The Autorité publishes its study on the competition issues surrounding the energy and environmental impact of artificial intelligence

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Following on from Opinion 24-A-05 on generative AI, the *Autorité* wanted to take its analysis further by examining competition issues surrounding the energy and environmental impact of AI. Today, the *Autorité* is publishing its first study on the topic and urges all stakeholders to engage with the issues.

The emergence and massive deployment of AI are recent, and the impact of AI is still difficult to measure, in particular given the improvements in energy efficiency and resource management that AI will enable. However, the rapid development of data centres and AI – which is a key priority for France and the European Union – is driving a sharp rise in electricity consumption, considerable pressure on other resources (water, rare metals, land) and a significant carbon footprint.

The *Autorité* notes that the impact on energy and natural resources raises three types of competition issues:

- difficulties in accessing the power grid and energy prices, which may affect the sector's competitive dynamics;

- the growing focus on the frugality of AI services (i.e. the search for efficiency that minimises environmental impact), which may foster the development of new offerings enabling certain operators, in particular smaller companies, to compete with the biggest operators in the sector;

- the standardisation underway, in particular the introduction of methods for determining environmental footprint, which appears fundamental to

guaranteeing competition between operators based on their respective merits.

In view of the issues identified, the *Autorité* places particular emphasis on the need for reliable and transparent data on the energy and environmental footprints of AI, in order to ensure effective competition on those aspects. Such transparency, including through the implementation of standards, would also ensure that frugality can play its full role as a competitive parameter. The *Autorité* stresses, in addition, the need to ensure that access to areas suitable for data centres and to energy, in particular nuclear-generated electricity, is not restricted to certain operators only.

Consequently, the *Autorité* invites all stakeholders to take note of the issues identified and, where appropriate, to refer any suspected anticompetitive practices, or to seek informal guidance from the General Rapporteur on the compatibility of their projects with sustainability objectives with competition rules.

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