

British Council helps cities to beat the recession

6/5/2010

(London/Madrid) World recession. Low growth. Stagnant economies. For almost two years, major world cities have felt the harsh edge of the global recession. Hard times have fanned the flames of intolerance towards immigration. Now a major new initiative from the British Council confronts these problems head on. The OPENCities programme suggests how city leaders can use the recession to their advantage and move towards a more stable future, where success and tolerance meet as one.

Greg Clark, city expert and lead advisor on the British Council's OPENCities programme, sees a bright future for cities with strong leadership and the determination to evolve and grow.

“OPENCities encourages the exchange of positive ideas between forward-thinking world cities. Creating an environment where locals and new migrants can live in harmony is another key element of the programme. For the first time, cities will have a specific way to gauge their openness and help their leaders develop successful strategies to compete on a world-stage. For example, we can see Hong Kong is clearly trying to establish itself as an alternative to traditional financial capitals like London and New York. It is open to attracting new talent from different parts of the world, whilst creating work opportunities for its long-term Chinese population. Improvements in local infrastructure, plus the staging of major business, cultural and sporting events, are all part of the drive to raise profile.”

The British Council will publish four OPENCities reports this year, containing valuable advice and information for city planners and economists. From September, a tool to measure and benchmark city openness will be available online. Developed by BAK Basel, this details of this new application feature in the first publication, *Understanding OPENCities*, which outlines how “openness” to balanced immigration can contribute towards a city's long-term success.

In the current economic climate, immigration is a sensitive issue for many world politicians, as has been witnessed recently in the run-up to the UK election. But Greg Clark disagrees with this negative thinking:

“History shows that when there is an economic downturn, there is a tendency to want to close doors to immigrants. In reality, it is people that attract jobs to a city, leading to a stronger, more stable economy. For example, San Francisco has attracted the world's best brains and

is home to over 100 different nationalities. It develops IT systems and software that work all over the world and its diverse workforce have the knowledge of what will work best in their part of the world. Subsequently this shared database of knowledge is part of the reason why Silicon Valley has been so successful. Other cities can learn from San Francisco's success: everyone can contribute to the planning process."

The *Understanding OPENCities* report is launched worldwide on May 21st and will tie in with UNESCO's World Day for Cultural Diversity, for Dialogue and Development. It features case studies from Amsterdam, Auckland, Dublin, Madrid, and Toronto, comparing and contrasting their strengths and weaknesses, and highlighting how each city has embraced openness in its bid to build a successful world brand.

Positive ideas. Exciting innovation. OPENCities from the British Council. Looking to the future.

Contact:

To download your free copy of *Understanding OPENCities* and to find out more about this British Council programme, visit www.opencities.eu

OPENCities – Great places to live, work and play

Note for editors:

OPENCities

OPENCities is British Council led project that aims to identify the links between migration and cities' competitiveness, with particular emphasis on internationalisation and population issues that will highlight migration as a competitive advantage for cities and, help integration and cohesion agendas. OPENCities project partners include Belfast, Bilbao, Bucharest, Cardiff, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Madrid, Nitra, Poznan, Sofia, Vienna. For further information visit the OPENCities website at www.opencities.eu

The British Council

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