

# NNWG (No Name Working Group) Review of Unidentified Human Remains

In July 2013, a **comprehensive review of unidentified human remains** was launched at the 12 mortuary facilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The review was completed in January 2018.

JULY  
**2013**

JANUARY  
**2018**

The review was carried out by the NN (“no name”, “nomen nescio:”) Working Group.

Working Groups were created by the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to review cases of unidentified remains in the country’s 12 mortuary facilities in order to determine if new identifications could be made.\*

The NN Working Group comprised Prosecutors, representatives from the Missing Persons Institute of Bosnia and Herzegovina (MPI), the Republika Srpska Center for the Investigation of War and War Crimes and the Search for Missing Persons, legal medicine specialists, the Institute for Forensic Medicine of Republika Srpska, the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) crime technicians, companies managing the facilities and other institutions/individuals as needed.

The 12 mortuary facilities



Over the course of four and a half years, the NNWG examined a total of

→ **3,583 cases**

→ **121 new identifications**

Among 3,583 cases examined during the NN project there are cases containing no human remains, cases which are not in the mandate of MPI/ICMP (92-95 period), ossuary material (cases which cannot be identified), cases with no match to reference blood samples, etc.

**A case** is defined as a set of human remains or evidence which was assigned a unique identification case number by the relevant prosecutor’s office, upon exhumation. A case can be a single bone, a body part, a full body or can be composed of commingled, disarticulated human remains. Also, a case can contain no human remains

(mistakenly exhumed animal skeletons, pieces of evidence, clothing, personal effects, etc.). A case of human remains can include one or more skeletal sets.

**A skeletal set** is a set of human remains which can be ascertained to originate from one person (through anthropological examination or DNA testing).

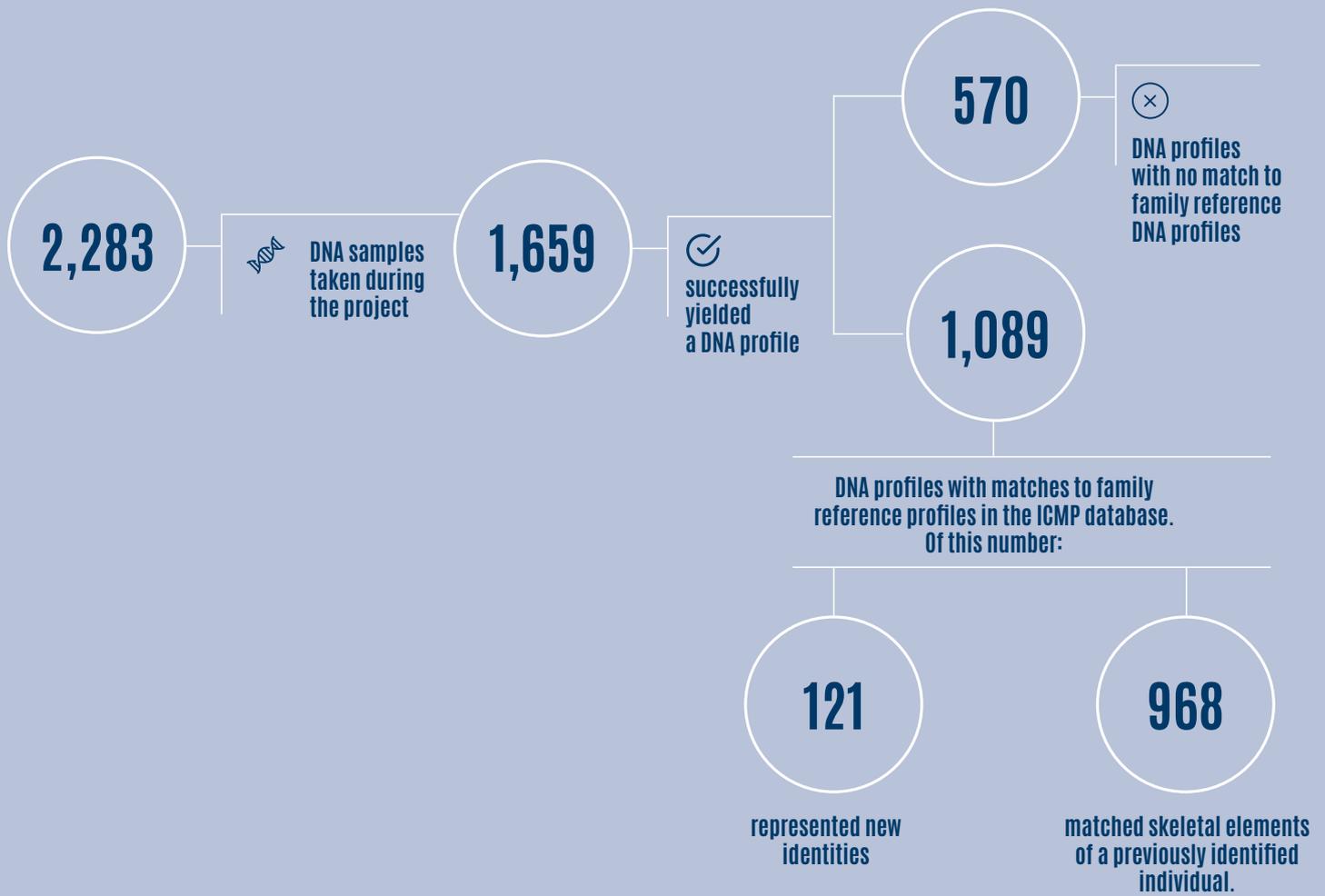


ICMP completed the examination of facilities, and after DNA testing of bone samples from NN cases the results are:

**1,888**  
unique unmatched DNA profiles



**1,888**  
unidentified individuals located in BiH mortuary facilities



\*ICMP and the MPI believe that cases that do not match DNA profiles given by relatives of the missing may be a consequence of misidentifications.

Some of the 8,000 bodies that were identified before ICMP introduced DNA-led identification in 2001 may have been **misidentified**.

This can happen easily when traditional methods of identification are used – for example, identifying human remains on the basis of clothes or wristwatches or documents that are nearby. In the disruption and confusion of war, these things are often exchanged or lost or otherwise moved from person to person.

By contrast, a DNA match report is only issued when there is 99.95 percent certainty, and the percentage is often much higher than that.

However, many of the families who buried a loved one before 2001 did not provide ICMP with a blood sample – because they believed there was no need, as their loved one had already been identified.

If human remains that were buried were **misidentified**, these might actually belong to families that **did** provide blood samples.

At the same time, the remains that truly belong to families who buried **misidentified** remains may be among those that are stored in the 12 mortuaries.

In September 2017 the MPI, with ICMP support, began proactively encouraging families whose missing relative was identified before 2001 to provide blood or saliva samples. In this way, it is hoped that more identifications can be made, and misidentifications can be corrected.

