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SORVEGLIATI SPAZIALI: LEVERAGING AR FOR PLANETARY DEFENSE AWARENESS

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Sorvegliati Spaziali – Looking Up to Space to Protect Our Planet is a communication project by the Italian National Institute for Astrophysics, endorsed by NASA's Planetary Defense Coordination Office Outreach Office. It represents one of the

world's first coordinated, comprehensive, and coherent public awareness campaigns on planetary defense by a research institution.
From near-Earth asteroids and comets to space weather, meteors, meteorites, and space debris, Sorvegliati Spaziali aims to provide scientific and cultural knowledge to illustrate how our planet is exposed to various natural and man-made space threats.

The core of the project is the entirely graphic and multimedia Italian website, sorvegliatispaziali.inaf.it, available online since 2021, where all communication products are published.

The project is at the forefront of using transversal, multidisciplinary, narrative science language and produces a variety of original multimedia information products, including news, videos, theatre videoclips, NEO, meteor shower and solar bulletins, a glossary, comics, and reviews.

One of its specific objectives was to develop a distinctive science brochure with augmented reality (AR) content on planetary defense, leveraging the significant potential of AR in modern science communication and public engagement.

The AR App Sorvegliati Spaziali is free and available for iOS and AR-compatible Android mobile devices (mobile phones and tablets), both in Italian and English and was developed in collaboration with the Italian company Vitruvio Virtual Reality.
It enables users to simulate four planetary defense phenomena in their environment, such as the entry and explosion of an asteroid into the Earth’s atmosphere, followed by a meteorite search on the ground. The brochure also provides in-depth content on events such as Tunguska and Chelyabinsk, along with updated information about the NEO population.
Here, we present the Sorvegliati Spaziali project and, in more detail, its AR app—an initiative that transcends mere edutainment by addressing critical issues such as risk perception and communication related to space events.

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