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Digital Single Market

Press release 9 August 2012

Microcopters and ground robots used to assess the damage of earthquake-hit Italian churches

In late July the EU-funded project NIFTi successfully deployed a team of flying and ground-based robots in Mirandola, Emilia-Romagna, Italy, upon the official request by the Vigili del Fuoco, the Italian national rescue organization in charge of disaster response and recovery. The NIFTi team was tasked to assess the damage to local churches only 20 kilometres away from the epicentre of the series of earthquakes that hit the region in May and June 2012. When the NIFTi team started their mission, the inner city of Mirandola was still sealed off by the military and nobody could access the area without authorisation. The conditions were very dangerous, and two fire fighters had been killed there before by a collapsing roof. The robots entered badly damaged buildings, scanned the area and produced 3D map reconstructions and high-resolution videos to report on structural damage to ceilings, arches and aisles in the largely destroyed churches, which date back to the 13th and 15th centuries, and on the state of cultural artefacts such as paintings, decorations, tombs and altars.

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