

## Protection against housing fraud

Every week, fraudsters place hundreds of apartment ads on online real estate portals. They offer particularly cheap apartments or rooms, but insist on a deposit or initial rent payments in advance. The payments are supposed to be transferred abroad. They never have any personal contact with interested parties - everything is done by email. Fake companies on the Internet are also used to feign seriousness. Portals such as Immobilienscout24 or Immowelt try to delete as many of these advertisements as possible. Once the victim has paid, it quickly becomes clear that the apartment on offer does not exist. The housing shortage of students or trainees in particular is often exploited in this way.

## How do I recognize fraudulent offers?

- The rent is well below the usual average rent.
- The landlord does not want to come to show the apartment himself.
- The landlord states that he is currently abroad.
- E-mail communication is usually in English.
- Payment is processed via cash transfer. This means that the money is not sent to an account, but to a person. The transfer data and a (fake) ID are sufficient to collect the money and data.

## Recommendations in case of fraud:

- Don't delete the email!
- Make a report to the police and bring transfer receipts with you.

## Tips:

- Beware of unrealistically low rental prices.
- Never make an advance payment, either in cash or by bank transfer.
- View the apartment before signing a rental agreement or making any payments.
- Reputable landlords do not rent out apartments without first viewing them.
- Seek personal contact with the landlord. He should at least speak to you on the phone.
- Always conclude a written tenancy agreement. Take a trusted person with you for support. If in doubt, research similar situations, names, telephone numbers or key terms on the Internet.
- Report dubious offers to the portal operator.
- Do not send copies of identity documents to strangers and do not pass on any personal data, especially bank details. Your data could be misused for other crimes.