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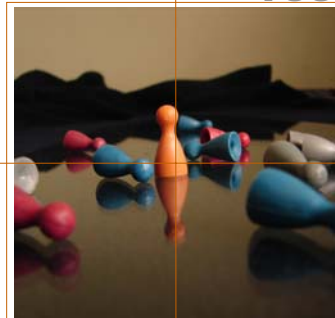
## **EMARKETS MAY BE USED FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Swedish Trade Council  
eMarket Services

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September 2006

e Business  
Issue



The fantastic evolution of internet and the new means for international trade brings companies closer together and creates new and vast business opportunities. At the same time it may give ground for new illegal cross border activities that the organized crime syndicates may take advantage of. Trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes of this time. This report is written by the Swedish Trade Council and reflect the experience from a considerable number of Swedish SME:s.

Following Sweden's entry into the Schengen scheme, small and medium-sized businesses in Sweden have become a target for international bogus companies on the hunt for much sought-after visas to the Schengen countries.

Foreign entities calling themselves companies search the internet and eMarket directories to retrieve names of SME:s that could be contacted for pretended offers for future trade. These bogus companies could be on the other side of the world and yet be felt like they are very much present and real due to internet efficiency. The beauty of the internet, cutting the distances has at the same time opened a new lucrative way to illegally cross borders for the purpose of getting into the black labour-market in developed countries.

With these false promises of business, the bogus company is given assistance in obtaining a visa for, in this case Schengen, but no business comes out of it – instead the Swedish company becomes an involuntary accomplice to the growing trade in human trafficking, in which visas are worth their weight in gold.

## How it works

The typical course of events is that a SME is contacted by a company – often in the Middle East, Africa or Asia – expressing an interest in the SME's products or services. In many cases the prospective buyer exhibits relatively good knowledge of the Swedish company's business and sector.

The prospect of a major international order means that the seller devotes a good deal of time to writing quotations and planning for a lucrative business opportunity. As the negotiations near their conclusion, the buyer explains that they now intend to send a delegation from the company to visit the Swedish supplier, to visit their facilities and sign the contract.

It is usually a relatively large group, consisting of the MD, technical managers, assistants and secretaries. The Swedish company is asked to send an invitation, a document that makes it possible to get visas for the group at a Schengen embassy in the country in question.

## Large number of unrecorded cases

But the delegation of eager buyers never materialises. Instead the sought-after visa is used to gain access to within the Schengen walls. Once inside the holder has "free access" to the fifteen European countries participating in the scheme.

The Trade Council have only just scratched the surface, and we have already found a large number of cases, which we are currently trying to put into order and gain an understanding of. But there is most likely an enormous number of unrecorded cases.

Many small companies dream of making that big breakthrough with an international customer, and they hope that a major deal can be done. And this is the way the bogus companies work, presenting an “almost too good opportunity” to be true, which an SME can not ignore. Although these activities have so far been taking place behind the scenes, the Swedish Trade Council has been contacted by a large number of companies that have invited potential customers who never showed up.

## Hard work

In some cases it is easy to tell that the entities are not serious, but in other cases the people behind the bogus companies have really gone to town and had registered enterprises with their own website. The borderless information society has made it far easier to give the appearance of representing a serious organization with good knowledge of the seller and his sector.

The picture is confirmed by Swedish Migration Board: “This is a growing problem, and an example of how people in certain countries are using all possible ways of gaining entry to Sweden and Schengen on false premises.”

Even high-profile sports events such as the Vasaloppet cross-country skiing race, or Lidingöloppet race are used in the quest to gain access to the closed Schengen region:

“We’ve also seen how people who can neither run nor ski register for sporting events and then either disappear into the black labour market in Europe or claim asylum here in Sweden.” Cultural visits by singers and entertainers are common reasons to obtain visas. Getting to grips with the problem appears difficult.

## Important to check out the company to avoid social tragedies

The Trade Council usually advise people who contact us to take great care to check whether the firm appears to be serious. We invite them to send copies of the correspondence to us for assessment and analysis. And if the company is then still unsure, they can also contact the Swedish embassy in the country in question.

At the same time, widespread corruption is making it easy to obtain ‘genuine’ documents. It would not be difficult to obtain a Nigerian passport, as long as one pay for it. Alongside the inconvenience caused to Swedish companies, there is a far darker and more tragic side to this problem.

At present, it is virtually impossible for people from countries outside the West to gain entry to the Schengen region. At the same time there is an enormous demand for cheap labour. Desperate people are forced into the hands of the those involved in human trafficking and risk their lives during attempts to get over the Schengen walls that are often potentially life-threatening.

According to many reports, trafficking is one of the fastest-growing areas of crime organised across national borders. A visa to a Schengen country can be worth many thousand EURO.

## How to know when to be careful -- some good hints

- When the buyer puts an order of either unusually large order or strangely even numbers of different items.
- When the buyer claims to be in a hurry and is pushing the transaction.
- When the buyer does not have a domain address that corresponds to his company name.
- When the buyer is more interested to visit you, than to know more about the products.

## About Schengen:

The Schengen agreement was set up in 1985 by France, Germany and the Benelux countries. Sweden has been a full member since March 25th 2001. The scheme currently involves Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece.

## More information:

News Week,

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9711920/site/newsweek>

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice:

<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>