

AS/Mig (2025) Proceedings 01

8 December 2025

Declassified¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Proceedings

of the Parliamentary round table on “The role of public policy to prevent and address disappearances of migrants”, held at the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye on 27 November 2025

1. Introduction

The Parliamentary round table was hosted by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 27 November 2025 to discuss ways to prevent and address migrant disappearances through public policy, a pressing human rights issue.

This event marked the launch of the new PACE [Toolkit for parliamentarians](#) in [Turkish](#), based on the recommendations originating from [Resolution 2569 \(2024\)](#) “Missing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – A call to clarify their fate” and on the parliamentary [conference](#) convened in April 2025 at the Council of Europe. The toolkit offers guidance on the key policy issues related to preventing and addressing cases of missing migrants, provides concrete ideas for parliamentary action, and highlights good practices from various European countries and beyond. In particular, it provides insights into policy measures that can help prevent disappearances, enhance search mechanisms, ensure identification of the deceased, support families, and foster cross-border cooperation.

Welcome speeches given by Mr Yıldırım Tuğrul Türkeş (Türkiye, NR), Chairperson of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr William Massolin, Head of the Council of Europe Programme Office in Ankara, and Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef, Secretary to the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, opened the meeting. Subsequently, during two panel discussions, participants discussed national challenges and opportunities for enhanced regional co-operation. The panels were respectively moderated by Ms Meryem Göka (Türkiye, NR), Member of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Mr Tamer Kılıç, Head of Türkiye Office of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. The discussion’s main outcomes were summarised by Dr Nihal Eminoğlu of Ankara University.

2. Proceedings

2.1. Welcome speeches

Mr Yıldırım Tuğrul Türkeş highlighted the complexity of the issue of “missing migrants”, noting its implications for human rights, migration management, forensic identification and public accountability. He emphasised that Türkiye’s location at the crossroads of major migration routes has shaped a migration policy grounded in human rights, the rule of law and good governance. This approach is reflected in the reforming of Türkiye’s migration governance model, as well as in progress in border management, biometric data systems and measures to combat and address human trafficking and migrant smuggling, all of which have helped prevent disappearances and strengthen accountability.

Mr William Massolin praised Türkiye’s hospitality in hosting refugees, acknowledging the social, economic and administrative challenges this creates at both national and local levels, as well as the sustained efforts

¹ These proceedings were declassified by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons on 8 December 2025.

made to address them. He also highlighted the longstanding co-operation between the Council of Europe and Türkiye, noting that migration has become a central area of this partnership. Mr Massolin emphasised that the Council of Europe instruments affirm the protection of migrants' rights as a legal and moral obligation, not merely a policy choice. In particular, he stressed that ensuring the rights to truth, justice and effective remedy for families of missing migrants is a matter of human rights and dignity.

Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef thanked the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye for its warm welcome and for the fruitful co-operation between both secretariats in the successful organisation the event. He outlined the objectives of the roundtable, notably the launch of the publication "Missing Migrants – A Toolkit for Parliamentarians".

2.2. Panel 1 - National challenges: policy prospects

Ms Gamze Gül Çakır Kılıç, representing the Presidency of Migration Management, presented an overview of Türkiye's holistic migration governance model. She highlighted practical tools that help prevent migrant disappearances, such as the *Mobile Migration Points* operating across the country and the *YIMER 157* hotline, which migrants can contact for information, emergency assistance at sea, or support if they are victims of human trafficking. She also pointed to key policies that contribute to prevent and resolve cases of missing migrants, including Türkiye's 2025-2030 Anti-Trafficking Plan.

Ms Pelin Yılık (Türkiye, NR), Member of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Rapporteur on "Migrants' and Refugees' access to healthcare", presented the PACE report she is currently preparing. She regretted that restrictive migration policies across Europe have contributed to disappearances and deaths. She further stressed that limited access to health services, clean food and safe drinking water, as a consequence of such policies, also contributes to disappearances. Ms Yılık noted that her report seeks to highlight the injustices and challenges migrants face in accessing quality health care, including mental health care, and to propose concrete solutions to address them.

Dr José Luis Prieto, Head of the Forensic Pathology Department at Madrid's Institute of Forensic Medicine and Forensic Sciences, outlined the challenges forensic experts in Spain face when identifying people who lost their life during migration. He stressed the urgent need for a harmonised national approach to forensic identification in the migration context. Dr Prieto presented the work he and other forensic experts are undertaking to establish a national, migration-specific forensic protocol and database. He also emphasised the importance of co-operation with countries of origin and transit to facilitate their identification when they have died.

Mr Kamil Erdem Güler, Director of Migration Services at the Turkish Red Crescent Society, presented the organisation's *Restoring Family Links* programme, illustrating it with examples of families dispersed across borders who were successfully reunited. He noted, however, that such cases remain rare, with only a small proportion of applications resulting in reunification. Mr Güler explained that the Red Crescent conducts tracing, data matching, and coordination with national and international partners to resolve cases of missing migrants. He also highlighted the importance of appointing National Focal Points for Missing Migrants, harmonising data and forensic standards, conducting searches regardless of administrative status, strengthening regional forensic capacity, and improving overall search mechanisms.

2.3. Panel 2 - Regional co-operation: a human-rights based response to a global challenge

Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef presented PACE's new toolkit and its objectives. He emphasised that the term "missing migrant" refers to any person considered by their family to have gone missing during their migration journey, regardless of their administrative status. Mr Martin-Micallef stressed that parliamentarians can take meaningful action by adopting laws to ensure harmonised national practices and promote cross-border co-operation in line with international and Council of Europe standards. He also highlighted the role of inter-parliamentary action in advancing co-operation to resolve cases of missing migrants.

Ms Serap Yaşar, former PACE member and rapporteur on "Missing refugee and migrant children in Europe," outlined the key recommendations of [Resolution 2324 \(2020\)](#). She emphasised that the issue remains highly relevant, noting that the investigative journalism collective *Lost in Europe* documented over 51 000 unaccompanied migrant children and young people (previously in state care) who disappeared between 2021 and 2023.² She also highlighted her personal efforts to specific cases of children being reunited with their families.

Ms Sarah Klingeberg, Regional Internal Displacement and Migration Adviser for Europe and Central Asia at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), highlighted the ICRC's longstanding experience addressing cases of missing persons, including migrants. Sharing the story of a mother whose son was gone

² Lost in Europe, [Data: explained](#) (accessed 3 December 2025).

missing, she illustrated the challenges families face in reporting disappearances, accessing information, and navigating cross-border searches, whether the person is alive or deceased. She emphasised the strong need for harmonised national procedures, centralised data collection, and the appointment of National Focal Points for Missing Migrants to enable transnational co-operation and involve families as key actors. She concluded that multi-stakeholder, state-led action with parliamentary support is essential to prevent and respond to migrant disappearances.

Prof. Mehmet Gökay Özerim, Yaşar University, emphasised that addressing and preventing migrant disappearances requires strong multi-stakeholder and regional co-operation, particularly given that the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean migration routes are the most dangerous in the world. He highlighted the heightened vulnerabilities of migrant children and young people, noting that their risk of disappearance is three to four times higher, especially for those transitioning to adulthood. At this age, they are more at risk of becoming victims of trafficking and more exposed to smugglers, usually face language barriers, and often lack accompanying adults or State-appointed guardians.

3. Conclusion

Participants highlighted Türkiye's unique role in Europe due to its geographical position along various migration routes. They underlined its experience hosting a significant number of refugees and migrants, and examples of protective practices which reduce the likelihood of people going missing or dying. They also underscored the need for greater European solidarity and for rights-based approaches, both to prevent disappearances and to resolve cases of missing migrants.

The round table discussions emphasised the importance of state-led, human rights-based policies, with PACE Resolution 2569 and the Toolkit providing guidance on how to design such policies. Key outcomes of the discussions included:

- The value of Türkiye's holistic, human-centred migration governance to prevent disappearances, including in the realm of search and rescue, protection, health care, and measures against human trafficking and migrant smuggling.
- The need for harmonisation of national practices to resolve cases of missing migrants, including forensic methods and data collection.
- The importance of European solidarity and regional co-operation, based on the extensive existing normative framework of the Council of Europe and international standards, as well as co-operation fora such as the *Network of Focal Points for Missing Migrants*.³
- A recognition of the moral and human rights obligations as regards families of missing migrants' right to the truth and justice, as well as the importance of including them in the search for their loved ones and in policymaking processes (both as information providers and as rights holders).
- An acknowledgement of the heightened vulnerability of migrant children and young people transitioning to adulthood.

³ The Network of Focal Points for Missing Migrants brings together many European and African States as part of the Rabat Process co-operation framework. See: Rabat Process, 4 August 2025, [Outcome: Advancing cooperation on missing migrants in the Rabat Process region - Rabat Process](#).

Annex – Programme of the Parliamentary round table on “The role of public policy to prevent and address disappearances of migrants”

Grand National Assembly of Türkiye

Ankara, 27 November 2025

Welcome speeches

- **Mr Yıldırım Tuğrul Türkeş**, Chairperson of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- **Mr William Massolin**, Head of Office, Council of Europe Programme Office in Ankara
- **Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef**, Secretary to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Panel 1 - National challenges: policy prospects

Moderation: **Ms Meryem Göka**, Member of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

- **Ms Gamze Gül Çakır Kılıç**, Presidency of Migration Management
- **Ms Pelin Yılık**, Member of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- **Dr José Luis Prieto**, Head of the Forensic Pathology Department, Institute of Forensic Medicine and Forensic Sciences, Madrid
- **Mr Kamil Erdem Güler**, Director of Migration Services, Turkish Red Crescent Society

Panel 2 - Regional co-operation: a human-rights based response to a global challenge

Moderation: **Mr Tamer Kılıç**, Head of Türkiye Office, International Centre for Migration Policy Development

- **Mr Gaël Martin-Micallef**, Secretary to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- **Ms Serap Yaşar**, Former Member of the Turkish Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Rapporteur on Missing refugee and migrant children in Europe (2020)
- **Ms Sarah Klingeberg**, Regional Internal Displacement and Migration Adviser for Europe and Central Asia, International Committee of the Red Cross
- **Prof. Mehmet Gökay Özerim**, Yaşar University

Conclusive remarks

- **Dr Nihal Eminoğlu**, Ankara University