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## Central Bank of Ireland Issues Warning on Unauthorised Firm – Scam entity clones authorised APEL Financial Distribution Services Limited

12 April 2022 Warning Notice

It has come to the attention of the Central Bank of Ireland ('Central Bank') that a fraudulent entity, operating the website <https://apel-financial.com/> (not currently active), has been claiming to be an investment firm / investment business firm in the State in the absence of appropriate authorisations. In this instance, the fraudulent entity cloned and impersonated a legitimate Central Bank authorised firm in order to deceive consumers.

This unauthorised entity has cloned the details (name or part thereof, Irish address and authorisation number) of a legitimate firm – APEL Financial Distribution Services Limited, which is authorised by the Central Bank. It should be noted that there is **no connection whatsoever between the Central Bank authorised entity and the unauthorised entity that has cloned its details.**

A list of unauthorised firms published to date is available on the Central Bank website.

It is a criminal offence for an unauthorised firm to provide financial services in Ireland that would require an authorisation under the relevant legislation for which the Central Bank is the responsible body for enforcing. Consumers should be aware, that if they deal with a firm that is not authorised, they are not eligible for compensation from the Investor Compensation Scheme.

Fraudsters are increasingly using legitimate firms' details to add an air of legitimacy to their fraud. The fraudsters will 'borrow' some or all of the legitimate information of an authorised / legitimate firm for the purpose of this fraud. They may quote authorisation numbers / company registration numbers and links to seemingly legitimate websites and even provide the real address of an authorised / legitimate firm. Consumers are advised to check our register to verify a firm's details and to call the firm back directly using its advertised phone number. Always access the register from our website, rather than through links in emails or on a firm's / person's website.

There are some further steps that individuals should take before dealing with firms / persons which purport to offer financial services:

- Always double-check the URL and contact details of a firm / person in case it is a 'clone firm / person' pretending to be an authorised firm / person, such as your bank or a genuine investment firm.
- Check the list of unauthorised firms. If the firm / person is not on our list, do not assume it is legitimate – it may not have been reported to the Central Bank yet.
- Check that the product being offered to you is present on the website of the legitimate company.
- For further information, please visit the Avoiding Scams and Unauthorised Activity section of the Central Bank's website.

Any person wishing to contact the Central Bank with information regarding such firms / persons may telephone (01) 224 4000. This line is also available to the public to check if a firm is authorised.

### Notes to editors

The name of the above firm is published under Section 53 of the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013.