(English version)

Question for written answer E-000912/26
to the Commission
Piotr Müller (ECR)
(4 March 2026)

Subject: Impact of planned environmental standards for data centres on the EU's digital competitiveness and investments in AI infrastructure

The rapid development of artificial intelligence and the digitalisation of the economy is driving an increase in demand for data centres, which constitute critical infrastructure. Meanwhile, the Commission is considering the introduction of binding environmental standards concerning energy and water consumption, even though the sector is already struggling with high energy costs, network constraints and the scarcity of raw materials. There is a risk that, instead of promoting the digital transformation, additional regulatory and reporting obligations will lead to a slowdown in investments, the relocation of infrastructure outside the EU and an increase in the EU's technological dependence on third countries.

In light of the above:

1. How does the Commission assess the impact of the planned binding environmental standards for data centres on the EU's ability to attract investment in AI infrastructure and remain competitive with the US and Asia?

2. How does the Commission intend to prevent a situation where new regulatory obligations lead to the relocation of data centres outside the EU, which could increase the Union's digital dependency?

3. Has the Commission carried out a regulatory cost-benefit analysis that takes into account the growing number of investment barriers in the energy, network and raw materials sectors, and what conclusions were reached?

Submitted: 4.3.2026

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(4 May 2026)

The Commission has consulted the data centre industry from the outset when it drafted the Energy Efficiency Directive ([1]) and subsequent proposal delegated acts on reporting, rating scheme and minimum performance standards on water and energy usage.

The introduction of these measures has not affected their investment decisions in the EU but rather the opposite: colocation data centres invested EUR 7,7 billion in 2024, and they plan to invest over EUR 26 billion in 2030 ([2]).

The upcoming Cloud and AI Development Act will address the urgent and growing data centre capacity gap, aiming to at least triple the EU's data centre capacity within the next five to seven years.

It will do so by harmonising the conditions for investment in data centres across the EU with a focus on sustainable and innovative data centres, ensuring their operators find access to land, water, finance and energy in the EU.

Additionally, through the upcoming Strategic Roadmap for Digitalisation and AI in the Energy Sector the Commission will facilitate the sustainable integration of data centres into the EU energy system.

The Commission has conducted various regulatory impact assessments and cost benefit analyses related to investment barriers in the energy, network, and raw materials sectors, particularly in the context of the Green Deal Industrial Plan ([3]), REPowerEU ([4]), Critical Raw Materials Act ([5]) and Net-Zero Industry Act ([6]).

It will conduct an impact assessment that will accompany any proposal for a regulation on minimum performance standards later this year.

([1]) https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-directive_en.
([2]) https://www.eudca.org/new-2026-state-of-european-data-centres.
([3]) https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/green-deal-industrial-plan_en.
([4]) https://commission.europa.eu/topics/energy/repowereu_en.
([5]) https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/green-deal-industrial-plan/european-critical-raw-materials-act_en.
([6]) https://commission.europa.eu/topics/competitiveness/green-deal-industrial-plan/net-zero-industry-act_en.