



3RD CALRE “Stars of Europe”

AWARD

Participation form

Regional Legislative Assembly: ASSEMBLY OF EXTREMADURA

Country: SPAIN

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Type of project:

d) Other: **MINUTE'S SILENCE FOR MISSING PERSONS IN EXTREMADURA**



Date of issuing of the initiative: 9th March 2017 until now

Reference period: 2017-2018

Short description of the initiative:

The Assembly of Extremadura observes a minute's silence on day 9 of each month to remember those disappeared in the region.

Upon unanimous approval of an institutional declaration at the Chamber's Plenary in March, the president of the Assembly of Extremadura, Blanca Martín, held a meeting with representatives of the four parliamentary groups (PSOE-SIEX, PP, Podemos Extremadura and Grupo Mixto-Ciudadanos), the president of the European Foundation for Missing Persons (QSD-Global), Paco Lobatón, and relatives of missing people from Extremadura. In this meeting, they agreed to hold a minute's silence on day 9 of each month to remember the missing persons in Extremadura.



The president of the Assembly, Blanca Martín, expressed that the relatives and the Foundation were demanding more visibility.

In this respect, Martín added that to "raise awareness as soon as possible in this region, a minute's silence shall be observed on day 9 of each month at the entrance of the Assembly of Extremadura until the missing persons in this region are found". "In this way, we want to support the families, give them visibility and, above all, ensure that no one forgets they are missing", she concluded.

Meanwhile, Paco Lobatón welcomed the initiative because "it was the first time that an action of this kind takes place in Spain, and it will give great encouragement to the families".

Role of the regional Assembly:

On 9th March 2017, the Assembly of Extremadura met at plenary session 45 and unanimously approved an institutional declaration in light of the high amount of missing persons cases, acting in solidarity with their families and wishing to contribute towards raising social awareness on an issue with alarming figures.

The declaration states that more than 20,000 people disappeared in Spain in 2016, of which around 84 are at high risk, according to data from the National Police Force. Currently, between 1,000 and 2,000 cases are still open, although there is a high rate of solving.

In view of this reality, the Congress of Deputies approved on 10th November 2010 to proclaim 9th March as Missing Persons Day. In addition, the Senate created the Special Commission to study the problem of Missing Persons for no Apparent Reason. Its conclusions were gathered in a report unanimously approved on 12th February 2014.

The parliamentary groups represented at the Assembly of Extremadura in this ninth term, in order to raise awareness on this painful reality, committed themselves to:

1. Adhere to the declaration of the Congress of Deputies of 2010 which proclaimed 9th March as the Day of Missing Persons for no Apparent Reason .
2. Show their solidarity with the families of missing persons and with the associations and entities that represent them.



3. Show their solidarity and sympathy with the families and friends of Extremadura citizen Manuela Chavero, who disappeared in Monesterio on 5th July.
4. Call upon the central government and any institution affected by this issue to keep working towards a better institutional coordination which enables progress in the investigations and searches of missing persons, as well as improve the assistance and support to their relatives.
5. Undertake the recommendations of the Senate included in the Report of the Special Commission for the Study of the Problem around Missing Persons for no Apparent Reason, so that the problem is deemed as a priority, taking into account its entire complexity, not only the technical or regulatory aspects, but also and especially its human aspects.
6. Ensure that this issue is considered from a global perspective and as State policy.

From this moment on, the regional Chamber observes a minute's silence on day 9 of each month to remember those disappeared in the region. It was a decision made by the president of the Assembly of Extremadura and unanimously approved by the parliamentary groups in a meeting held with representatives of the European Foundation for Missing Persons and families of the persons disappeared in Extremadura.

Thanks to this initiative on 9th March 2018, the Assembly of Extremadura was awarded with the 9 March Award "Best Institutional Action" in the category of Commitment and Specialisation in the third edition of the awards, which are granted by the European Foundation for Missing Persons (QSD-Global).

Specifically, the jury of the award valued that on day 9 of each month the Assembly of Extremadura convenes at the entrance of the institution to hold a minute's silence to remember all those disappeared in the region and show support to their relatives. It also stressed the "message of union and political consensus to raise awareness and call for progress in missing persons investigations" and considered "making visible the causes of the disappearances on a regular basis of the utmost importance".



After receiving the award, Blanca Martín dedicated the prize to the families of the two women from Extremadura that are still missing, Manuela Chavero and Francisca Cadenas, and assured that "until they are not found, we will continue doing our best". In fact, it was the relatives of Manuela Chavero and Francisca Cadenas who delivered the prize to the regional Chamber.

The president of the Assembly also appreciated the efforts by the "State's law enforcement bodies for their work". She asked them not to "forget and keep working because they need to be found".

In addition, Blanca Martín said that the "people from Extremadura are modest but, above all, very caring". She also thanked "each and every resident from Monesterio and Hornachos for participating in the several searches carried out to find Manuela and Francisca".

Finally, the president of the Chamber wished the initiative to transfer to other autonomous communities parliaments.

Besides Blanca Martín, the spokesperson of the Ciudadanos group, María Victoria Domínguez, the spokesperson of the parliamentary group Podemos Extremadura, Álvaro Jaén, the deputy spokesperson of the parliamentary group PP, Luis Alfonso Hernández Carrón, and the spokesperson of the parliamentary group PSOE, Valentín García, were present.

It should be noted that QSD-Global grants these awards for the third year in a row to recognise, promote and foster actions, initiatives and research related to the reality of disappearances. The foundation created these prizes to "both honour exemplary actions already performed as well as foster those that in the near future might contribute to improving the missing persons search systems, family support and prevention and study of the reasons behind the disappearances".

Main features of the initiative:

Spain has been actively working within the European Union on this topic. The disappearance of people in our country, especially those who are under age, have warranted particular attention by the Spanish public powers, as well as the law enforcement authorities. This is the reason why several policies aimed at facing this concern have been adopted.



In 2013 the Spanish Senate created the Special Commission for the study of the issue of persons missing for no apparent reason. Its work pointed out to the need of setting up a **National Missing Persons Centre** aimed at becoming a body able to develop initiatives to help spread knowledge and allow progress on the issue. It was finally launched in 2017.

In this manner, the path followed in our country up until 2018 in terms of raised and carried out initiatives and public policies by the public powers in this matter have experienced a significant growth. Given the relevance they have achieved and their transcendence some of them should be noted, such as the instructions on police action or on the activation of early warning systems in the case of child disappearances, the launch since 2009 of the Unidentified Missing Persons and Human Remains (PDyRH) IT system, and the setting up of a free and confidential helpline that works in several European Union countries.

Furthermore, on the occasion of the **National Day of Missing Persons for no Apparent Reason** which takes place on 9th March, and which was unanimously established by the Congress of Deputies in November 2010, the Minister for Internal Affairs presented the first **Statistics report on the situation of missing persons in Spain**, which is published on an annual basis.

For many years, the development of public measures and policies in this topic, such as the above, highlight the **transcendence of the phenomenon of missing persons**.

This is a reality that concerns not only citizens but is also the public institutions, because the consequences are suffered by those around the missing person and also involves society as a whole, mainly if we take into account that any person at any given time can disappear.

The **Assembly of Extremadura** joins this commitment by making the cases of missing persons in our Autonomous Community, remembering them on day 9 of every month by holding a minute's silence at the entrance of the regional Chamber.

Citizen awareness and the ensuing and necessary collaboration are a transcendent and key cornerstone to face this phenomenon, through shared responsibility of the law enforcement bodies and the citizens, the latter as guarantors of the ethical duty that is acting and being present so that our society gets better every day and that social coexistence and peace, as well as citizen security, reaches the highest satisfaction rates possible.



Description of the consequences on the regions pointing out the positive European implications:

The **Council of Europe** approved a Recommendation on 9th December 2009, defining a **missing person** as person who is absent from their usual residence for no known or apparent reason, whose existence has become a reason for concern, or that their new residence is unknown, resulting in the search for their own safety and based on family or social interest.

In addition, Recommendation R(79) 6 of the **Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of 20th April 1979** on the search for missing persons, includes in its annex a profiling of missing persons, thus defining its scope of application.

In spite of this, the **concept of "missing person"** may change from country to country, including different categories of individuals and different risk levels. However, the issue itself is common in every society.

During the **Council of Justice and Internal Affairs which took place on 27th and 28th November 2008** it was agreed to urge member states to introduce and develop national warning systems for the general public in the event of kidnapping of children, as well as to establish application modes at national level allowing a cross-border activation of national systems.

However, to this day the European Union has no registry at European level for unsolved missing persons cases and it is still necessary to improve coordination between national police forces, missing persons databases and victims assistance, among other issues. Some MEPs have highlighted these shortcomings within the European Parliament.

As pointed out by the European Commission, missing persons are a high-risk group for human trafficking. It should be reminded that the EU has created a global and political framework on human trafficking, referring to the victims' rights directive. Work is being done in European law to improve access to justice for crime victims and their relatives.



In short, actions such as that of the Assembly of Extremadura, devoted to the topic of disappearances, contribute in a certain way in **making visible this problem** and thus **improves the missing persons search systems, the support to their families and prevention and study of the causes behind disappearances, raising social awareness on the impact suffered every year by thousands of families who report the disappearance of a loved one.**





PHOTOGRAPHIC ANNEX



Meeting to adopt the agreement to observe a minute's silence on day 9 of each month.



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9 of March Award "Best Institutional Action" awarded by QSD-Global

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