European Tech Champions Act Simulation: Role Handout

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

Council: Italy

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

Italy supports a European technology programme, but on its own terms. It has excellent research centres and world-class industry in some fields: one of Europe's most powerful supercomputers, Leonardo, runs in Bologna, and Italian pharmaceutical and biotech companies are among Europe's strongest. It also has regions in the south that rarely win European competitive calls, and a public debt of about 135% of GDP. Since July 2024, Italy has been under the EU's excessive deficit procedure.

That shapes everything. You cannot match the state aid that Germany and France give their own champions. You cannot easily pay large national contributions. What you want is European

money that reaches all of Italy, cheap European loans you can choose to take, and a guarantee that any national contribution will not count against you under the fiscal rules.

Your government is led by a party that sits in the ECR group in the Parliament. It is a channel nobody else in the Council has.

Your needs, wants and pain points

Needs (+3 each if fully met)

1. **Money for all regions (budget sheet, block C, Articles 4 and 6).** Fully met: national or regional envelopes with a cohesion key get at least 30%, or cohesion-key envelopes of at least 15% plus a widening bonus in the open calls. Partly met: cohesion-key envelopes of 15 to 29.5% without a bonus, envelopes of 5 to 14.5% with a bonus, or a widening bonus alone (+2); cohesion-key envelopes of 5 to 14.5% without a bonus (+1).
2. **A fiscal-rule clause (Article 2).** Fully met: national contributions to the programme are treated as one-off expenditure that does not count against a member state under the EU fiscal rules, or there are no national contributions at all. Partly met (+1): a political commitment ("shall take into account") without a clear rule.
3. **Biotechnology stays in (Article 3(1)(d)).** Fully met: biotech remains a priority domain, with no ethical limits beyond those that apply in Horizon Europe. Partly met (+1): biotech stays, but with additional restrictions.

Wants (+2 each if fully met)

1. **Access to cheap EU loans (block B).** The line "EU borrowing for loans to member states" is at least EUR 3 billion. Partly met (+1): 1 to 2.5.
2. **Simple procedures (Article 4 or a new article).** The text sets a maximum time from application to grant (for example six months) or a simplified procedure for SMEs. Partly met (+1): a general commitment to simplification.
3. **High-performance computing (block D).** The HPC earmark is at least 10%. Partly met (+1): 5 to 9.5%.

Pain points (-5 each if they happen)

1. **An unaffordable bill (block B, Article 2).** National contributions by GNI key above EUR 5 billion without a fiscal-rule clause. Partly (-2): by GNI key above 3 up to 5 without the clause.
2. **A subsidy race you cannot win (Article 5(4)).** National state aid gets a fast-track with a fixed deadline or a presumption of compatibility, while cohesion-key envelopes are below 20% and there is no widening bonus. Partly (-2): accelerated assessment of state aid without a fixed deadline, with the same lack of cohesion money.

Confidential (for you alone)

You can trade the HPC earmark for the fiscal-rule clause: the clause matters more to your finance ministry than any facility. You also know that Spain wants a flagship supercomputer in Barcelona, as you would like one in Bologna; you can compete or cooperate with Madrid, but do not let the flagship divide the southern states while Germany watches. Finally, your government's party sits in the ECR group: you may talk to the ECR negotiator as a friend.

Who you need and who is in your way

- **Cohesion and envelopes:** Spain shares your interest in money for poorer regions, Poland wants envelopes too; S&D supports cohesion; ECR and the Patriots (if cast) want national envelopes for other reasons. Germany, the Netherlands (if cast), Renew and the Commission are in your way.
- **Fiscal-rule clause:** France needs it as much as you do but may not say so. Germany and the Netherlands will resist.
- **Loans:** Spain and Poland may borrow too. Loans also help Germany avoid debt for grants, so they can be a bridge.
- **State aid:** France wants it loosened. Make France pay for it with a cohesion share.
- **Biotech:** the ECR may want ethical limits; you can ask its negotiator to keep them within existing law.

What you can give away

The HPC earmark; quantum; climate conditions up to a tag of 30%; Parliament oversight and reporting; a voluntary pledge of up to EUR 2.5 billion (Italy gave EUR 150 million to the European Tech Champions Initiative in 2023).

If there is no deal

Your no-deal score is **0**. No deal costs you nothing directly, but a programme that never reaches the south would also give you nothing. What you want is a programme that does.

Scorecard: Italy

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: all regions (block C, Art. 4 and 6)	cohesion-key envelopes at least 30%, or at least 15% plus widening bonus	cohesion-key envelopes 15 to 29.5%, envelopes 5 to 14.5% with bonus, or bonus alone (+2); cohesion-key envelopes 5 to 14.5% (+1)	+3	
Need 2: fiscal-rule clause (Art. 2)	national contributions excluded under the fiscal rules, or none	a “shall take into account” commitment (+1)	+3	
Need 3: biotech (Art. 3(1)(d))	biotech stays, no ethical limits beyond Horizon Europe	biotech stays with extra restrictions (+1)	+3	
Want 1: loans (block B)	loan line at least 3	1 to 2.5 (+1)	+2	
Want 2: simple procedures (Art. 4 or new)	maximum time-to-grant or SME procedure	general commitment to simplification (+1)	+2	
Want 3: HPC (block D)	HPC earmark at least 10%	5 to 9.5% (+1)	+2	
Pain 1: unaffordable bill (block B)	national contributions by GNI key above 5 without fiscal-rule clause	by GNI key above 3 up to 5 without the clause (-2)	-5	
Pain 2: subsidy race (Art. 5(4))	state-aid deadline or presumption, cohesion-key envelopes below 20% and no widening bonus	accelerated assessment without deadline, same lack of cohesion money (-2)	-5	
Total				
No-deal score			0	