

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs
The Chair

D (2024)
MC/an

Ms Roberta METSOLA
President of the European Parliament
SPAAK 09B011
Brussels

Subject: Request to withdraw access badges to the premises of the European Parliament for registered Amazon's interest representatives

Dear President,

On behalf of the EMPL Coordinators, in accordance with the Parliament's Rules of Procedure and established precedent, and in light of Amazon's repeated refusal to attend EMPL hearings, we would like to request that appropriate measures be put in place to withdraw access badges to the European Parliament's premises for registered Amazon's interest representatives.

The initial refusal of Amazon to participate in EMPL hearings took place on May 20, 2021. Specifically, they abstained from attending the hearing addressing "Amazon attacks on fundamental workers' rights and freedoms: freedom of assembly and association, and the right to collective bargain and action," scheduled for May 27, 2021. The purpose of this session was to scrutinize and gain a better understanding of media-revealed reports suggesting potential monitoring of Amazon's workers, along with other business and workplace practices, which might have been in breach of European labour, data and privacy laws.

The EMPL Committee extended an invitation to Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, requesting him to present the company's views and clarifications on the discussed issues. Regrettably, Mr. Bezos declined the invitation. Instead of dispatching a senior leadership substitute for the CEO, Amazon suggested addressing Members' inquiries in written form after the hearing. Furthermore, the company expressed interest in hosting a visit for the EMPL Committee to one of its sites once travel restrictions are lifted.

The second instance of Amazon's leadership avoiding engagement with our Committee was raised in my previous letter from 8 November 2023, in which I informed you about the cancellation of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs' mission to the Amazon facilities in Germany and Poland. This mission, originally scheduled for 18 - 20 December 2023, as part of our Committee's programme for that semester, aimed to provide Committee Members with first-hand insights into working conditions at Amazon, foster discussions with

workers and their representatives, and engage with local labour authorities to enhance our understanding of employment practices within Amazon facilities. As previously mentioned, despite an initial willingness from Amazon to host the delegation, the company later communicated its inability to facilitate the visit as planned.

On the third instance, Amazon representatives declined to participate in the exchange of views on “Working conditions in Amazon warehouses” held by the EMPL Committee on 23 January this year. Once again, invitations were extended to Amazon representatives and worker representatives. Despite providing ample notice and necessary means for remote participation, Amazon declined to participate, citing an excuse of short notice (Amazon’s reply letter in the annex). Notably, three guest speakers representing trade unions active in Amazon warehouses in Germany and Poland connected remotely, providing stark testimonies on the challenging conditions faced by Amazon workers. These testimonies only amplified EMPL Members’ concerns.

The debate revealed allegations of Amazon's breach of fundamental rights of assembly, association, collective bargaining and action as well as fair and just working conditions. Company’s use of algorithms for productivity evaluation, and increasing focus on speed of work, and pervasive surveillance resulted in certain cases in physical and mental strain on workers.

Some of these worrisome claims are supported for example by recent university study in the United States¹ or ruling by the French data protection authority² that fined Amazon for engaging in "excessive" surveillance of its workers, deemed illegal.

The gravity of these issues demands the utmost attention from our Committee. Unfortunately, Amazon's refusal to engage in public dialogue with lawmakers have made it impossible for EMPL Members and European citizens to gain first-hand accounts from the company's management on these pressing questions and allegations. By refusing to engage in an open dialogue with the European Parliament, Amazon not only demonstrates disrespect for our institution but also obstructs a democratic scrutiny process.

This issue extends beyond disrespect for the European Parliament; it concerns the well-being, fundamental rights and working conditions of hundreds of thousands of Europeans working in Amazon warehouses, be they permanent employees or seasonal workers.

In light of these circumstances, the Coordinators of the EMPL Committee decided to request the withdrawal of access badges to the European Parliament premises for Amazon’s representatives. It is unreasonable for Members to be lobbied by Amazon while at the same time being deprived of the right to represent the interests of European citizens and inquire about claims of breaches of fundamental rights enshrined in EU Treaties and EU labour laws.

Consequently, we earnestly request the implementation of measures to revoke access badges to the European Parliament's premises for registered Amazon’s interest representatives until the company's management is willing to engage in genuine dialogue with the Parliament and address our sincere concerns.

¹ <https://cued.uic.edu/news-stories/new-report-pain-points/>

² <https://www.cnil.fr/fr/surveillance-des-salaries-la-cnil-sanctionne-amazon-france-logistique-dune-amende-de-32-millions>

The EMPL Committee remains steadfast in its commitment to accountability and transparency for the welfare of European workers, and we appreciate your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dragos PÎSLARU

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Agence Europe