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Will your bank pay for online fraud?

Small ad platforms are often abused by Internet criminals for their illicit practices. Users should take personal responsibility instead of relying on their bank to pay for any potential losses.

Someone bought an electronic item from Facebook Marketplace, paying in advance. The goods never arrived – the payee turned out to be the middleman of a gang of scammers. His bank did not accept any liability on its part and refused the victim's claim for compensation.

This case shows that small ad platform and online shop users should not rely on the financial institutions involved to check transactions, even though they do apply a variety of screening processes to identify and prevent fraudulent remittances. But even though they are continuously improving these processes, there is no guarantee that they will be able to expose fraudulent activities.

Protect yourself by taking the following measures:

- Remain generally sceptical when using small ad platforms. Check the seller's information as much as possible. Don't rely on the financial institution paying or the one receiving your remittance to be able to identify or prevent fraudulent behaviour.
- Only pay in advance if you are able to verify the payee or if the small ad platform used provides adequate buyer protection (against fraud). Since the latter is hardly ever the case, you shouldn't pay for any goods in advance if in doubt. Instead, try for instance to pick them up in person, so you can inspect and check the item before paying.

Further tips on how to prevent online fraud can be found on the Schweizerische Kriminalprävention SKP website: www.skppsc.ch/online-betrug (<http://www.skppsc.ch/online-betrug>).