

Financial Fraud Warning

The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has received many questions about the legitimacy of certain solicitations received by post or email. These letters or emails hold out the promise of large sums of money in exchange for payment of advance fees, transaction costs, customs duties, etc. In some cases, the recipient is informed that he has won a lottery. The letters and emails also state that the financial or other transactions have been initiated by companies registered in the Netherlands or other European countries.

The Embassy wishes to make it absolutely clear that, in all probability, such requests are fraudulent and are related to a well-known financial swindle which first appeared in West Africa in the 1980s. The swindle is now so widespread that national and international law enforcement authorities refer to it as “Nigerian bank fraud”, “Nigerian advance fee fraud” and “419 fraud”. Suggestions that a lottery has been won fall into a separate category although the method of operation is comparable and the fraud is perpetrated by the same swindlers.

Several features the schemes share are listed below:

- a. a sum of money (or a product), of lawful or unlawful origin, from a lottery, an investment plan, oil, a bequest, real estate, a bankruptcy, etc., will be made available upon receipt of an advance payment of fees associated with the release of the money (or product);
- b. to initiate the transaction, the recipient must contact an official of the company registered in the Netherlands (or in another European country);
- c. the official must be contacted at a mobile telephone number; in the Netherlands the number always begins with 0031 (06)...;
- d. attempts to verify the company name and address in a business directory or with the local Chamber of Commerce all fail;
- e. an invitation to travel to the Netherlands is generally extended in order to complete the transaction and pay the advance fee.

If you are still uncertain about the solicitation after having read this information, you may contact the Embassy by telephone at +355 4 240 828.

You can find a great deal of information about the nature and extent of these fraudulent practices at www.419fraud.com.

If you have been the victim of these fraudulent practices, you may inform the Dutch authorities by using the fraud form.

The police receive so many reports of this nature that in many cases they do not send confirmation of receipt. Because of the methods used by these swindlers (Internet, mobile telephone numbers, fake addresses and names, bank accounts which only exist for a matter of days), in most cases it is extremely difficult to track down the perpetrators or recover the victims' money.