

26th of August 2020

Mr Jeff Bezos
Amazon

Dear Jeff Bezos and Amazon,

And so, you eventually made it to Sweden. As a general rule, the Swedish consumer movement welcomes those who move here, but when it comes to Amazon in particular, there are currently too many outstanding issues. Your lack of respect for the right to unionise, doubts about how you contribute to a sustainable future, and the abuse of market power and of anti-competitive behaviour have already been raised by many others, including several public authorities in Europe. As a consumer organisation, we would on our part like to raise a couple of issues that have so far escaped the limelight. Issues directly affecting your customers.

First of all, safety is everything to us consumers. This means that USB-chargers should not catch fire¹, and that toys and other products should be free of dangerous chemicals.² It also means that it should be easy to configure what data you collect about us, and that no one should be able to eavesdrop on our family through your smart speakers. On the contrary however, when we meet with authorities and colleagues from other EU countries, we get the impression that many of your listed products threaten our privacy or are potentially life-threatening. In fact, recent testing shows that more than half of the products listed on Amazon and other platforms may be unsafe.³ This is frankly unacceptable.

Second, consumers like to know from whom they are shopping. This is a prerequisite for claiming our consumer rights. Browsing your European websites with this in mind left us mostly confused. This is a feeling we share with the multitude of consumers who have contacted our advisors in their futile attempts to return faulty products listed on your website. In some cases, the time it takes for you to reply leaves consumers without legal recourse against the actual seller. This grindingly slow process is a far cry from the speed of delivery you boast about elsewhere.

A California court recently concluded that since Amazon has a critical role in payment and delivery, you can be held liable for the safety of the products you list.⁴ We would like for similar

¹ <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2019/09/killer-chargers-travel-adaptors-and-power-banks-rife-on-online-marketplaces/>

² <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2018/12/hamleys-smyths-and-argos-sell-slimes-containing-chemicals-up-to-four-times-higher-than-eu-safety-limit/>

³ <https://www.beuc.eu/publications/two-thirds-250-products-bought-online-marketplaces-fail-safety-tests-consumer-groups/html>

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-com-liability-idUSKCN259327>

jurisprudence to be established here in the EU. Until then, we would like to offer the following advice:

1. Seeing that most of the products listed on your website are sold by other companies, we would advise you to make it easier for consumers to understand who the actual seller is. Granted, new EU legislation on this issue is currently being drafted⁵ but it will not arrive before 2022. We have gathered that Amazon likes to be at the forefront, so why fix tomorrow what you can fix today.
2. Many of your listed products are unsafe, others potentially life-threatening. As it stands, consumers are required to report dangerous products for them to be removed from your website. It is impossible for us to scrutinise everything that you list. Take charge of your supply chain, and demand that sellers adhere to relevant product safety legislation. Time has come for you to step up and ensure that a purchase from Amazon never results in a visit to the Emergency room.

Stop hiding behind your platform. Accept responsibility for what you stock, sell and advertise. And take responsibility for your customers' safety and privacy.

Best regards,

Jan Bertoft
Secretary General of The Swedish Consumers' Association.

⁵ https://www.beuc.eu/publications/beuc-x-2020-031_making_the_digital_services_act_work_for_consumers_-_beucs_recommendations.pdf