

**Drones to boost in infrastructure maintenance efficiency**

## **Abertis closes its first innovation challenge 'Drone Challenge' with the participation of 70 international startups**


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- **The winning project was submitted by Azisa & Aren, led by a Spanish and an American company that have joined forces to revolutionise infrastructure inspection, offering more efficient, cost-effective and sustainable monitoring services thanks to the combined experience in drone technology and artificial intelligence applied to structure management.**
- **Nearly 70 startups took part in this challenge that Abertis and the Abertis Foundation launched at the end of last year for companies and startups from all over the world, with the aim of identifying innovative solutions to current mobility challenges based on using drones to improve road operations and infrastructure maintenance.**
- **All the initiatives were judged by a committee of experts formed by members from the different countries in which the Group operates. Azisa & Aren was awarded an estimated €40,000 to develop a pilot project in one of the countries in which Abertis operates and the five runners-up each received a prize of €4,000.**
- **'Drone Challenge' is part of Beyond Roads, Abertis' innovation hub for the transformation of high-capacity roads.**

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The Azisa & Aren startup has won the 'Drone Challenge' that Abertis, a world leader in the transformation of high-capacity roads, and the Abertis Foundation, launched at the end of last year. The winning project, jointly piloted by Azisa, based in Gijón, and Aren, based in New York, represents a turning point in infrastructure inspection thanks to the Spanish company's experience offering drone-based inspection services and the American company's technology as an expert in artificial intelligence applied to the structure management.

This initiative provides end-to-end industrial inspection services using unmanned vehicles such as drones, UGVs, ROVs and USVs. It also uses different software tools to create valuable 2D and 3D information and Artificial Intelligence to process and analyse damage to concrete and metal structures.



*"The pilot project that we are going to carry out with Azisa & Aren will be a great opportunity to boost the efficiency of our operations, promote innovation, and consolidate our commitment to offer increasingly safer infrastructures through innovation," says Toni Duran, Global Head of Innovation at Abertis. "We have selected this option because it allows automated inspection of structures like bridges to identify possible damage, as well as letting us monitor any changes in the damage, infer the structural condition and devise an optimal maintenance plan.*

*The winners Raúl Álvarez, CEO of Azisa, Ali Khaloo, co-founder CEO of Aren, and Edgar Martinez Ceja, co-founder COO of Aren, highlighted that "working with Abertis is a great opportunity to expand our operations globally. Providing them with our know-how after almost 10 years of work and bringing them value in the inspection and life cycle management of their infrastructures will give us the opportunity to demonstrate how the technology we have created by combining artificial intelligence and civil engineering can help the road infrastructure management and operation industry to be more efficient and optimise their resources during the life cycle."*

Around 70 projects from all over the world, mainly from Spain, Argentina, Mexico, India, Italy, Brazil, Puerto Rico, France, Chile and the United States, among others, were submitted to for this first call for proposals. All of them were assessed a committee of structure maintenance and road operation experts formed by members from the different countries in which the group is present. Azisa & Aren was awarded an estimated €40,000 to carry out a pilot project in one of the countries in which Abertis operates. The five runners up - Naitec (R&D Foundation), Uali Ibérica, Silent Falcon, Inspection Drone and Aiviewgroup - will each receive a prize of €4,000.

The Drone Challenge aims to identify potential solutions to the various challenges facing the industry. The project is designed to attract a broad innovation ecosystem made up of universities, entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and startups. The initiative is part of Beyond Roads, Abertis' open innovation hub, designed to explore and promote smart solutions in the field of infrastructure and mobility.

### **Mobility's challenges, from the air**

Among other purposes, drones and drone-borne technology can be used as solutions to improve high-capacity road operation activities in areas such as traffic management, road operations support, effective response to emergencies and adverse weather events on roads.

Drones also help to improve infrastructure maintenance activities, such as inspection or rehabilitation of pavements and structures.

*Hand in hand with its Foundation, Abertis is committed to leading the revolution in infrastructure management, collaborating with universities, entrepreneurs and visionary startups that share our passion for a more sustainable, safe and efficient future," added Georgina Flamme, director of the Abertis Foundation-; "we want to develop new and even more advanced solutions that help us improve all our indicators to directly and positively impact the well-being of people and the environment.*

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