



## **The Media Working Group in the European Parliament: Scandals around „Golden Visas” show the importance of investigative journalism**

Today the European Parliament debated the serious security threats caused by the sale of EU passports and visas to citizens of third countries. In the past few years, a number of member states offered so-called “golden visas” where wealthy citizens could buy long-term visas, residence permits or even citizenship of EU Member States by taking part in certain investment schemes. These dubious schemes in various forms operated in such States as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Malta and Portugal, to name a few.

After years of delay, the European Commission is now ready to step up and take action against these schemes in the case of Cyprus and Malta. Offering citizenship for cash is undermining the very basis of our democracy, and such practices in one Member States are affecting all 27 EU Members.

The truly international efforts to stop citizenship-for-cash regimes became possible because of the efforts of a large number of dedicated and courageous investigative journalists from a number of countries. We are truly grateful for their work. They revealed how people who were allowed to stay within the EU were causing a security threat. Many of the beneficiaries of these schemes have built up their wealth through money laundering and corruption or they are key members of oppressive dictatorships. It has been revealed how corrupt systems were built up to smoothen the applications of those who were “ready to pay extra”, including neglecting the necessary security checks.

The cross-party members of the Media Working Group are calling the attention of the European Commission to make sure it follows up on all the journalists’ revelations on this matter. Murdered Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was among those who had worked on revealing the corruption behind the structure of golden visas. It is our duty to respect her memory and support the journalists who were able to reveal the facts about this threat to our democracy. Democracy needs protection and democracy needs independent investigative journalism.

On behalf of Media Working Group

David Casa, Co-chair of the Working Group  
Ramona Strugariu, Co-chair of the Working group  
Magdalena Adamowicz  
Irena Joveva,  
Alive Kuhnke  
Dace Melbārde,  
Viola von Cramon-Taubadel