



FINANCIAL SERVICES
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SAVINGS OFFERS THAT ARE TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE? BEWARE!

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In recent months, many consumers have reported to the FSMA that they were approached by companies with a variety of offers, promising rates of return far higher than market rates and often claiming the returns are guaranteed. Beware, because often behind these tempting offers are scammers who are not authorized to make such offers, the sole aim of which is to steal your savings.



The principle is always the same: you are contacted by phone by a salesperson, **without any prior initiative on your part** or after leaving your details on an online contact form.

The swindlers then promise you will earn very high, or even guaranteed returns, thanks to savings accounts with various underlying investments (rental of parking spaces or closed garages, purchase of rooms in retirement homes in Portugal or France).

The FSMA was informed that the companies behind the following websites have been approaching Belgians with these types of offers:

- Alpha Connect Capital France – www.accfrance.com
- Dutch Options & Futures institute BV – <https://www.dofin-bv.com>
- Global Multi Trade – www.globalmtcorp.com
- ITM IMMO LOG
- International Financial Advisers – www.robingregory-ifa.com and <https://occxpng.1e-gtwsjdnqj7msc-1-3dbtwdnfgq.com>
- Omicron SCPI – www.omicron-scp.com
- Oranje Vest BV – www.oranje-bv.com
- PMB Invest – www.PMB-invest.com
- Themis Patrimoine

Warning: these companies do not hold an authorization and are thus not permitted to offer investment services in Belgium. Moreover, it is very likely that these are cases of investment fraud, which means that in the end, the amounts invested are never reimbursed.

In order to appear more convincing to consumers, these companies have **usurped the identity** of authorized investment firms; namely Alpha Connect Capital GmbH, Dutch Options and Futures Institute BV, International Financial Advisers SARL, Omicron Investment Management GmbH, Oranjeveste BV and PMB Capital LTD.

HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP?

The FSMA encourages you to follow the recommendations below in order to prevent being defrauded:

- **Take the test** (</en/beware-fraud>) on the website of the FSMA to determine whether the offer you have received is fraudulent.
- **Be wary of promises of completely disproportionate returns.** Where a return seems too good to be true, it usually is!
- **Do not accept uncritically the information provided by such companies.** It is not uncommon for a company to claim to be authorized to offer financial services although this is not the case. Be sure always to verify the information you are given (company identity, home country, etc.). If the company is located outside the European Union, you will also have to be aware of the difficulty of legal recourse in the event of a potential dispute.
- **Check whether the company holds an authorization** by searching the lists published on the FSMA website – **Check your provider** (</en>). **Be wary as well of 'cloned firms'**: companies that pass themselves off as different, lawful companies even though they in fact have no connection with the latter. A close look at the email addresses or contact details for the companies in question may prove useful in order to detect potential fraud of this sort.
- **Consult the warnings** published on the FSMA website as well as on the website of foreign supervisory authorities and of **IOSCO** (https://www.iosco.org/investor_protection/?subsection=investor_alerts_portal). Check if the company offering you a financial service has been named in a warning. Search not only for the name of the company(ies) in question but also for the companies to which you are being asked to transfer money.

On the FSMA website, this search can be conducted via the **search function** (</en>) provided. In addition, all the 'companies' about which the FSMA has already published a warning are included on the '**List of companies operating unlawfully in Belgium**' (<https://www.fsma.be/en/warnings/companies-operating-unlawfully-in-belgium>) published on the FSMA website.

Please note: the fact that the FSMA has not published a warning against a given company does not mean that that company is authorized to offer financial services. While the FSMA seeks to ensure that it publishes warnings in a timely manner, it is entirely possible that a company operating unlawfully on the Belgian market may not yet have come to its attention. Moreover, unauthorized companies regularly change their name.

- **Be wary of unsolicited phone calls/emails (cold calling)**, that is, where no prior request has been made by the investor. Such calls are often indications of an attempt at fraud.
- **Be wary of requests to pay money into bank accounts in countries that have nothing to do with the company** that is approaching you, or your own place of residence.
- **Never invest in a product if you do not fully understand what is being offered.**
- **Be all the more suspicious** if the payout of returns is conditional on an **additional payment** and/or the payment of a tax. These additional demands are often the sign of fraud.

If you have the least doubt about whether financial services being offered to you are lawful, please don't hesitate to contact the FSMA directly using the **consumer contact form** (</en/consumer-contact-form>). As well, feel free to notify it should you come across a suspicious company that has not yet been the subject of a warning by the FSMA.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE VICTIM OF FRAUD?

If you think you are the victim of fraud, make sure you **do not pay any additional sums** to your contact. **Note:** this is also and especially true if you are promised a refund in exchange for a final payment, as this is a technique frequently used by fraudsters in order to try to obtain one last payment.

Also, contact the **local police** (<https://www.police.be/en>) immediately to make a complaint and **alert the FSMA** to the scam via the **consumer contact form** (</en/consumer-contact-form>).

The FSMA stresses the importance of filing a complaint **quickly** and with **ample documentation** (the company in question, bank accounts to which you transferred money, etc.).