



In the past few weeks, the FSMA has received new complaints from consumers who have been approached by companies offering wealth management and/or savings plans, most often with a guaranteed return. The FSMA warns consumers against these tempting offers, because often behind them are fraudsters who are not authorized to make such offers, the sole aim of which is to steal your savings.

The principle always remains the same: victims are contacted by telephone without having asked for it or after having entered their contact details on an online form. They are offered wealth management services, with the promise of returns in excess of the market returns and most often with a capital guarantee. But in the end the result remains the same: the victims find themselves unable to recover their money (or at least all of it)!

Over the past few weeks, the FSMA has been informed of fraudulent activities via the following websites:

- www.choices-invest.com (trade name: Choices-Invest or Choices Invest)
- www.index-capital.be (trade name: Index Capital or Index-Capital)

The FSMA warns that the persons behind those websites 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.

How to avoid the trap?

In order to avoid such fraud, the FSMA urges you to exercise utmost prudence and advises you to remain vigilant of any indication of investment fraud. The FSMA makes several recommendations:

- **Be wary of (promises of) completely disproportionate returns.** If a return seems too good to be true, it usually is!
- **Always verify the identity of the company** who is contacting you (company identity, home country, etc.). If a company cannot be clearly identified, it should not be trusted.
- **Be wary as well of companies that claim to hold authorizations** from supervisory authorities and refer you to such authorizations. This is a very frequently used technique. However, these are often cases of **identity theft**. You will find more information about this in the FSMA's [warning](#) of 28 January 2019. If you have any doubt whatsoever, please do not hesitate to confirm the information you have been given with the FSMA.
- **Find out as well when the company website was set up:** if the company's website is relatively new, this could be an additional sign of investment fraud.
- **Be wary of requests to pay money into bank accounts in countries that have nothing to do** with the supposed registered office of the company that approaches you, or your own place of residence.

What to do if you have been the victim of fraud?

If you think you are the victim of fraud, make sure you do not pay any additional sums to your contact. Be especially wary if you are promised a refund in exchange for a final payment, as this is a technique frequently used by fraudsters in order to obtain additional funds.

Also, immediately **contact** the [local police](#) to make a complaint and **alert the FSMA** to the scam via the [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.).

More than ever, then, prudence is necessary.

If you have any doubt whatsoever about whether financial services being offered to you are lawful, please do not hesitate **to contact the FSMA directly** via the [consumer contact form](#). Equally, feel free to notify the FSMA of any suspicious company that has not yet been the subject of a warning on its part.

For more information on this subject, the FSMA invites potential investors to consult its [warning](#) of 1 March 2019.

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