
French Nationality Remains Best in the World, while Brexit Britain Risks a Dramatic Decline

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French citizens can take satisfaction that their nationality has once again been ranked as the best in the world, while for citizens of the UK, the ramifications of a ‘hard’ Brexit could well sink the quality of their nationality from 8th globally, to 56th (the current position of China). This is according to the latest findings of the [Kälin and Kochenov’s Quality of Nationality Index](#) (QNI), which is the only ranking that objectively measures and ranks all the world’s nationalities as legal statuses.

Holding the top spot for eight consecutive years, France earned a score of 83.5% out of a possible 100% — less than one percentage point ahead of Germany and the Netherlands, which sit in joint-2nd place with 82.8%. While the difference between the quality of French and Dutch and German nationalities is relatively narrow, France’s comparative advantage lies in its greater settlement freedom (attributable mainly to the country’s former colonial empire).

In the top 10 on this year’s index, Denmark finds itself in 3rd place with a score of 81.7%, while Norway and Sweden hold joint-4th spot with 81.5%. Positions 5-10 are held by Iceland (81.4%), Finland (81.2%), Italy (80.7%), the UK (80.3%), Ireland (80.2%), and Spain (80.0%), in that order.

The US occupies 25th place on the QNI with a score of 70.0% — the country’s relatively poor standing is primarily due to its low settlement freedom compared to EU member states. China ranks 56th — a four-place improvement on last year, and the Russian Federation climbs up 2 positions to 62nd place. The UAE has attained its highest rank ever, securing 42nd place.

The bottom three nationalities on this year’s QNI are South Sudan (157th), Afghanistan (158th), and Somalia (159th), with respective scores of 15.9%, 15.4%, and 13.8%.

Brexit likely to sink quality of UK nationality

EU countries generally perform extremely well on the QNI, largely due to the liberal degree of settlement freedom permitted between member states, as well as the stand-out quality of many of the nationalities in and of themselves. However, the UK could become the exception to this rule, with its current 8th position potentially in jeopardy if it crashes out of the EU without a deal in place.

[Prof. Dr. Dimitry Kochenov](#), a law professor and author of *Citizenship* (MIT Press, 2019) and [Dr. Christian H Käelin](#), Chairman of [Henley & Partners](#) and author of *Ius Doni* (Brill, 2019) are the co-creators of the Index. Prof. Kochenov explains: “The UK may be about to establish a world record in terms of profoundly undermining the quality of its nationality without going through any violent conflict.

Depending on the still-to-be determined outcome of Brexit, the UK could see itself falling from the elite group of ‘very high quality’ nationalities into the ‘high quality’ bracket. A truly ‘hard’ Brexit would result in the UK having a nationality that does not grant Brits settlement or work rights in any of the EU jurisdictions or Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland: a collection of the most highly developed places on earth, greatly diminishing the quality of its own nationality in an irrevocable manner: either you have such rights, or not – and in such a scenario UK citizens won’t have them.”

Although unlikely, in the worst-case scenario and depending on the economic downturn caused by Brexit, the UK could possibly fall even further and into the ‘medium quality’ tier alongside China and Russia.

Climbers and fallers on the QNI

Taking a retrospective look at the last five years, Timor-Leste (92nd) has been the highest climber on the QNI since 2014, rising 26 places and improving its value by 8.4% with a score of 33.1%. While Timor-Leste saw minor improvements in its Human Development and Peace and Stability scores, the country’s Travel Freedom score almost doubled between 2014 and 2018. Colombia (59th) has also made a significant gain of 19 places and 11.6% in value since 2014, with a current score of 43.3%. This is attributable to the increased economic integration of South American economies and its improved Travel Freedom score, which has doubled since 2014 following the visa-waiver agreement between Colombia and Europe’s Schengen Area countries in 2015.

Other notable risers over the last five years are the UAE (42nd with a score of 50.3%), which has ascended 14 places in the rankings, Moldova (73rd with a score of 38.6%), which has gained 9 places, and Croatia (24th with a score of 73.8%), which has improved its value by 19.6% and risen 5 places in the rankings — these countries having benefited from improved Travel Freedom scores. By contrast, the quality of the Qatari nationality has plummeted as a result of regional diplomatic conflicts, dropping by 25 places since 2014 to its current 78th position with a score of 37.1%. Libya, too, has dropped by 25 places in the last five years, now in 145th position and scoring just 21.7%. The Libyan nationality has seen a significant deterioration in its Peace and Stability score, and its Travel Freedom score has also decreased since 2014.

The inherent inequality of nationality

Dr. Kaelin says the index is highly relevant to both individuals and governments. “It’s clear that our nationalities have a direct impact on our opportunities and on our freedom to travel, do business, and live longer, healthier, and more rewarding lives. The reality that the QNI describes is, in many respects, unfair and regrettable: in the majority of circumstances, our nationality plays an important role in establishing a highly irrational ceiling for our aspirations.” Prof. Kochenov adds: “The QNI is a clear illustration of the simple fact that speaking of the different nationalities of the world as equal, or even comparable, is misleading. We see that some nationalities offer bundles of rights, while others, quite clearly, are painful liabilities, dragging down the holders.”

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Notes to Editors

Infographics, graphs, and expert commentary

QNI infographics, radar graphs, and expert commentary essays are available for download on the [Henley & Partners website](#) and on the [QNI website](#).

About the creators of the QNI

Prof. Dimitry Kochenov – ‘the Passport Professor’ – holds a Chair in European Constitutional Law and Citizenship at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands and has held numerous fellowships and visiting professorships worldwide, including at Princeton University (Crane Fellowship in Law and Public Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School and Visiting Professorship at the Center for Human Values), the College of Europe, NYU School of Law (Emile Noël Fellowship), Basel Institute for Global Studies, and Osaka Graduate School of Law and Politics, as well as a Visiting Chair in Private Law (Citizenship) at the University of Turin, and a co-Chair in EU citizenship at LUISS in Rome. He publishes widely on different aspects of comparative and European citizenship law and migration regulation, and consults for governments and international organizations on the subjects of his interest. Prof. Kochenov’s latest book is *Citizenship* ([MIT Press, 2019](#)). Besides, he has (co-)edited a number of legal works with Cambridge and Oxford University Presses, including *EU Citizenship and Federalism: The Role of Rights* (Cambridge, 2017).

Dr. Christian H. Kaelin, TEP, IMCM, Chairman of Henley & Partners, is considered one of the world’s foremost experts in investment migration and citizenship-by-investment, a field he pioneered. Holding master’s and PhD degrees in law from the University of Zurich, he is a sought-after speaker and advises governments and international organizations. He is the author, co-author, or editor of many publications, including standard works such as the *Global Residence and Citizenship Handbook* (Ideos, 2016), the *Switzerland Business & Investment Handbook* (Orell Füssli, 2017), and *Ius Doni* ([Brill, 2019](#)).

Understanding the QNI

The QNI is an enormously powerful tool for gaining a clear understanding of what each country in the world offers its citizens. According to Prof. Kochenov, one of the most valuable learnings from the QNI for scholarship on nationality, is the “demystification of nationality as inherently and invariably beneficial.”

“Using a sophisticated combination of fully verifiable data derived from leading international institutions, including the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the QNI measures the internal value of nationality, which refers to the quality of life and opportunities for personal growth within our country of origin, as well as the external value of nationality, which identifies the diversity and quality of opportunities that our nationality allows us to pursue outside our country of origin.” The whole dataset of the QNI is available in open access free of charge.

The latest edition of the Index, published by Hart, replaces the *Henley & Partners – Kochenov Quality of Nationality Index* and marks a new beginning for the ranking. Aspects of the methodology have been updated, previous data have been reassessed, and deep revisions have been introduced throughout, building on the editions published by Ideos Publications annually from 2016 to 2018.

About Hart

Hart Publishing has been an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing since 2013 following 17 years as an independent publisher committed to the highest quality works of legal scholarship.

Hart books aim to be intellectually stimulating and innovative, and they seek to contribute to the academic study of law as well as to its development and practical implementation. Hart's list is international in scope, and is distributed globally. With over 1500 titles in print the list includes textbooks, scholarly monographs and works for practitioners and spans the entirety of legal scholarship. Hart's books are now available in both print and digital format simultaneously.

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The *Kälin and Kochenov's Quality of Nationality Index*, co-edited by Kochenov and Lindeboom, will be published soon by [Hart Publishing](#).

About Henley & Partners

Henley & Partners is the global leader in residence and citizenship planning. Each year, hundreds of wealthy individuals and their advisors rely on our expertise and experience in this area. The firm's highly qualified professionals work together as one team in over 30 offices worldwide.

The concept of residence and citizenship planning was created by Henley & Partners in the 1990s. As globalization has expanded, residence and citizenship have become topics of significant interest among the increasing number of internationally mobile entrepreneurs and investors whom we proudly serve every day.

The firm also runs a leading government advisory practice that has raised more than USD 8 billion in foreign direct investment. Trusted by governments, the firm has been involved in strategic consulting and in the design, set-up, and operation of the world's most successful residence and citizenship programs.

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