25th June 2026

AIB warns of sharp rise in fake investment ads targeting consumers online

- Criminals using false endorsements from personalities, politicians and companies for fake investments on web and social media platforms
- Scammers begin by requesting smaller amounts, then look for more from investors as they promise quick and high returns
- Investors may only realise they've been scammed in 12 months or when investment is due to mature

As part of its quarterly Fraud Trend update, AIB is warning customers to exercise extreme caution as new data highlights a significant increase in fraudulent investment advertisements and scam-related websites circulating online.

There was a dramatic escalation in site takedowns, where the bank intervenes to request a fraudulent domain be removed, between January and May 2026, with 1,500 times the instances of takedowns compared with all of 2025.

This highlights the rapid growth of this threat in 2026, as criminals increasingly exploit online and social media platforms to target consumers, with thousands of fake domains taken down following intervention by AIB. These advertisements often impersonate legitimate companies, media outlets, or individuals and politicians to build trust and encourage people to invest in opportunities that don't exist. And customers may only realise the purported investment is a scam 12 months or longer down the line, when their supposed investment was due to mature.

Fake Ads Driving Investment Scam Activity

Fraudsters are increasingly leveraging:

- Sponsored and targeted advertisements on social media platforms
- Fake news articles and cloned websites
- AI-generated content and false endorsements

This content creates convincing investment opportunities that can appear genuine. That's why people should always *Wait a Sec and Double Check*. In many cases, these scams are highly sophisticated and are designed to build trust over time, encouraging victims to make repeated payments.

Customer Case Study: From Online Advert to Financial Loss for 'Patricia'

A recent case seen by AIB highlights how these scams typically originate and escalate.

**The name and identifying details have been changed to protect the customer's identity.*

- Patricia fell victim to a sophisticated investment scam after encountering an advertisement online. The advertisement was just one example of thousands of scams which appear on social media with the suggestion of a legitimate investment opportunity. She thought she was making a relatively modest investment for a guaranteed and sizeable return.
- After clicking the link, Patricia was directed to a website where she registered her interest in the investment opportunity by submitting her contact details.
- The following morning, Patricia received a phone call from an individual identifying himself as “Daniel”. He presented himself as a representative of the investment platform and provided instructions on how to begin investing. Patricia was encouraged to make an initial payment of €110 to an account and to send proof of the transaction, which she did.
- She was informed that a second representative, “Michael”, would call her later that day to progress the investment further. Patricia subsequently received ongoing contact from individuals associated with the scam. During these interactions, she was asked to provide additional personal documentation, including a photograph of her driver’s licence and a utility bill, which she shared.
- The fraudsters continued contact using multiple international phone numbers, creating a sense of legitimacy and continuity in their approach.
- Over time, concerns were raised about the legitimacy of the investment, and it became clear that the opportunity was fraudulent. Patricia reported the matter to AIB. She was fortunate that the scam had not progressed further and she contacted the bank when she did. This saved her losing thousands of euro.
- While Patricia’s initial loss was relatively small, fraudsters commonly use low value “starter” investments to build trust before manipulating victims into making significantly larger payments, with overall losses in such scams often escalating to substantial amounts, in some instances into tens of thousands of euro.

AIB Customer Warning

AIB is urging customers to remain vigilant when engaging with any investment opportunity, particularly those encountered online or via social media.

Customers should be cautious where:

- The opportunity is discovered through an online or social media advert
- Returns appear unusually high or “guaranteed”
- They are contacted unexpectedly after submitting their details
- They are pressured to act quickly or send additional funds

Head of Fraud Intelligence at AIB, Harold Perez said ”We are seeing a huge increase in fake online advertisements promoting investment scams. Criminals are using sophisticated tactics, including social media advertising and cloned websites on legitimate search engines, to create increasingly convincing but entirely fraudulent opportunities. The scale of growth this year is particularly stark and demonstrates how quickly criminals are adapting their tactics, as we’ve intervened to have thousands of websites taken down.

We would strongly encourage customers to take time to verify any investment opportunity and seek independent advice before transferring funds - if an investment opportunity seems too good to be true, it likely is. Customers often only realise they have been targeted by a scam when they attempt to withdraw funds and encounter delays, excuses, or are unable to access their supposed investment at all. Always Wait a Sec and Double Check.

Banks alone cannot be the solution to this increasingly prevalent problem. We work closely with industry stakeholders including social media companies, telecommunications providers, the Banking and Payments Federation of Ireland (BPFI), and the Gardaí to detect and report fraud trends, as it's only by communicating and coordinating across the whole of society and industry that together we can be effective in combating these criminals."

For more information on how to protect yourself from fraud, visit our security centre on aib.ie. Here you will also find our contact information including our 24/7 fraud support line on 1800 24 22 27.

Media: paddy.x.mcdonnell@aib.ie 087 739 0743