

FinEst Centre
for Smart Cities

SMART CITY CHALLENGE 2025

City Challenge

Max 3 pages

send to smartcity@taltech.ee by Sept 30, 2025

Challenge Title – Prevent drowning in open water

City/county and country – Municipality of The Hague, Netherlands

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1. What is the future urban challenge that would need a solution to?

- Please describe the challenge of your city / county neighboring a city?
 - *The Hague is a city by the sea, where many residents, water sports enthusiasts, and tourists enjoy the beach and the water. Unfortunately, people still drown every year, for example due to strong currents and a lack of knowledge about the meaning of the flags or the beach and the dangers of the sea.*
 - *Our challenge: How can we prevent people from drowning in open water?*
- Which category your challenge is primarily in:
 - *Safe city*
- Why is it important for your city to solve it? How big priority it is for you and why?
 - *In 2024, 146 people drowned in the Netherlands; 107 residents of the Netherlands and 39 non-residents, some of whom were in The Hague.*
- Is this a unique challenge/problem of your city, why or is this by your knowledge a challenge/problem that many cities have – which kind of other cities?
 - *It is a global problem. Worldwide, an estimated 250,000 people drown every year, an alarming number that makes us aware of the need to prevent drowning. See <https://www.knrm.nl/nieuws/world-drowning-prevention-day>*

2. Innovation.

- How have you solved that issue so far?
 - *From May 1 to October 1, lifeguards are on duty every day to supervise and perform rescue operations, supported by flag systems, beach posts, and boats. Outside the season, the Surf Rescue Team of the Scheveningen fire department is on standby.*
 - *Despite public campaigns and events such as Safe at Sea, swimming in the sea remains risky. In addition to the existing campaigns, the focus will be on more target group-oriented work (specifically for newcomers), more intensive visibility at busy locations, and practical education through workshops.*
 - *This beach season, there are new warning flags on the beach with pictograms. The pictograms improve the 'comprehensibility of the meaning'.*



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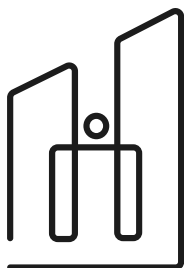


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- Why aren't the present solutions good enough? Are there legal obstacles, which ones?
 - *The emergency services cannot be everywhere at once, because the coastline of The Hague is approximately 11 kilometers long.*
 - *There are legal obstacles, especially around privacy and legislation.*
- What should be the main features, characteristics of the future solution to be potentially best for that challenge or problem?
 - *Quickly identify that someone is in danger in open water*
 - *Be able to quickly provide assistance to the person in distress*
 - *Quickly alert the emergency services to rescue the person*

3. Expected impact of your pilot solution.

- What is the expected impact to your city environment you expect to see if the challenge gets solved?
 - *More people can be rescued from open water, resulting in fewer or no drownings*
 - *Emergency services can be deployed more effectively where they are most needed*
- What is the expected impact to your citizens you expect to see if the challenge gets solved?
 - *Residents and tourists can enjoy a carefree day at the beach.*
 - *Residents and tourists can immediately see where they can and cannot swim.*
 - *Less traumatic experience for bystanders and emergency services.*
- What is the expected impact to your city governance you expect to see if the challenge gets solved?
 - *The solution contributes to the municipality's general duty of care for the safety of citizens, including beach safety, as part of public administration and crisis management. This duty means that, depending on the situation, municipalities are obliged to ensure the safety of swimming locations, identify risks, warn of dangers such as rip currents, and take measures to prevent accidents and casualties.*

4. Piloting

- Why would you be interested to become a piloting partner of a proposed solution to the challenge you are describing here? Describe shortly your capability to participate.
 - *The challenge described is a problem that occurs every year in The Hague, but it is also a global problem. See [World Drowning Prevention Day](#).*
 - *How powerful would it be if we could come up with an innovative solution together to, for example, recognize more quickly when someone is in danger in open water and save that person from drowning?*
 - *If this challenge is selected, we would of course like to participate in this pilot project by providing people and a test location. The coastal area (Scheveningen) also serves as a living lab: Living Lab Scheveningen. See: <https://smartcity.denhaag.nl/en/whitepaper> for more information.*

CHECKLIST AND FAQ

Are you a city, municipality or a campus / private real estate developer?

Yes – you are warmly welcome to propose 1-3 challenges, one challenge per one template



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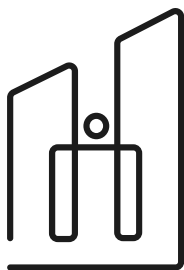


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No – do not send us any challenges but wait until we have gathered urban challenges and you are welcome to propose solution ideas by November 30

Are you describing challenge or problem? – Yes, then great.

Does a city need to propose a solution idea as well? – No, the researchers and companies will propose their solution ideas to the challenges proposal by the cities.

Can only Estonian cities propose challenges? Can only EU cities propose challenges? – No, cities* from whatever country are warmly welcome.

*A **City** is a local administrative unit where the majority of the population lives in an urban centre of at least 50 000 inhabitants and cities from countries with less than 5 cities of more than 100 000 inhabitants if they have more than 10 000 inhabitants. Those countries are: Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT), Slovenia (SI) and Slovakia (SK).

Can our city participate without proposing a challenge? – Yes, that is also possible but then you need to vote for challenges proposed by other cities. This can be done between Oct 2-30.

How will the challenges be evaluated? – We will not evaluate the proposed challenges but other cities/municipalities/campuses/private real estate developers can vote for the proposed challenges. In Round 5 researchers will start to propose solution ideas only to the challenges that have minimum one Estonian city/county and one city/county from another country.



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