

Retailer Auchan says it has not been approached by Amazon in Europe

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PARIS (Reuters) - French retailer Auchan [AUCH.UL] said on Monday it had not been approached by E-commerce giant Amazon (AMZN.O) about deals or partnerships in Europe, with speculation still rife that Amazon may be eyeing European transactions.



Auchan Retail head Wilhelm Hubner also told journalists that cooperation between Auchan and online giant Alibaba (BABA.N) would focus on China for now, after Alibaba announced a deal with Auchan in China.

Amazon's \$13.7 billion takeover of U.S. retail chain Whole Foods Market this year sparked speculation that it might be examining further tie-ups in Europe, possibly involving logistics partnerships with French supermarket operators.

"No. We have not been approached by Amazon on Europe or on any country. I consider that Amazon has a very industrial approach of commerce, not a very humanized one. This is not our vision and so we could not have started discussions," said Hubner, regarding the speculation concerning Amazon.

Hubner was speaking after Alibaba announced a HK\$22.4 billion (\$2.9 billion) investment for a major stake in China's top hypermart operator, Sun Art Retail Group Ltd ([6808.HK](#)), as part of a wider push into offline retail.

As part of an alliance with Sun Art's top shareholders Auchan Retail and Taiwanese conglomerate Ruentex Group, Alibaba would buy the stake from Ruentex while Auchan Retail would boost its own stake.

"This partnership is for China and the priority is to make it a success. The future will tell if there will be other partnerships (with Alibaba) in other countries," said Hubner.

Hubner, however, added Alibaba was keen on sourcing French, Italian and Spanish products through Auchan for its digital platforms and for the Chinese market.

Auchan has been present in China since 1998. The country is its second-largest market, making around 30 percent of Auchan Retail's annual sales of 52 billion euros (\$61 billion).