# European debate grows over revoking citizenship for dual nationals convicted of serious crimes



Swedish government plans to strip citizenship from dual nationals convicted of serious crimes have sparked a broader debate across Europe about linking citizenship to criminal behaviour. The proposals, announced recently by Sweden’s rightwing government with support from far-right parties, would allow revocation of Swedish passports for individuals convicted of offences such as espionage or treason.

Similar conversations have emerged in other European countries. In Iceland, politicians have called for comparable measures against those convicted of serious offences. The Dutch government has explored revoking citizenship for offenders of crimes with an antisemitic aspect. In Germany, Friedrich Merz, leader of the centre-right CDU/CSU bloc, suggested during the February election campaign that citizenship could be revoked for dual nationals who commit criminal acts.

Christian Joppke, a sociology professor at the University of Bern, links the growing association between citizenship and crime to a shift that began in the early 2000s under the UK government led by Tony Blair. At that time, citizenship was reframed as a privilege to be earned and could be lost through wrongdoing. “The new proposals now suggest that if you do any kind of serious crime, that should also allow for the possibility to withdraw citizenship – that is quite new,” Joppke told The Guardian.

This shift is occurring alongside the rise of far-right and nationalist parties across Europe. Joppke said: “What can states promise? The golden age of democracy once promised two cars per family, a house, a stable job. Now all this is gone… governments had homed in on the most basic type of security: physical security. This is the toolbox which is intimately connected to the agenda of the radical right.”

However, the proposals have met with criticism for creating a two-tier citizenship system, where dual nationals could be seen as perpetually “on probation.” German journalist and political commentator Gilda Sahebi expressed concerns about Merz’s proposal: “They can never truly be German... One mistake, one crime – and their Germanness is gone.” She further described the idea as normalising “racist discrimination” and linked it to the far-right concept of mass deportations, including for those with citizenship.

International law prohibits rendering individuals stateless, so these citizenship revocations generally apply only to dual nationals. Tanya Mehra, senior research fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism in The Hague, highlighted the legal and human rights issues this raises. “You have to really look more carefully at whether or not you’re violating their human rights,” she told The Guardian. Mehra pointed out cases where individuals stripped of one citizenship were left stranded in that country when the other country of nationality refused to receive them, effectively rendering them illegal residents.

The effects of such policies have been examined in Denmark, where laws have allowed citizenship removal for terror, treason, threats to the state, and, since 2021, gang-related crimes. Somdeep Sen, associate professor at Denmark’s Roskilde University, stated: “There isn’t much out there… that shows individuals keen to commit crime have been deterred by these changes.” Instead, the law provides “legal framing” for xenophobic public discourse falsely linking immigration to crime. Sen said these laws perpetuate the misperception that ancestry and ethnicity influence criminality, despite broad research showing no significant link between immigration levels and crime rates across Europe.

In Denmark, years of anti-immigration discourse combined with citizenship revocation laws have fostered feelings of exclusion among immigrants and dual nationals. Sen remarked, “such laws remind many of how tenuous their inclusion in Danish society is and how easily these ties to Denmark can be severed.”

These developments demonstrate a notable trend across several European countries to expand the conditions under which citizenship can be revoked, especially for dual nationals convicted of serious crimes. The implications for social cohesion, human rights, and the experience of dual nationals remain points of active debate within political and academic circles.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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* <https://schengen.news/sweden-plans-to-scrap-citizenship-for-individuals-viewed-as-threat-to-national-security/> - This article corroborates the proposal to revoke citizenship from dual nationals in Sweden who pose a threat to national security. It mentions specific offenses like using bribes or false information to obtain citizenship.
* <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/01/16/sweden-seeks-to-remove-citizenship-from-criminals-who-threaten-national-security> - This source confirms that Sweden intends to revoke citizenship from those convicted of crimes like espionage or treason, aligning with the broader European debate on linking citizenship to criminal behavior.
* <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/why-sweden-is-cracking-down-on-citizenship/> - The article explains Sweden's push for a constitutional amendment to enable citizenship revocation. It ties this move to broader societal shifts in Europe regarding citizenship and crime.
* <https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/sweden-moves-to-strip-citizenship-for-national-security-threats> - This article reinforces the consensus among Swedish parties to remove citizenship from dual nationals threatening national security. It also notes the challenges in addressing gang leaders operating abroad.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although not a direct source, Noah Wire Services is listed as the base source in the original article, offering a broad context on the European trend of linking citizenship to criminal behavior.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/26/how-idea-of-stripping-citizenship-for-crimes-spread-across-europe> - Please view link - unable to able to access data