

Watch out for investment fraud through dating apps

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The Financial Services and Markets Authority (FSMA) warns the public against investment fraud starting on dating apps and websites.

In recent months, the FSMA has received an increasing number of notifications regarding fraudulent online trading platforms using dating apps and websites (Tinder, Facebook Dating, etc.) to contact Belgian consumers.

Fraudsters contact consumers through **fake profiles** picturing wealthy people looking for a partner. Soon thereafter, the fraudsters behind these profiles ask to get in touch on another app, such as WhatsApp. The discussion quickly turns to the subject of money. The fraudsters flaunt their supposed wealth and share their secret to getting rich quickly and without risk: **online trading platforms**. They encourage their victims to use one particular

platform. However, these platforms **do not have an authorization** to offer investment products in Belgium.

Most consumers are suspicious at first. The fraudsters therefore engage in conversation during several weeks in order to gain their trust and to develop a fictitious relationship. The fraudsters do not hesitate to take advantage of the feelings that the victim is feeling towards the fake profile.

To try to prove that their system is risk-free, the scammers often put the victims in touch with a so-called financial expert, who advises them on their investment strategy.

Most victims start by investing small amounts. These small investments are always profitable. Moreover, if a victim who begins to suspect something attempts to withdraw a small amount of money in order to verify whether the platform is trustworthy, the withdrawal is carried out without impediment.

Through **snowball effect**, the victims are gradually urged to pay more and more money, only to lose their savings, and sometimes even go into debt. Consumers who invest in these firms never recover their investment. Therefore, such activities constitute a case of **investment fraud**.

A consumer tells us:

'I met C. on a dating website. After a few days chatting, C. mentioned an app that she was using for trading. Following the advice of her financial expert uncle, she said she had managed to build herself a small fortune. C. offered to send me her uncle's tips. At first, I was not interested, and a bit suspicious. However, she kept on praising the platform. Their website looked very professional and I even found reviews by other users, unanimously positive. I first tried it in demo mode (making fictitious investments), and as everything turned out to be highly lucrative, I started by investing EUR 1 200. My profits increased and I put more and more money in. Since then, it has turned out to be impossible to withdraw my money, even after paying all their alleged fees and taxes. In total, I have lost more than EUR 45 000.'

The FSMA therefore **strongly advises against responding to any offers of financial services** made by the following:

- **Forex 7xt+0** (<https://web.ftasjh.com/>)
- **Garafi** (<https://garafi.com/>)
- **Insun Forex** (<http://tradeinsun.com/>)

- **MWNG Company Limited** (https://mwngglobal.com/mwng_en/index.htm)
- **XT.com** (<https://www.xt.com/>)

In order to avoid fraud, the FSMA addresses the following recommendations to investors: **Always check the identity** (company name, home country, registered office, etc.) **of the company**. If the company cannot be clearly identified, it should not be trusted.

Always verify if the company in question has the requisite authorization. To this end, an easy [search](#) on the financial supervisory authority's website will do. **Important!** Always beware of '**cloned firms**': companies that pass themselves off as different, lawful companies even though they have no connection with them. A close look at the email addresses or contact details for the companies in question may prove useful in order to detect this type of fraud and prevent it.

More than ever, prudence is necessary. In case of any doubt, and before making any (more) payments, do not hesitate to contact the FSMA using the [consumer contact form](#). As well, please feel free to notify it of any contact with a suspicious company that has not yet been the subject of a warning by the FSMA.

Should fraudsters moreover manage to take control of your computer, the FSMA recommends that you contact your bank and, if necessary, that you change your passwords.

For more recommendations aimed at avoiding investment fraud, please consult the '[How to recognize and avoid fraud](#)' page on the FSMA website.