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Press release from AFRY

A new survey shows young people don't want to live in big cities and view overpopulation as one of the biggest challenges for future cities

Global trends and challenges, such as urbanisation, digitalisation and climate change, will affect how we live in the future. But what do the young people of today want future cities to look like? According to a new survey, only 12 per cent of young people want to live in big cities with more than one million inhabitants.

To build cities that young people of today want to live in, we first need to know what young people want. That is why AFRY conducted a survey of young people (aged 18-35) in six European countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland.

It is clear that sustainability – social, economic and environmental – is important to young people. More than 60 per cent of respondents replied that sustainability is an important factor when deciding where they want to live.

“It is clear that young people care about sustainability in all its forms – it is a crucial issue that we have to take into account when developing future cities and we have a lot to learn by listening to the younger generation when designing for the future” says Helena Paulsson, Head of Urban Development at AFRY.

After friends and family, and work opportunities, access to nature is the third most important criterion for young people when choosing where to live. At the same time, one in four says that there are not enough green areas where they live.

“We want to fix this! Greenery is incredibly important for our cities and we must continue to plan and build it into cities. Green areas are important not only for our wellbeing but also because they fill other functions such as biodiversity, temperature regulation, resilience and as a way of dealing with heavy rain,” says Helena Paulsson.

Aside from this, the survey shows that only slightly more than one in ten young people want to live in cities with more than a million inhabitants. Respondents were also asked what they view as the biggest challenges for future cities: overpopulation and waste management were the most common answers.

“It is clear that young people in these countries do not want to live in megacities. That overpopulation is seen as a threat in these countries, which have a relatively small population, could be interpreted as a result of there being a need for more sustainable urban planning in cities with a million inhabitants or more,” says Helena Paulsson.

In the survey, young people were also asked what they associate with a sustainable city. Access to nature and public transport running on renewable energy came out on top. This was followed by efficient recycling and affordable and accessible housing.

“These are quite essential things, which have an impact on people’s everyday life. The notion of the city being smart only came in fifth place, probably because of the fact that young people of today simply take the connected city for granted,” says Helena Paulsson.

By focusing on, and always using the people in the city, and their needs and wellbeing, as a starting point, we develop attractive, sustainable and smart cities for future generations. With our cumulative competence base within urban development, energy – and water, industry, digital solutions, future mobility and much more – we create combined solutions covering different fields, which form the key to the development of future cities.

The survey was carried out by the research company YouGov between 10-29 September this year. In total, 5,624 people took part in the survey, about 1,000 people per country. The report of the survey results can be found as an attachment.

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