Fast-tracking Big Tech Power – Research methodology

To analyse the lobbying that sought to influence EU's data centre policies, we collected lobby meetings data that is proactively published by the European Commission. We collected the data from integritywatch.eu and directly from the transparency webpages from European Commissioners, their Cabinets and Commission Directorate-General (DGs).

Importantly, proactive transparency only covers the top levels of the European Commission – from the President to the Head of Unit level. Any meeting taking place with officials below this level is not proactively disclosed and, hence, not included in our dataset. We have placed a freedom of information request for these meetings but DG CNECT did not provide them. This request has been escalated to the European Ombudsman who is currently investigating it.

Meetings with public authorities, such as those with representatives from Member States, regions or cities impacted by data centre deployment, are not covered by the Transparency register.

We have restricted our dataset to meetings that took place between the start of the current Commission mandate (December 2024) and the publication of the Cloud and AI Development Act proposal (03 June).

To identify the correct meetings we used the following search terms in the subject field: Cloud and AI Development Act, CADA, CAIDA, Data Center, Data Centre, Sovereign Cloud, Cloud Sovereignty, Digital Sovereignty, Technological Sovereignty, Technological Sovereignty Package, Tech Sovereignty Package, compute; computing; AI Continent Plan. We complemented this with additional research in the lists of meeting and minutes published by the Commission Directorate-General, Commissioners and Commissioner Cabinets.

We then categorised the listed entities per their Transparency Register declaration. We have collapsed different entities with a public link into one general category of "public organisation".

When a meeting included several lobbying entities, we split them into several lines – each one marking one lobbying encounter.

The resulting dataset covers 367 encounters taken by different Commission departments, including DG CNECT, DG Energy, DG Grow, the Presidency, among others.

As the EU Commission is working on several parallel initiatives regarding data centres that are often closely related, our methodology covers all meetings related to data centres and the cloud. The meetings included in the dataset cover not only the Cloud and AI Development Act, but also

the data centre rating scheme, sustainability requirements and cloud and data centre policies in general, as these issues are interwoven.

You can see a concrete example of this played in a meeting here – logged under the subject "Exchange of views on data centre sustainability", the meeting minutes show that the topics discussed included the rating scheme, minimum performance standards, the Cloud and AI Development Act, and the AI Continent Action Plan.

We then categorised every meeting according to a list of policy topics. Below is the final distribution of topics in our dataset.

Keyword/Policy	Number of encounters with specific keyword/policy	% of total encounters*
CADA	204	55.59%
Tech Sovereignty	97	26.43%
Date Centres Energy	46	12.53%
AI Continent Action Plan	26	7.08%
Data Centres Permitting	15	4.09%
AI Compute	15	4.09%
Data Centres Rating Scheme	12	3.27%
Data Centres Water	6	1.63%
Minimum Performance Standards	5	1.36%
Total Policy Themes	**426**	
Total Encounters	367	

* Encounters can be labelled with more than one policy topic hence the total does not add up to 100%