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No to techno-authoritarianism

Black Friday reminds us who pays the price for Amazon's booming profits and the political deals driving them

An unholy alliance between Big Tech and the far right is taking shape globally. Earlier this year, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, Tesla's Elon Musk and Meta's Mark Zuckerberg sat in the front row at Trump's inauguration. Amazon had donated 1 million US dollars as a coronation gift to Trump.

This was arguably the most lucrative investment in the company's history: Amazon's most recent filing shows it paid $1.4 billion less in taxes than in the same period last year because of Trump's corporate tax cuts passed earlier this year. Amazon's profits have soared by 15 per cent. On Tuesday, Amazon announced it will invest $50 billion in Artificial Intelligence for the US government, while the latter deregulates labour and environmental laws.

This deregulatory wave extends to Europe — and particularly our continent's landmark digital laws. GDPR, the AI Act and the DSA, are a thorn in the side of the techno-authoritarian alliance.

Until recently, Europe held out well against Amazon's deregulatory pressure. For instance, Amazon contested the €746 million fine, the highest in the history of the GDRP, in Europe's courts — until it lost definitively in March this year. Similarly, the company fought against its status as a 'very large' online platform according to the DSA, which would require it to do more to tackle illegal and harmful content. Again, the company lost in the courts just nine days ago. After a campaign led by UNI Europa, the European Parliament banned Amazon lobbyists when the company repeatedly evaded scrutiny for working conditions in its warehouses.

Defending the social model proudly

In the United States, along with Trump's authoritarianism, Amazon has escalated its anti-democratic tactics, attempting to declare the NLRB, the country's labour board, unconstitutional. This shows that Amazon is hell-bent on fighting against anyone attempting to regulate its power.

Amazon workers know this all too well. That's why they – together with civil society allies, small businesses and activists – are today, on Black Friday, mobilising strikes and protests in more than 30 countries globally to 'Make Amazon Pay'. Amazon workers are on the frontline of Amazon's business model, so they are not surprised that a company that busts unions and attacks the democratic foundations of our societies.

Like in the United States, Amazon could get its way in Europe too. The European Commission, after initially standing its ground, is now considering caving to Big Tech and US pressure. It recently announced a 'digital omnibus' package that would dismantle many progressive provisions in the EU's digital laws. A few days ago, Trump offered to drop tariffs on Europe in exchange for rolling back the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA).

Next to preserving and bolstering its world-leading digital laws, the European Commission should look at procurement to achieve these goals.

But Europe shouldn't submit to the pressure of the techno-authoritarian alliance. Instead, the continent's leaders should proudly defend its social model and take steps towards building a digitally sovereign economy.

This would mean keeping Europe's workers safe from excessive surveillance, unrealistic productivity quotas and unaccountable algorithmic management. And also protecting Europe's citizens from harmful content on its platforms and allowing decent European companies to compete on a level-playing field.

Next to preserving and bolstering its world-leading digital laws, the European Commission should look at procurement to achieve these goals. In the first half of next year, the European Commission will present a proposal for a reform to the bloc's public procurement rules. They govern how 15 per cent of Europe's GDP is spent through public contracts. Amazon Web Services has been a major beneficiary, with over €1.3 billion in public contracts between 2019 and 2021 and almost €30 million for AWS contracts with different EU Directorate-Generals from 2020 to 2022.

83 per cent of EU citizens

Why does the EU, and its member states, not give preference to European companies?

said they want union busters like Amazon to be excluded from public contracts.

Digital sovereignty mustn't only be talked about but built. The current rules disadvantage European competitors that respect workers' rights, actively undermining European principles such as dignity of labour, social dialogue and the right to fair working conditions.

A majority of Europeans agree: in a survey, 83 per cent of EU citizens said they want union busters like Amazon to be excluded from public contracts. The European Commission should listen to them and ensure that its reform obliges companies to engage in collective bargaining with workers and unions if they want taxpayers' money.

Australia serves as a good example here. The country's centre-left government has recently introduced an 'ethical conduct' clause into its federal procurement rules. Since 17 November 2025, government agencies are required to consider a company's record on labour rights, legal compliance and ethical behaviour before awarding contracts, a change that could bar firms accused of worker exploitation or lawbreaking from billions in government tenders. Amazon was one of the companies most cited during the campaign, which was led by UNI-affiliated Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association. If Australia can do it – a country that, like Europe, has historically been US-aligned – why can't we?

No, we won't leave Europe's future to an oligarchic fusion of American Big Tech and the far right. We will Make Amazon Pay to build a digitally sovereign and socially just European Union.

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