



Assessment of earthquake effects – contribution from online communication

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The rapid increase of social media and online newspapers in the last years have given the opportunity to make a national investigation on macroseismic effects on the Maltese Islands based on felt earthquake reports. A magnitude 4.1 earthquake struck close to Malta on Sunday 24th April 2011 at 13:02 GMT. The earthquake was preceded and followed by a series of smaller magnitude quakes throughout the day, most of which were felt by the locals on the island. The continuous news media coverage during the day and the extensive sharing of the news item on social media resulted in a strong public response to fill in the 'Did you feel it?' online form on the website of the Seismic Monitoring and Research Unit (SMRU) at the University of Malta (<http://seismic.research.um.edu.mt/>). The results yield interesting information about the demographics of the island, and the different felt experiences possibly relating to geological settings and diverse structural and age-classified buildings.

Based on this case study, the SMRU is in the process of developing a mobile phone application dedicated to share earthquake information to the local community. The application will automatically prompt users to fill in a simplified 'Did you feel it?' report to potentially felt earthquakes. Automatic location using Global Positioning Systems can be incorporated to provide a 'real time' intensity map that can be used by the Civil Protection Department.