sheet, each of them has a veto. Think early about which other sources reach 20.
- **State aid:** Germany can afford state aid as well and may quietly support you. Italy, Spain and Poland cannot, and they will want something in return (a cohesion share, a widening bonus, envelopes). Renew and the Commission will defend the single market.
- **Sovereignty and Buy European:** the Patriots (if cast) support Buy European; S&D may. Poland, the Netherlands, Renew and the EPP will resist anything that looks anti-American.
- **The Commission** wants a successful act as much as you do. It is your best partner for a large headline, but it will not support legally risky exclusions.

What you can give away

The quantum earmark; national or regional envelopes up to 30%; social and climate conditions; Parliament oversight; a co-investment target of any size, as long as it does not replace public money.

If there is no deal

Your no-deal score is **-2**. If the act fails, your President's flagship idea fails with it, and the opposition at home will say so. You have more to lose than any other member state.

Scorecard: France

For the peer scorer. Score the final text, or record the no-deal score if no act is adopted. Each item scores once, at the highest level reached.

Item	Fully met if	Partly met if	Points	Score
Need 1: European effort (block A)	public envelope at least 20	15 to 19.5 (+2); 12 to 14.5 (+1)	+3	
Need 2: state aid (Art. 5(4))	fast-track with fixed deadline, or presumption of compatibility	accelerated assessment without fixed deadline (+1)	+3	
Need 3: sovereignty (Art. 1 and 7)	sovereignty first objective in Art. 1(2) and Art. 7(2) kept or strengthened	one of the two (+1)	+3	
Want 1: Buy European (Art. 4 or new)	preference for European products in programme procurement	tie-breaker or "trusted" suppliers only (+1)	+2	
Want 2: defence (block D)	defence and dual-use at least 10%	5 to 9.5% (+1)	+2	
Want 3: nuclear counts (Art. 4 or new)	nuclear named as climate-compatible energy	"low-carbon" without naming nuclear (+1)	+2	
Pain 1: token programme (block A)	public envelope below 12	no partial	-5	
Pain 2: door left open (Art. 6)	third-country-controlled companies treated as Union entities	only named partners, with conditions (-2); Art. 6(1) as proposed does not count	-5	
Total				
No-deal score			-2	