Press

Forum für Zukunftsenergien

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European Energy Colloquium

The EU Data Centre Rating Scheme: Efficiency Catalyst or Reporting Overload?

Brussels, June 3, 2026 – The EU is moving on from guidelines to hard numbers. With the recently closed consultation on the respective EED Delegated Act, energy efficiency in data centres is no longer just a corporate social responsibility goal – it becomes a regulatory permit to operate. A major point of debate is the question of accountability: in complex operating environments where infrastructure and IT hardware are managed by different parties, a uniform rating may struggle to reflect a fair comparison. Furthermore, there is the risk that the administrative effort required to meet these reporting mandates could overshadow the actual goal of driving technical innovation.

In the framework of the European Energy Colloquium, the Forum für Zukunftsenergien discussed the core implications of the rating scheme for the future of Europe's digital infrastructure with representatives from politics and the affected sectors.

Margareta Djordjevic, Head of Unit of Energy Efficiency: Policy and Financing in DG Energy at the European Commission, emphasized that digital growth must move in lockstep with the clean energy transition. While the expanding data-centre sector drives digital progress, it also strains electricity grids, drives carbon emissions, and increases the consumption of resources, such as water. To address this, the EU intends to firmly align digital growth with sustainability. Setting a global precedent, the European Union is the first jurisdiction to introduce binding legislation specifically targeting the energy performance of data centres through the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) and Delegated Regulation (EU) 2024/1364. Building on this first step, Djordjevic highlighted that the upcoming Delegated Regulation will establish a common EU rating scheme. This system will drastically increase transparency, by informing better policymaking and the procurement of sustainable digital services, while still promoting industry frontrunners without hindering innovation. Addressing concerns regarding regulatory red tape, she reassured stakeholders that the rating scheme will impose no additional administrative burden on operators or Member States. Instead, it will automatically generate energy performance labels directly from the existing EU database. Looking ahead, the Commission is already working on the next phase to introduce potential minimum performance standards that will ensure all new or retrofitted facilities meet a mandatory sustainability baseline. Although this package is being actively developed, there is currently no fixed timeline for its release, thus ensuring the focus remains on a thorough and practicable design.

Matthias Plötzke, Managing Director at the German Datacenter Association (GDA), emphasized that while the industry supports Europe’s climate goals, the upcoming regulatory framework must be grounded in operational reality. Commenting on the overarching EU macroeconomic strategies on digitalization and energy policy, Plötzke noted that current high-level policies offer little practical orientation for operators. To ensure that the clean energy transition succeeds, digital growth must be supported by workable regulations in particular as the EU’s objective is to triple data centre capacity in the upcoming 5-7 years. While the GDA

acknowledges the intent of the Directive and the EED Delegated Act to drive energy efficiency and enable EU-wide comparability for data centres, Plötzke warned of a potential mismatch between regulatory theory and industry reality. Under the current design, core metrics like Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) risk distorting a facility's true efficiency by ignoring IT load utilization rates. Furthermore, the label design would fail to account for the unique operational lifecycles and geographical characteristic. Data centers in northern Europe faces different operational circumstances than in south of Europe. Without addressing these structural gaps, the new rating scheme risks becoming an exercise in reporting without a value added in user information, Plötzke cautioned. Looking ahead to the next regulatory phase, the GDA maintains that potential Minimum Performance Standards (MPS) should be based upon the established rating scheme. However, Plötzke advocated against implementing any mandatory performance baselines before 2030. He stressed that a two-to-three-year transition period is essential to collect, validate, and analyse data across at least two full reporting cycles. Ultimately, any future mandatory standards must account for workable regulatory framework conditions and address broader infrastructure barriers that cannot be solved at the facility level alone. He appreciated the constructive exchange between EU Commission and data center industry and underscored the readiness to contribute further.

In the panel discussion **Jutta Paulus, MEP** (Greens), **Margareta Djordjevic**, **Dr. Luka Kim**, Head of Public Policy for Germany at Vantage Data Centers and **Sascha Horn**, Regional Strategic Account Manager DACH at VERTIV, moderated by **Ulrike Drachsel**, Managing Director of the Forum für Zukunftsenergien, discussed the EU Data Centre Rating Scheme. Djordjevic emphasized that the European Commission was maintaining its commitment to introducing a transparent rating system for data centres despite technical and regional challenges but was opting for a differentiated implementation. She explained that the primary objective was to create genuine market transparency through the EU label and to significantly drive the expansion and utilization of renewable energy within the digital sector. The planned system, she noted, should not be viewed as a bureaucratic hurdle, but rather as a necessary foundation for Europe's digital and green transformation. At the same time, Djordjevic expressed understanding for the concerns voiced by the industry, which had warned against oversimplifying complex technical realities. She acknowledged that a broad, Europe-wide comparison fell short and that a fair rating system must inherently account for local conditions. Kim made it clear that the debate was no longer about whether energy efficiency policies made sense, but rather how to ensure the framework accurately reflected operational reality. Any misalignment at this foundational stage, Kim warned, would inevitably scale across the entire future system. Horn argued that efficiency in data centres was always location-specific, with the local energy mix, grid connections, climate, water availability, and redundancy requirements playing a decisive role. Regarding these pressing issues surrounding new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), rising water consumption (WUE), and waste heat utilization, Djordjevic emphasized that policy frameworks must recognize these structural realities faced by the industry. The discussion demonstrated that bureaucracy itself was not the core challenge of the debate. Rather, the true task for both policymakers and the industry lay in accurately and sustainably reflecting techno-structural realities, ranging from AI infrastructure to local urban planning, within the shared regulatory framework.

We thank the German Datacenter Association for the support and the Rhineland-Palatinate State Representation in Brussels for its hospitality.

The presentations will soon be available for members of the Forum für Zukunftsenergien e.V. to download from the Website (Press/Publications). If you or your company/institution are members of the Forum für Zukunftsenergien and do not yet have access data, please send an email to: info@zukunftsenergien.de.

About the Forum für Zukunftsenergien e.V.

The Forum für Zukunftsenergien is the only industry-neutral and politically independent institution in the energy sector in the pre-parliamentary arena in Germany. The registered association promotes renewable and non-renewable energies as well as rational and economical energy use. Its goal is to promote a secure, affordable, resource-efficient and environmentally

friendly energy supply. The association has approximately 230 members from industry, the energy sector, associations, research and service institutions, as well as prominent figures from politics, business, science and administration.

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