

News release

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Barcelona, Copenhagen and London most admired cities in the world by city leaders

Branding, inclusiveness and economic development are cities leaders' top priority

KUALA LUMPUR, 30 MAY 2011 – In a highly competitive global environment, cities are under increased pressure to attract people and investment, while providing a sustainable, vibrant community for their citizens. For a report *Cities for citizens* released last week, EY interviewed 72 city leaders about who they felt was best dealing with this challenge. The respondent who included Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, and Secretary General of the Office of the Mayor of Bogota, Yuri Chillan Reyes ranked Barcelona as the most admired city in the world, followed by Copenhagen and London.

“Despite the common perception that world-famous cities would inevitably be a role model for city leaders, smaller cities and countries have developed a distinct approach of their own that makes them a potential role model for others to replicate”, says Philippe Peuch-Lestrade, Global Government & Public Sector Leader at Ernst & Young.

Barcelona and Copenhagen point toward recent successes that have allowed them to surge ahead of city competitors. While Barcelona used its Olympic legacy to accelerate the city development and further increase its attractiveness, Copenhagen has become globally recognized for its pioneering approach to sustainability, such as its aim to become carbon neutral by 2025.

London, which completed the top three, was followed closely by New York and Paris – all having in common their approach to urban transportation and the fact that they are important hubs for business worldwide. “London is often seen as constantly developing a system of public transport that combines modern technology with environmental awareness, particularly taking the difficult decision to introduce congestion charges for vehicles,” continues Peuch-Lestrade.

City leaders' visions vs. citizens' expectations

Other findings reveal that there is a discrepancy between what city leaders' envisage for their cities and what citizens' expectations really are. When asked which criteria would be at the heart of their strategy in the next 10 years for developing their cities, city leaders stated: building the city's brand (23%), being 'socially inclusive' (20%) and finally, being 'developed economically' (18%). Having safe and relatively crime-free communities ranked as one of the lowest criteria. However, according to external research¹, citizens have different expectations when it comes to make a city an attractive place to live and work, which are: jobs creation, transport and safety.

Says Peuch-Lestrade: "To attract people and especially talent, policy-makers need to successfully deliver on the job markets, public transport and security. Failure to do so may result in depopulation of the best talent migrating out of the city and a less-skilled workforce remaining, which might adversely affect perceptions of the city by investors, as well as impact the socioeconomic balance of the city."

Concludes, Peuch-Lestrade: "The respective size of a city is not important, all have the capacity to deliver a vision to attract resources, and in doing so become the best they can be. Strong leadership is needed, to underpin a vision that broadly appeals to the aspirations of individuals across the city's diverse spectrum of stakeholders. Prioritizing the allocation of resources to meet strategic goals is needed along with delivering a portfolio of services that will satisfy citizens' expectations."

- Ends -

About the methodology

We devised two closely aligned survey question sets on the developing agenda for city leaders around the world:

- One for the city mayor, or a chief executive (35 interviews) – the person with the vision to build a brighter future
- One for their strategy director or finance director (37 interviews) – the person who will oversee the planning and execution from an operational and financial perspective. We approached participants from a wide range and diverse set of cities around the world, in order to capture and gauge their views about their cities, their ambitions for them and their developing agenda as they collectively pursue the principal aim of economic growth.

The report can be found on <http://www.ey.com/cities>

¹ These criteria and questions were drawn from the *Liveable Cities: challenges and opportunities for policymakers* report (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited 2010), and the *Philips Index for Health and Well-being: A global perspective Report 2010* (The Philips Center for Health and Well-being 2010).

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