



Amazon CS Netherlands BV
Mr R. Donker, CEO
Bachstraat 15
1077 GE AMSTERDAM

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Amazon

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Bijlage(n)
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Dear Mr Donker,

Amazon has discovered the Netherlands, a pinprick on the world map. As small as it is, however, it will soon be getting an Amazon sorting centre in the vicinity of Schiphol airport. This will be the company's next step with regard to its activities in the Netherlands. In an era of significantly changed consumer buying behaviour, spurred on by the corona pandemic, this is a commercially logical move. The 'Randstad' - the urban centre of western Holland with around eight million citizens - is just around the corner, and making deliveries within the promised time frame is practically guaranteed. It is actually strange that Amazon has waited so long to take this step.

Amazon is not just any company. You know, just as we do, that Amazon has become the largest ecommerce corporation in Europe, with worldwide over one million employees and a turnover comparable with the Gross Domestic Product of a country like Portugal. The company's value is phenomenally high, and its expansion knows no boundaries, both literally and metaphorically.

Entrepreneurship and growth also create obligations, however, which apply equally to the corner shop entrepreneur as well as to a mammoth organisation like Amazon. The obligations do not only relate to terms and conditions of employment and working conditions; they also have to do with trade union freedom and to the quality and continuity of labour, as well as to respect for and confidence in one's workforce.

Despite its geographically modest size, the above-mentioned aspects are what The Netherlands actually excel in. The Dutch have established a valuable tradition of consultation between employers and employees as well as a tradition of collective agreements on terms and conditions of employment. It is a tradition in which trade unions are not regarded as vehicles of resistance but as a constructive contribution towards a decent and fair work environment both for employers and employees. And it is also a tradition in which trade union membership is considered a fundamental right, and employees are not monitored by means of all kinds of digital surveillance.

Even where trade unions are concerned, Amazon is not just any company. Amazon's opposition to trade unions, in combination with its size and market dominance, renders it a unique company worldwide. We all know the stories about the American city of Bessemer in Alabama, as well as those about our neighbouring countries, from which the Netherlands was and still is being supplied. These stories range from workers not being able to visit the bathroom and a disproportionate workload to the digital monitoring of employees as well as the conscious policy to keep trade unions out. We can assure you that we do not want such practices here.

In the Netherlands, companies that create jobs and assume their responsibilities by being good employers are welcome. We have already set out above how we interpret this, and in this context we are very concerned, in particular about companies that do not understand, or are not willing to understand, how the Dutch labour market functions. Understanding and respecting industrial relations is essential, not only for employers but also for employees and their trade unions.

We expect Amazon to look carefully into the Dutch labour market, to become familiar with the labour relations we have here, and to embrace the Dutch model.

With kind regards,

Tuur Elzinga	President FNV trade union, The Netherlands
Christy Hoffman	Secretary general UNIGlobal Union
Oliver Roethig	Regional secretary UNI Europe
Agnes Jongerius	Member of the European Parliament, S&D
Kim van Sparrentak	Member of the European Parliament, Greens/EFA
Michiel Al	FNV trade union official