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Title: **Green Data Centres for Europe: Climate-Safe and Sovereign**

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Introduction

Europe needs its own digital capacity — the foundation of a digitally enabled society, a competitive economy and a functioning government. Digital capacity also means the power to shape artificial intelligence itself, rather than leaving it to Big Tech and authoritarian governments. However, the current data-centre expansion is pressuring Europe's energy, water and land, while a few US hyperscalers are dominating the cloud market and seizing the value it creates. The European Green Party calls for binding rules to keep Europe’s digital infrastructure within environmental and resource limits, alongside equal requirements across EU Member States and candidate countries. Transparency, data protection and democratic oversight must be core principles. Executed correctly, Europe’s digital infrastructure can become a competitive advantage.

Body

Data centres are among the largest new loads Europe will connect this decade. On their current path, they risk straining grids, depleting water resources and generating noise and waste, while their tax revenues and economic benefits often flow elsewhere. They create relatively few local jobs compared with their energy demand. Europe needs digital infrastructure, but not at the expense of communities and ecosystems or by exacerbating water stress or grid constraints.

Across Europe, procedural accelerations and insufficient safeguards are

repeating a familiar pattern. Changes to urban-planning and construction legislation adopted in June 2026 in North Macedonia an EU candidate country have accelerated procedures for data-centre and related energy infrastructure projects, while key criteria and safeguards remain insufficiently defined. Plans for a national data centre and a proposed commercial project in Pehčevo have raised questions about transparency, investment criteria and public participation. Where communities are confronted with such projects without information or a say, emergency brakes follow, as moratoria in Scotland and the Amsterdam region show.

The EU has begun building a framework for transparency and monitoring, but reporting and non-binding commitments are not enough. Missing are common minimum requirements, effective monitoring and fair allocation of the costs of infrastructure and environmental impacts.

Europe does not have to choose between digitalisation and climate: a green data-centre and AI strategy can set it apart from the United States, which is turning to gas turbines, and China, where coal still dominates. Its first building block is flexibility: data centres that shift non-urgent workloads to hours of surplus wind and solar and use their batteries to support the grid stop competing with households and industry for scarce grid capacity and can connect sooner – without making electricity more expensive for everyone else. Its second is sovereignty: data centres open to foreign authorities do not become European by sitting on European soil – they must be built, owned and run by Europeans, with strong data protection and cybersecurity.

Demands

The European Green Party calls for:

- Binding European minimum standards for large data centres on energy, water and resource efficiency, including useful waste-heat utilisation benefiting local communities, within a Paris-aligned carbon budget.

- Data-centre operators must cover their fair share of the costs for grid reinforcement, additional renewable capacity and required water infrastructure.

- Grid access and permits conditional on efficiency, flexibility, storage, demand response and clean power, demonstrated through additional renewable or carbon-free capacity beyond existing supply, without displacing existing industries and other grid users, with priority connection for flexible data centres.

- Prioritising the siting of new data centres in regions with surplus renewable power and spare grid capacity, with on-site gas permitted only as transitional, hydrogen-ready back-up under a binding conversion path.

- A European water hierarchy prioritising recycled and reclaimed water for cooling, with restrictions on drinking-water use.

- Binding assessments of energy, water, grid, biodiversity, noise and cumulative impacts, including drought and heatwave risks.

- Public facility-level reporting of electricity, peak demand, water, emissions, flexibility, waste-heat recovery, electronic waste and compute utilisation, with an end to confidentiality carve-outs in the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) reporting.

- Transparent conditions for public support, permitting and infrastructure access — tied to clean power and flexibility - without preferential treatment for Big Tech or other investors, ensuring a level playing field where the greenest and cheapest options win and value stays in Europe, and accountable rules for data storage and protection.

- A transparent, participatory European framework ensuring community involvement, expert input and public access to key project information.

- The same core European safeguards in EU candidate countries, including North Macedonia, so that weaker rules do not attract unsustainable investment.

Background

- **Amazon, Microsoft and Google** jointly hold ~70% of the European cloud market; the European share halved from 29% (2017) to ~15% (2024). The US CLOUD Act and FISA

Section 702 make data held by US-controlled providers presumptively reachable by US authorities regardless of storage location.
https://www.acm.nl/system/files/documents/marktstudie-clouddiensten.pdf
https://www.srgresearch.com/articles/european-cloud-providers-local-market-share-now-holds-steady-at-15https://cms.law/en/bel/legal-updates/white-paper-demystifying-the-debate-on-the-us-cloud-act-vs-european-uk-data-sovereignty-in-the-context-of-cloud-services

- **Cloud and AI Development Act (CADA) tripling target:** the proposed act aims to triple EU data-centre capacity within five to seven years, including faster permits for projects in data-centre acceleration zones. https://oeil.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en/document-summary?id=1903654

- **Cooling systems and back-up generators** for data centres cause local nuisance, including significant noise pollution.
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2772985025000262

- **Data centres produce large volumes of electronic waste**, especially considering the rapid generational turnover of hardware needed for AI computing (e.g. graphic cards); e-waste is often exported to Eastern and Southeastern European countries.
https://wiki.ban.org/images/1/16/AI_Waste_Wave_Part_1.pdfhttps://china-cee.eu/2025/11/28/north-macedonia-monthly-briefing-europes-wasteland-how-macedonia-became-one-of-the-dumping-grounds-of-the-continent/

- **EED dashboard (European Commission)** reports 18.5 TWh for the EU in 2024, against credible independent estimates of 60–100 TWh; data centres account for 4.6% of Dutch and 23% of Irish electricity consumption; Dublin grid operators have paused new data-centre connections until 2028.
https://dashboard.tech.ec.europa.eu/qs_digit_dashboard_mt/public/sense/app-/940a61c3-bcfe-47d6-a786-25d93aa63b85/sheet/ZLWpJa/state/analysis/bookmark/381456a5-1044-4047-92f5-671be7ad92c4https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/ireland-data-center-construction-markethttps://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2025/51/data-centres-consume-4-6-percent-of-the-netherlands-electricity
https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-dcmec/datacentresmeteredelectricityconsumption2025/

- **EED reporting thresholds:** the Directive requires reporting from data centres with at least 500 kW installed IT power; large data centres are 2–10 MW, very large exceed 10 MW (EED / Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1364). https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-targets-directive-and-rules/energy-efficiency-directive_en

- **Flexibility (Duke University, 2025):** 76 GW of new load, about 10% of US peak demand, could be integrated with an average annual curtailment rate of 0.25% — corresponding to around 85 hours of curtailment a year.
https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/publications/rethinking-load-growth

- **Fossil lock-in (IEA 2025):** natural gas expands by 175 TWh to meet growing data-centre demand, notably in the US. https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/executive-summary

- **Global data-centre electricity consumption** was 416 TWh in 2024; electricity-related emissions could grow 2.5 times by 2030 in a high-growth scenario; UNEP's 2025 Emissions Gap Report identifies data centres as the fastest-growing source of emissions globally.
https://www.iea.org/reports/energy-and-ai/executive-summary
https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2025

- **IEA update (2026):** global data-centre electricity demand is set to nearly double from 485 TWh in 2025 to 950 TWh by 2030; demand from AI-focused data centres rose by 50% in 2025 alone; orders for gas turbines to power data centres rose 70% in 2025.
https://www.iea.org/reports/key-questions-on-energy-and-ai/executive-summary

- **Moratoria or emergency brakes** on data-centre projects have either been enacted or backed in Scotland (SNP), New York (statewide, 2026), and Amsterdam (municipal).
https://www.datacenterdynamics.com/en/news/scotland-data-center-moratorium/
https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/first-statewide-moratorium-new-hyperscale-data-centers-launched-governor-kathy-hochulhttps://nltimes.nl/2025/04/18/amsterdam-allowing-data-centers-municipality

- **North Macedonia:** as of June 2026 legislative changes accelerated data-centre project procedures, while transparency, investment-screening and participation criteria remain

insufficiently defined (National Data Centre; Pehčevo project). https://ddklaw.com.mk/north-macedonia-strengthens-legal-framework-for-data-centre-development/?lang=enhttps://a1on.mk/macedonia/sovetot-na-opshtina-pehchevo-ja-otfrli-inicijativata-za-izgradba-na-data-centar/https://mactel.com.au/en/The-Pehcevo-Municipality-Council-voted-in-favor/

- **US AI build-out:** heavily debt-financed (AI capex projected at ~$5.5tn by 2030), with securitised data-centre debt and accelerated index-fund inclusion transmitting valuation risk to European savings and pensions. https://www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2026/jan/tracking-ai-contribution-gdp-growth

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Yes

Yes

Supporters

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