



Elite Quality Report 2026

The Sustainable Value Creation of Nations

Edited by Tomas Casas i Klett and Guido Cozzi

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Singapore maintains the top position in the EQx2026 for the seventh consecutive year. The United States surged back last year and retains the second place, powered primarily by its commanding lead in artificial intelligence. Japan rises to third, while China delivers one of the most remarkable performances, climbing eight places to #11 which is the highest ranking ever for a non-advanced economy. Overall, Asian economies continue to strengthen their position in global elite quality.

The results also highlight important trends: several traditional high performers (Switzerland, UK, Australia, Israel, Norway) are experiencing mostly minor but steady declines, underscoring that elite quality is not permanent: it requires continuous creative destruction, sustained value creation through productive risk-taking, and the constant constraining of value-transfer activities. In parallel, many emerging markets (Brazil, Turkey, Egypt, South Africa) show significant recovery. Europe continues to lead in the Next Generation Value Creation Barometer (NGVCb), yet its overall elite quality is declining, raising concerns about long-term intergenerational sustainability.

The EQx2026 underscores that high-quality elite systems are those that effectively convert coordination capacity into broad-based value creation and minimize value transfers.

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Tomas Casas-Klett is permanent faculty at the University of St.Gallen. He specializes in International Business, particularly on innovation, and the practical aspects of doing business in East Asia. He is the co-editor of both the annual Elite Quality Index (EQx) report on 'the sustainable value creation of nations' and the annual Value Creation Ratings (VCr) report on 'the sustainable value creation of firms', as well as the author of the treatise, Towards an Elite Theory of Economic Development.

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