

**Question for written answer E-002292/2018  
to the Commission**

Rule 130

**Kati Piri (S&D) and Paul Tang (S&D)**

Subject: Hungary and issue of 'golden visas'

It has been reported<sup>1</sup> that the Hungarian government has granted citizenship to two Syrians who are directly linked to Bashar al-Assad and his regime. They were able to gain citizenship through the purchase of residency bonds, despite the fact that this raises serious security concerns, not just for Hungary but for the EU as a whole. One of them, Atiya Khoury, has been placed on a sanction list by the US for assisting Assad with large-scale financial transactions, while the other individual, Salmo Bazkka, is accused by the Italian authorities of being a member of an international money laundering, arms trafficking and human trafficking ring.

With an apparent approval rate of 99.7 % of 20 000 applicants for such 'golden visas' in Hungary<sup>2</sup>, is the Commission confident that all the individuals concerned have been properly checked for security purposes?

What actions will the Commission take in order to ensure the safety of the EU's citizens and oblige Member States to prevent criminals obtaining (European) citizenship?

If a Member State does not undertake proper security checks on individuals when granting citizenship, would that not be in breach of the duty of sincere cooperation under Article 4(3) TEU?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-election-residency-syria/hungary-gave-visa-to-syrian-man-under-u-s-sanctions-for-assisting-assad-websites-idUSKBN1H42SL>

<sup>2</sup> <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2018/03/28/fidesz-regime-gave-residency-permits-to-bashar-al-assads-financial-backers>