

PAG·ASA

30 years of support to victims
of human trafficking





PAG·ASA

FOREWORD

30 years! Since the founding of our NGO in 1994, PAG-ASA has come a long way, always focusing on its core mission: fighting human trafficking by supporting its victims and defending their rights. Over the years, we have continuously adapted our services to meet the evolving needs of victims and the changing dynamics of society.

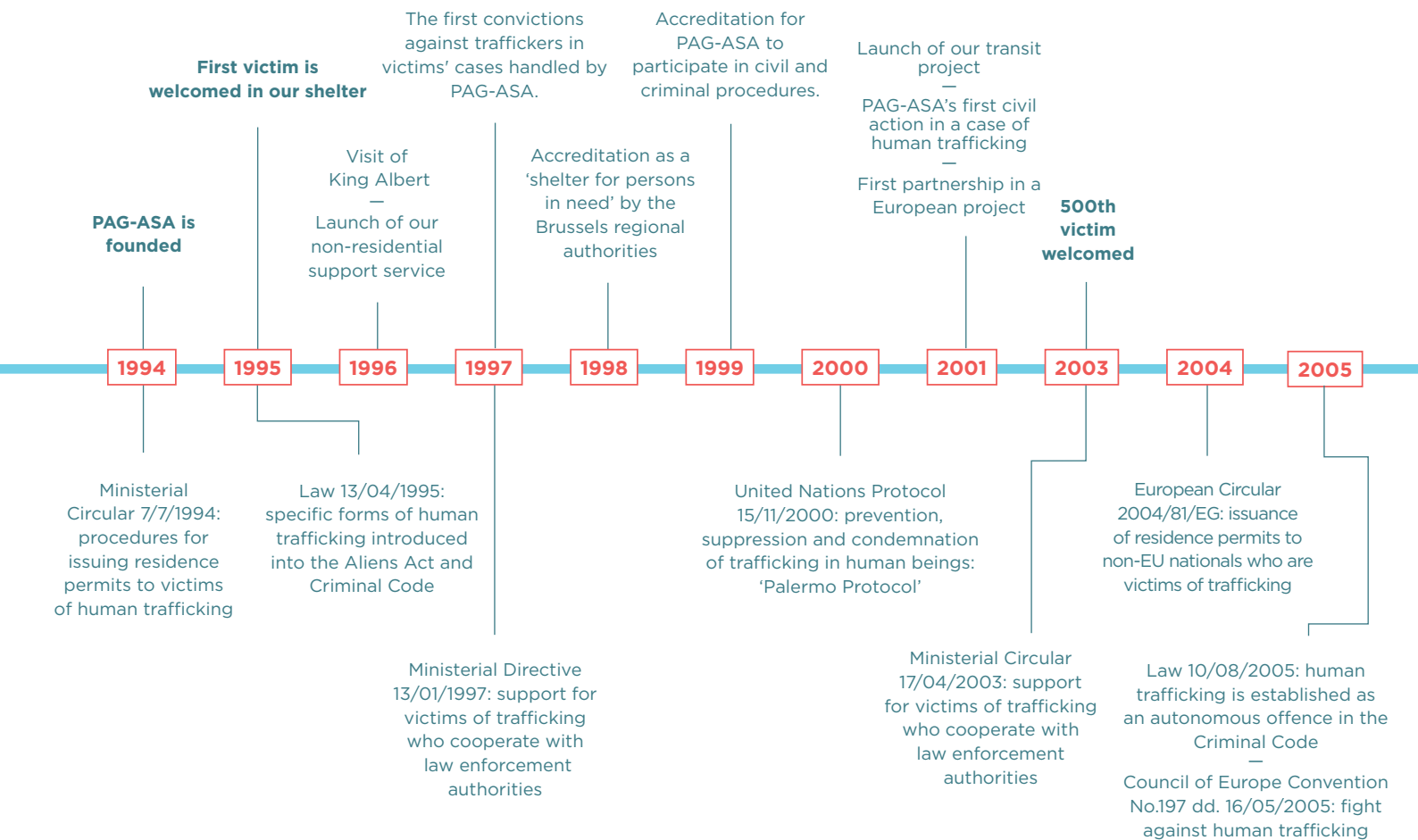
The past few years have brought significant challenges. In October 2019, we celebrated our 25th anniversary at the Belgian Senate, surrounded by our professional partners. Just a few months later, however, we were faced with a new reality. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our lives and shook our work. Unfortunately, its consequences persist: the economic and social impact of the health crisis have made vulnerable groups even more susceptible to exploitation, making our mission even more important.

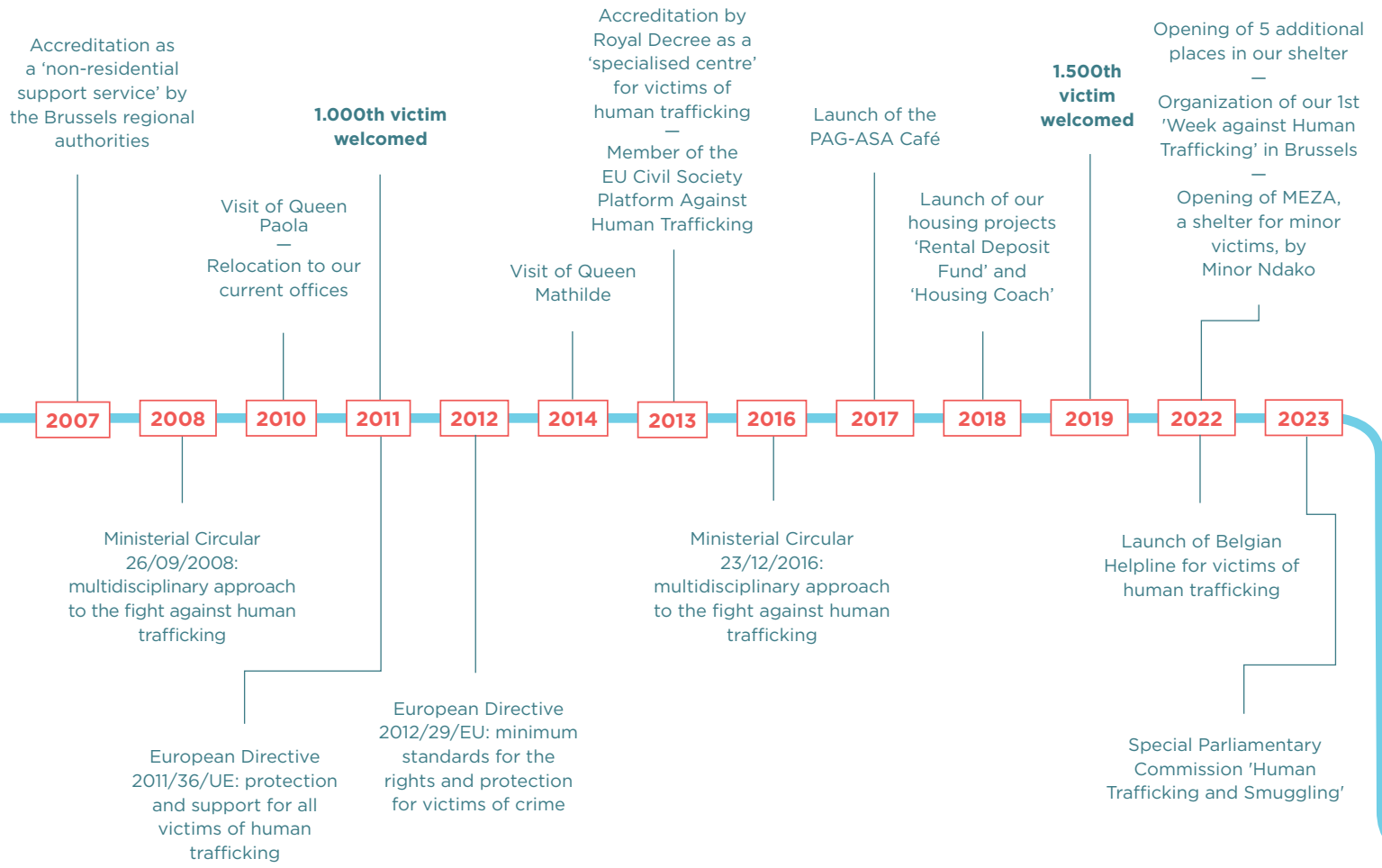
PAG-ASA has demonstrated resilience and innovation, ensuring the continuous delivery of essential services to victims 24/7, even in difficult circumstances. In response to the new challenges, we have launched new projects, strengthened our partnerships, and developed innovative tools to generate greater impact. This has required great energy and dedication from everyone: volunteers, staff, board members, and, of course, our beneficiaries.

Our heartfelt congratulations and a huge thank you to all of you!

To mark our 30th anniversary, we organized a special celebration with our beneficiaries. Words cannot describe the joy we felt! We have been deeply moved by the hundreds of positive messages we've received. They give us the strength and motivation we need to tackle the challenges that lie ahead!

Jozef De Witte (President) and Sarah De Hovre (Director)





VISION AND MISSION

Vision: PAG-ASA aspires to have a society in which the exploitation and trafficking of human beings no longer exists. As long as this has not been achieved, PAG-ASA advocates for everyone to stand against the exploitation of people, where the exploiters are rigorously condemned by the authorities and where all victims of human trafficking have access to adequate support, so that they have the resources to build a new life.

Mission: PAG-ASA is committed helping all (potential) victims of human trafficking; this entails two core missions. The first is to provide quality support to victims of human trafficking. This means ensuring our support is tailor-made to the individual, in the short and long term, and is focused on recovery and (re-)integration into society. The second is to actively take part in the fight against trafficking of human beings at the national and international level. This includes cooperating with the relevant public authorities, both in the field and at policy level, as well as awareness-raising, information sharing, training and providing advisory services.

COLLABORATION

PAG-ASA is one of three specialized centers in Belgium dedicated to victims of human trafficking, which are recognized and mandated by the national authorities to support victims under the framework of the 'special procedure for protection and assistance'. Thus, PAG-ASA takes part in the multidisciplinary approach in the fight against human trafficking, collaborating closely with all its partners.

VALUES



Equality



Transparency



Engagement



Pluralism



Respect



Openness



Trust

WORKING PRINCIPLES



The victim at the heart of all our activities



Working as part of a network



Holistic and sustainable support



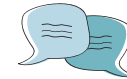
Empowerment and fostering autonomy



Professional discretion and confidentiality



Respecting laws and regulation



Dialogue and active participation

OUR SUPPORT TO VICTIMS



Reception and referrals



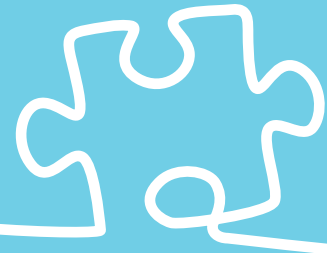
Sheltered housing



Legal support



Administrative support



Psychosocial support

REFERRALS

“I arrived at PAG-ASA through the police. They really helped me. The first time the police said, ‘We’re taking you to a place where you will be happy,’ I was scared because I didn’t trust the police. But when they brought me to PAG-ASA, I thought, ‘ah, this really feels like a home.’”

M., NIGERIA, EXPLOITED IN BRUSSELS



A referral is any request for help made to PAG-ASA, whether it is done by phone, email, in person at our offices, or through the national helpline. Each referral is handled with care, because behind every request stands a person who deserves an attentive and respectful response, even when the situation does not involve human trafficking.

Referrals can come directly from someone who thinks they may be a victim of trafficking, from someone who knows them, or from a frontline professional they have met (such as the police, labour inspection services, a Fedasil center, or a lawyer).

Persons/organizations who referred potential victims to PAG-ASA over the last 5 years

Victims themselves	972
Social sector	449
Private persons	429
Law enforcement	323
Services for foreigners and migrants	171
Services for UFM*	137
Legal aid services	126
Medical sector	63
Sürya / Payoke	44
Diplomatic body	14
Unknown	21

*UFM = Unaccompanied Foreign Minors

When we identify indicators of trafficking, we meet with the presumed victim and take all necessary steps to clarify their situation; offering support tailored to their needs and requests. We explain the conditions, benefits, and potential challenges of the protection procedure for victims of human trafficking, enabling the victim to make an informed choice about whether or not to enter the procedure and receive our support. If they choose another path, we fully respect their decision.

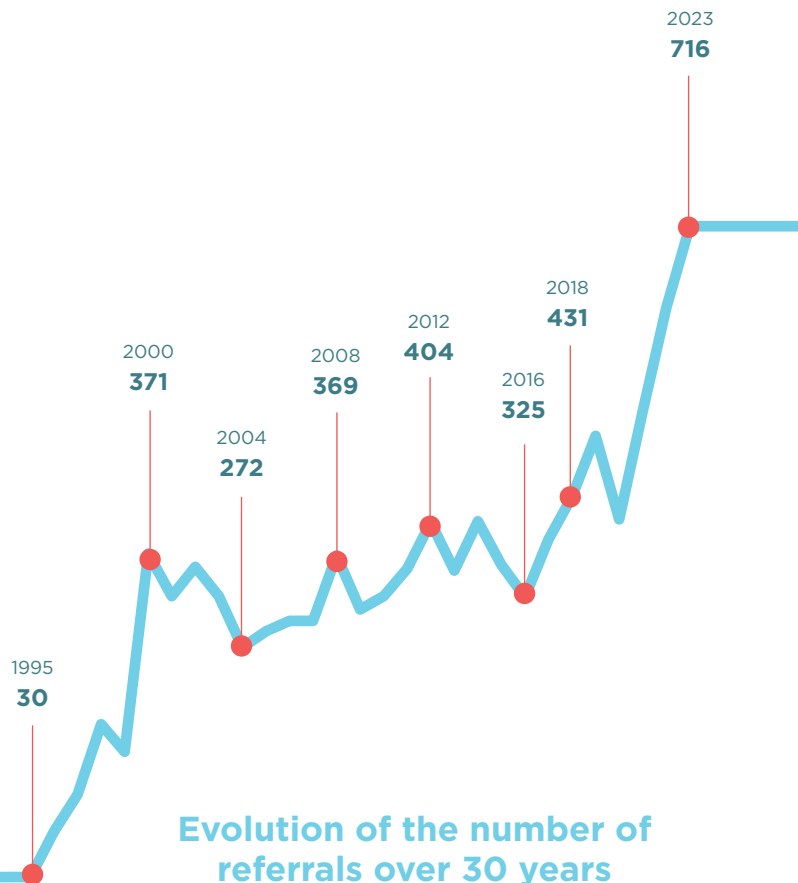
From the first contact, we try to create an environment where each person feels safe and respected, turning an often difficult experience into the start of recovery.

9.913 total number
of referrals
(over 30 years)

24/7 staff are reachable
around the clock

In recent years, we have seen a noticeable increase in referrals, often for situations without indicators of trafficking. Several factors may explain this trend, including:

- 1 reduced access of other support services caused by the increased digitalization which began during the COVID crisis.
- 2 saturated homelessness services in the Brussels region.
- 3 a shortage of accommodation for asylum seekers, leading people to unsafe or inadequate solutions to survive.
- 4 PAG-ASA's increased efforts in awareness-raising and training for professionals.
- 5 the launch of the Belgian helpline www.stophumantrafficking.be in 2022.



Evolution of the number of referrals over 30 years

SUPPORT PROGRAMME

“ *PAG-ASA is here to heal past wounds, replacing painful memories with beautiful ones through kindness and meaningful activities, leaving behind not even scars.*

D., MOROCCO, EXPLOITED IN FLEMISH BRABANT



For victims, arriving at PAG-ASA means the beginning of a path to recovery and independence, a journey that individuals undertake with courage. We are here to support them every step of the way, offering personalized, comprehensive assistance across all aspects of their lives. We believe that with the right resources, each person can heal from past trauma and create a future filled with hope.

Our individual support is holistic and tailored, adapted to the unique needs, context, and strengths of each individual.

Our support is structured around three key areas: legal, administrative, and psychosocial. While most individuals require support in all three areas, some may only need assistance in one or two. For instance, someone with a permanent residence permit may not require administrative support.

1.769

total number of
victims supported
by PAG-ASA (30 years)

250

number of victims
supported by PAG-ASA
each year

3 to 5
YEARS

typical length
of support

When beginning their journey with PAG-ASA, victims in need of secure and stable housing can stay in our shelter, where they receive intensive residential support. For those who already have housing upon arrival or who moved out of our shelter, we provide ambulatory support, with regular follow-ups at their homes or in our offices. The intensity of this support is adapted to individual needs.

In addition to individual support, we offer group activities to reduce isolation and expand our beneficiaries' support network. Since 2019, we also offer housing assistance, via personalized coaching and a rental guarantee fund. Finding affordable housing is a significant challenge in a limited and increasingly expensive rental market, making this support crucial for those moving out of our shelter toward independent living.

RECORDS

1

DAY

shortest duration of support

26

YEARS

longest duration of support
(still on-going)



SHELTERED HOUSING

“*Back then, my mind was filled with worries and needs. When I arrived at PAG-ASA, I felt respect above all: people spoke to me kindly, explained things to me, helped me wash my clothes, and I had a room with a shower. It felt like it was family, or like a mother with her child. They also helped me register for school and with Actiris.*

G., MOROCCO, EXPLOITED IN WEST FLANDERS



Our shelter is much more than just a place to stay; it is a quiet and safe space, where individuals can start rebuilding and planning their future at their own pace. We welcome all presumed victims of human trafficking, without distinction of nationality, gender, or type of exploitation.

Each private room has its own bathroom, and our shared areas provide a protected and supportive environment. Every day, our staff work to create a family-like, warm atmosphere where everyone can finally feel safe and at ease.

In 2022, due to the increasing demand and thanks to generous donations from private supporters, we expanded our shelter! We now have an additional wing with five private rooms and a shared space. This area welcomes residents who have gained some independence but are not yet fully ready to live on their own.

21

individual
bedrooms

99%

highest rate of
occupancy
(in 2019) *

6.377

cumulative
number of
nights (2023)

4^{to}6

MONTHS

average
length of stay

LEGAL SUPPORT

“When my boss was convicted, I felt a huge sense of relief. He was the criminal, and now everyone knows he’s not a good person. I used to be afraid of him, but not anymore. My legal assistant helped me keep my address and contacts hidden, so I felt safe throughout the trial.

M., ALGERIA, EXPLOITED IN HAINAUT



We understand how crucial it is for victims to feel supported and safe during the legal procedure against their traffickers. Our legal support is designed to provide assistance at every stage of the procedure: we assist victims in filing complaints or making statements, keep them informed of any developments in the investigation and in the criminal case, and support them when the case goes to court. If they wish, we also get them in contact

with a lawyer to participate as civil party during the proceedings and/or to claim for compensation.

By working closely with the police, labour inspection, the prosecutor's office, and lawyers, we advocate for the victims' rights and guide them through the judicial system so that they feel protected and supported throughout the entire procedure.

THE PAST 5 YEARS:

88

trials against exploiters
in cases handled by
PAG-ASA¹

55

cases which
did not lead to
a trial²

8

number of cases
in which PAG-ASA
acted as a civil party

1 Here, a trial implies that the public prosecutor pursued the case in court for human trafficking. Following this, there may have been a conviction or an acquittal (full or partial). There could be several victims involved in one case.

2 Due to a dissolution or a dismissal of the case

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

“

I'm happy now with my papers in Belgium. I can work legally, go to school, and rent housing. Before, I was on the streets and had nothing. Now, everything has changed.

H., MOROCCO, EXPLOITED IN BRUSSELS



Under the special procedure for protection and assistance for victims of human trafficking, as outlined in the Aliens Act, victims without a residence permit can be granted a temporary residence document. PAG-ASA handles all the necessary administrative steps to obtain and renew residence and work permits through the Immigration Office and local authorities.

For those who have been living with a precarious, illegal immigration status, obtaining a residence and work permit is a crucial step in their journey towards recovery. This document grants them access to fundamental rights, such as work, education, and housing, allowing them to transition from a state of vulnerability to a stable situation with future prospects.

THE PAST 5 YEARS:

124

non-belgian victims who were regularized under the human trafficking procedure or for humanitarian reasons

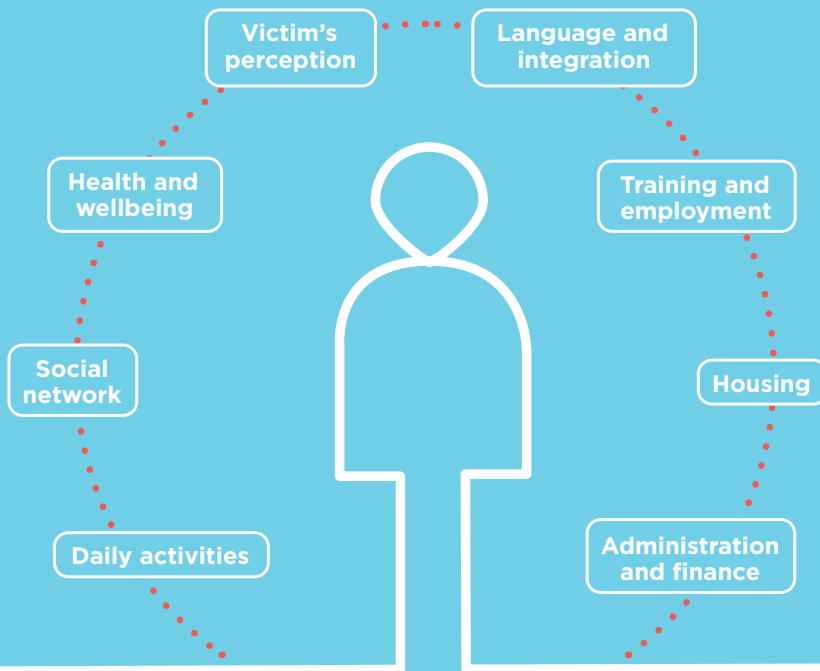
16

non-belgian victims who chose to return to their country of origin

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

“With the help of PAG-ASA’s team, I started studying again after having left school more than 25 years ago. I enrolled in the social integration course and began language classes. With PAG-ASA’s support, I was able to reconnect with my true self, rebuild trust in others and in myself. I learnt how to take care of myself again.

P., MOROCCO, EXPLOITED IN BRUSSELS



We believe in each individual's capacity to recover and regain their independence. Our social workers are here to stand by and support each person on their individual journey, walking with them every step of the way.

Our psychosocial support touches on all aspects of a person's life, and is continuously adapted to meet each individual's unique needs. Our goal is to help each person develop their own life project, fostering autonomy and resilience.

Each individual has regular meetings with their social worker, whether at home, at PAG-ASA, or elsewhere. The frequency of these meetings is flexible, ranging from daily to monthly appointments depending on the person's specific needs.

We also collaborate with various organizations to offer complementary activities or to meet specific needs, helping our beneficiaries build a strong social network.

1.089

hours worked by
interpreters over a year (2023)

282

hours of individual
appointments with
victims per month (2023)

PROFILE OF VICTIMS

“When I saw the other people, I thought, ‘Hey, I’m not the only victim—there are many of us.’ I wanted to see if there were other Nigerians, but there were people from other countries, speaking different languages. Still, we lived together like a community, because we were all coming from the same situation.

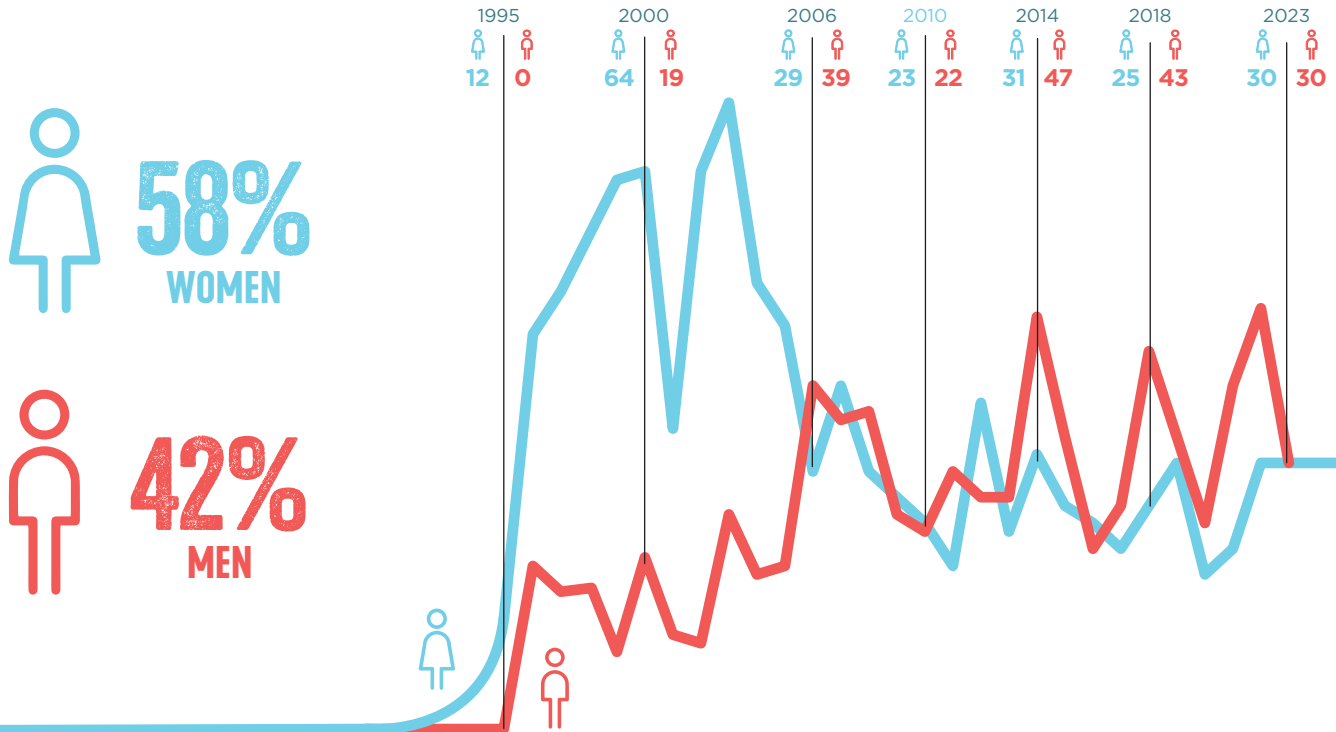
F, NIGERIA, EXPLOITED IN BRUSSELS

At PAG-ASA, we encounter people from all walks of life, and our experience shows that there is no “typical” profile of a victim. Age, gender, education level, nationality, and socio-economic background are irrelevant: human trafficking can affect anyone.

The vulnerability of victims can stem from a variety of factors: social, family, and/or economic circumstances; addiction to alcohol, drugs, and/or medications; or mild to severe mental health challenges. These vulnerabilities can make certain individuals potential targets of trafficking. However, these factors alone do not explain how someone falls into an exploitative situation.

What trafficking victims often have in common is a lack of a support network and the misfortune of encountering someone willing to exploit their vulnerabilities and isolation for personal gain.

Evolution of the number of new victims by gender over 30 years



TYPE OF EXPLOITATION



39%

sexual exploitation



14%

aggravated smuggling



1%

forced committing
of crimes



42%

labour (economic)
exploitation



1%

exploitation through
begging



2%

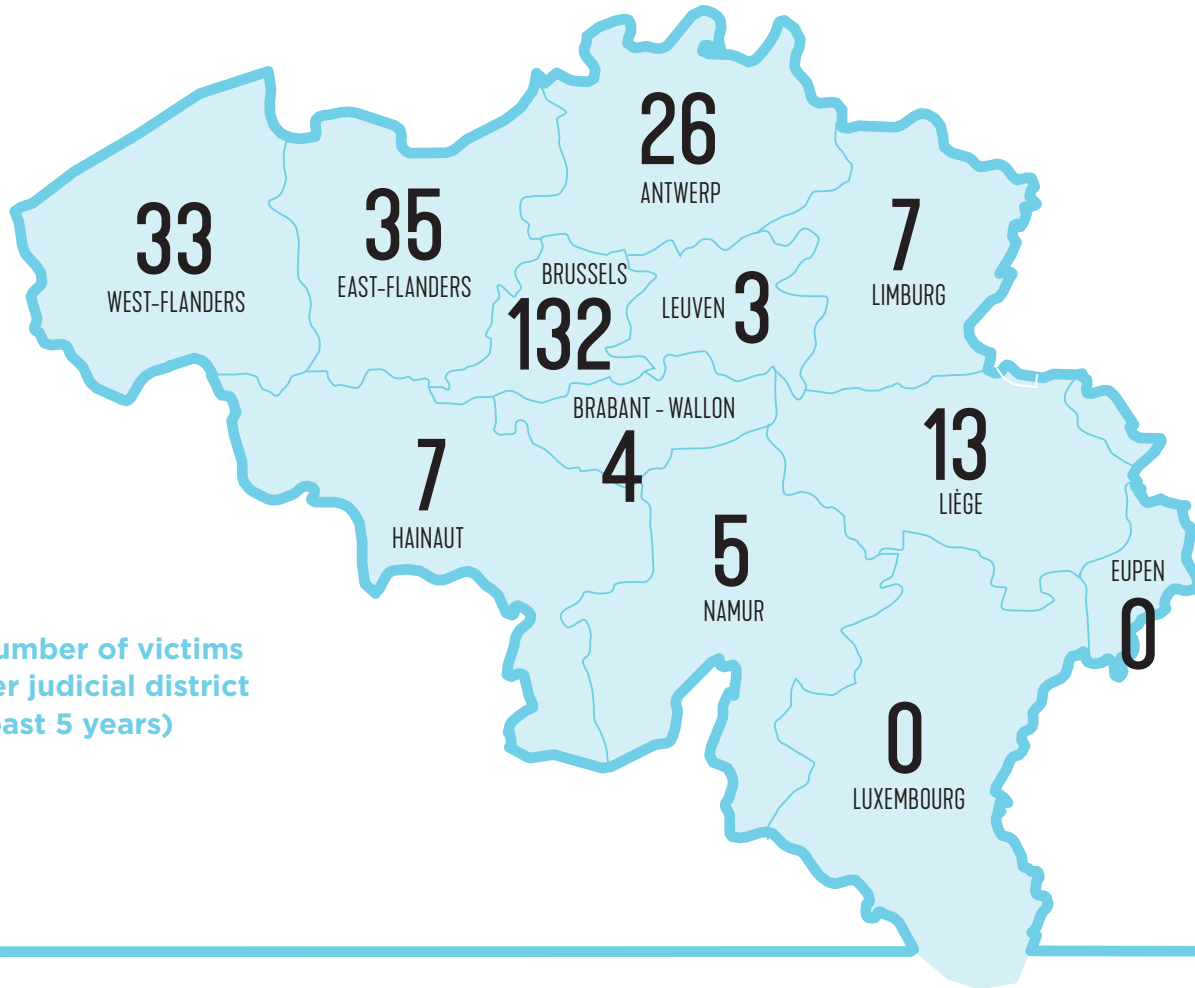
other types

Evolution of the number of new victims by type of exploitation over 30 years



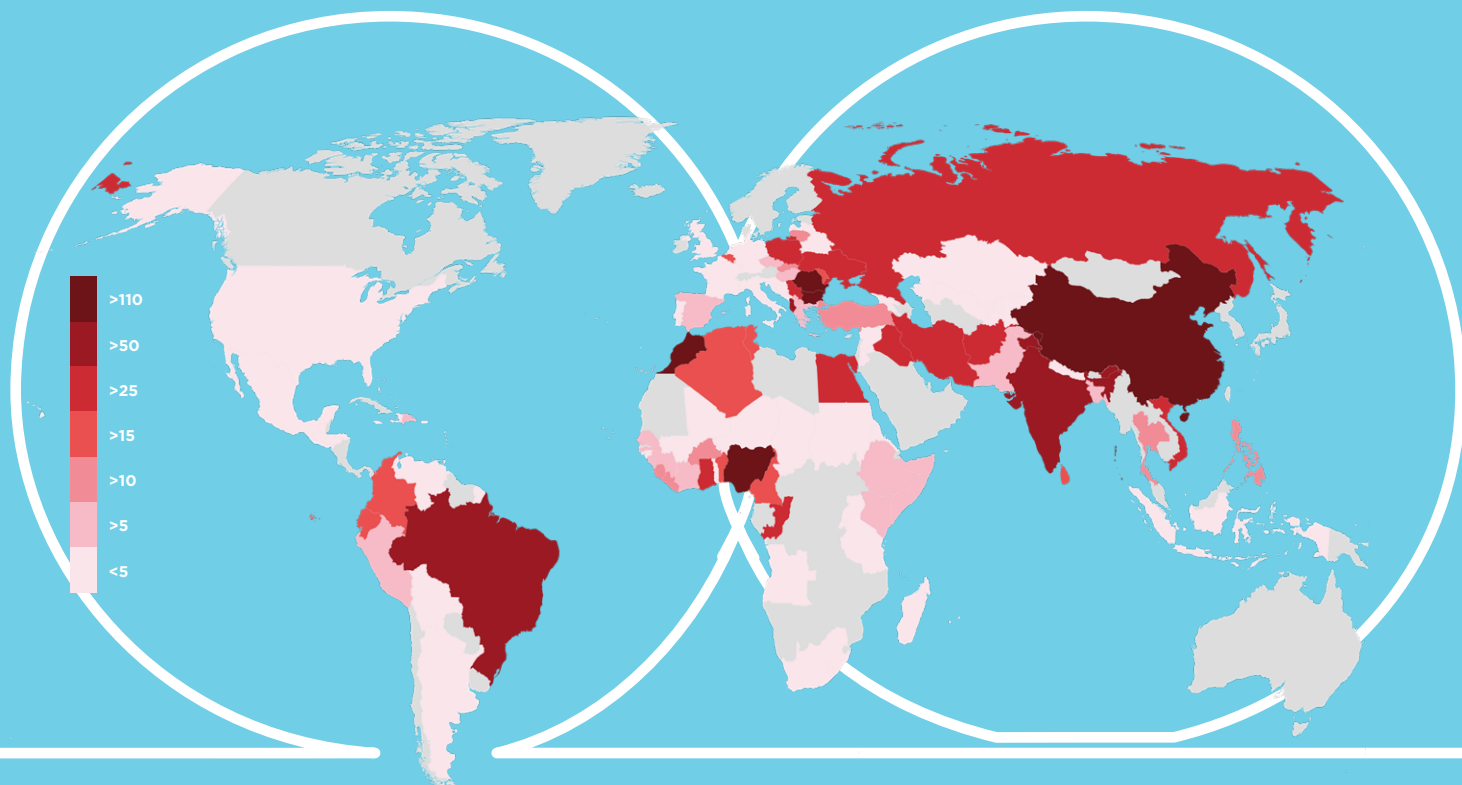
PLACE OF EXPLOITATION

PAG-ASA's mission is not tied to any particular territorial jurisdiction: we welcome and support victims regardless of where they were exploited within Belgium. As a result, we work closely with police, inspectors, and prosecutors from all Belgian judicial districts. In fact, a victim exploited in Antwerp may feel unsafe there and be redirected to Brussels or Liège (or vice versa). Additionally, if PAG-ASA's shelter is at full capacity, a victim may be redirected to Payoke or Sürya (or vice versa). Each situation is assessed based on the context and needs of the victim.



Number of victims
per judicial district
(past 5 years)

NATIONALITIES OF VICTIMS

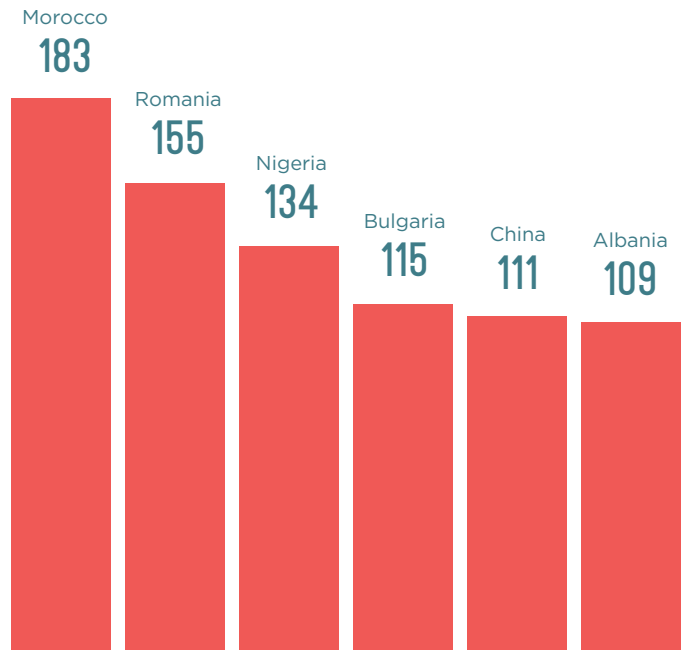


Number of victims by nationality (over 30 years)

>110		>15		>5		<5	
Morocco	183	Afghanistan	25	Burkina Faso	10	El Salvador	4
Romania	155	Congo (Zaire)	25	Lithuania	10	Guatemala	4
Nigeria	134	Ghana	25	Sierra Leone	10	Kazakhstan	4
Bulgaria	115	Moldova	24	Kosovo	9	Mali	4
China	111	Ecuador	23	Pakistan	9	Palestine	4
		Algeria	22	Macedonia	8	Portugal	4
		Tunisia	22	Somalia	8	Syria	4
		Belgium	19	Bangladesh	7	Uzbekistan	4
		Cameroon	19	Ethiopia	7	Belarus	3
		Benin	17	Ivory Coast	7	Cape Verde	3
		Former Yugoslavia	16	Spain	7	Chad	3
		Sri Lanka	16	Guinea	6	Eritrea	3
				Hungary	6	France	3
				Kenya	6	Guinea-Bissau	3
				Czech Republic	6	Indonesia	3
				Dominican Republic	5	Latvia	3
				Greece	5	Sudan	3
				Peru	5	Togo	3
				Senegal	5	Venezuela	3
						Angola	2
						Armenia	2
						Bosnia	2
						Croatia	2
						Germany	2
						Haiti	2
						Italy	2
						Madagascar	2
						Mexico	2
						Niger	2
						South Africa	2
						Argentina	1
						Bolivia	1
						Georgia	1
						Honduras	1
						Jamaica	1
						Jordan	1
						Kyrgyzstan	1
						Lesotho	1
						Mauritius	1
						Montenegro	1
						Nepal	1
						Netherlands	1
						Rwanda	1
						Slovenia	1
						Tajikistan	1
						Tanzania	1
						Tibet	1
						Uganda	1
						United Kingdom	1
						United States	1
						Unknown	1

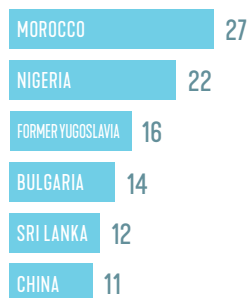
The most common nationalities over 30 years

PAG-ASA has provided support to victims from 104 different nationalities. Among these, six nationalities account each for over 100 supported victims. While these six nationalities have remained consistently represented, the most frequent nationalities have shifted over the years. At times, other nationalities have been more prominent, as shown on the next page.

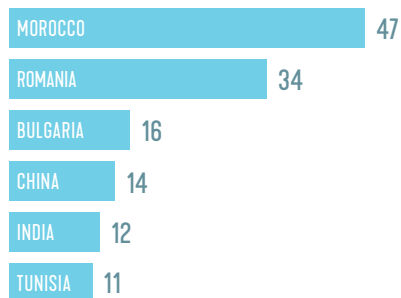


The most frequent nationalities over five-year periods

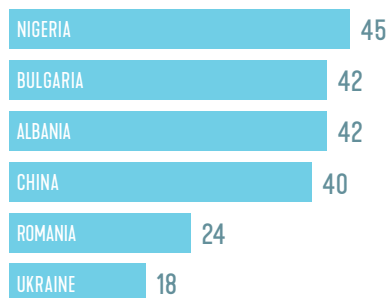
1995 – 1998



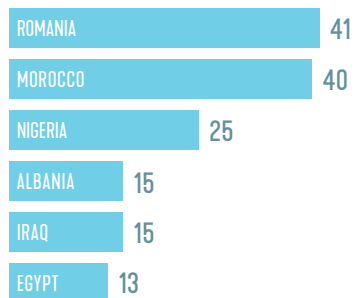
2009 – 2013



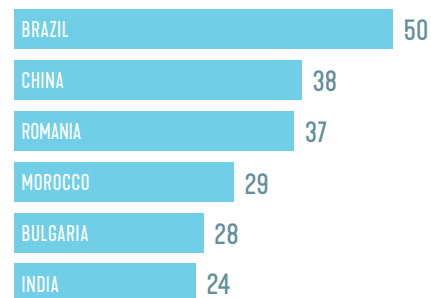
1998 – 2003



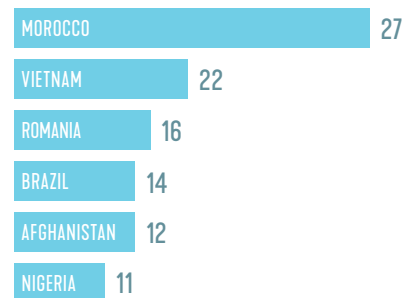
2014 – 2018



2004 – 2008



2019 – 2023



NEW PROJECTS

“*Living at CO-KOT with other young people from Brussels or elsewhere allows me to grow and learn to fully live in the moment.*”

A., ALBANIA, EXPLOITED IN HAINAUT

PAG-ASA’s approach is rooted in personalization: every individual support plan is tailored to the client’s needs, context, and strengths. When individual needs reveal emerging trends within our target group or in society at large, and when it seems relevant for us to address them as an organization, PAG-ASA does not hesitate to launch new pilot projects in response. This is how, over the past five years, we have developed the following projects:

1 Outreach

This project, supported by Safe Brussels, enables our team to join police and labour inspection during anti-trafficking operations in Brussels, or to remain on “standby” to meet victims at the police station after these operations. This approach gives us the opportunity to reach victims directly on-site, where we inform them about their rights and the available support services.

2 National helpline

Sürya, Payoke, and PAG-ASA launched, with the support of the FPS Justice, the new "National helpline" for victims of human trafficking: a shared website and a centralized phone number to facilitate access to support services for victims.

3 MyEldo

Thanks to financial support from AMIF, Myria, Sürya, Payoke, and PAG-ASA developed MyEldo: a web application for registering referrals and tracking support services. This tool enhances our efficiency and provides a more comprehensive view of the human trafficking phenomenon in Belgium.

4 Meza

Our partner Minor Ndako, with financial support from the Flemish authorities, opened a shelter for unaccompanied minor girls who are presumed victims of sexual exploitation. PAG-ASA handles the 24/7 referral system and provides legal and administrative support to the young residents. This project in the Flemish-speaking

region of Belgium complements our collaboration with Esperanto in the French-speaking region, ensuring comprehensive support for minors across the country.

5 VONA

The VONA project, funded by the European Union, aims to enhance support for third-country-national women victims of trafficking through a gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approach. Among other benefits, this project allows us to cover costs for psychological, therapeutic, or psychiatric sessions when these are not covered by health insurance or social welfare services.

6 CO-KOT

In partnership with various stakeholders, we created CO-KOT: a unique shared housing project in Brussels where students, former unaccompanied minors supported by Minor Ndako, and young adults supported by PAG-ASA live together. This initiative promotes social integration and personal development in a diverse environment.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS-RAISING

Training and awareness-raising play a crucial role in equipping frontline professionals with the skills and knowledge to quickly identify signs and indicators of potential human trafficking situations and effectively refer presumed victims to one of the three specialized centers.

We provide training sessions and awareness materials for professionals who work with at-risk groups and/or potential victims. In fact, national and international partners and organizations frequently contact us in this regard.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, funding from Safe.brussels has enabled us to significantly expand our training activities since 2019. Moreover, through a partnership with the Regional School of Public Administration (ERAP), we provide training on human trafficking to public administration employees.

We also carry out awareness-raising initiatives for the general public, particularly on World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (July 30) and European Anti-Trafficking Day (October 18). Since 2022, we have organized an annual "Week Against Human Trafficking" in Brussels, featuring training sessions, film screenings, photo exhibitions, and awareness-raising activities.

OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS:

2.650

professionals
trained

49

international delegations
visited PAG-ASA

6.620

participants in our
awareness-raising activities

Professionals trained by PAG-ASA include

Local and federal police • Regional and federal inspection services • Prosecutors • Prosecutors' legal advisors
Guardians • Civil servants • Lawyers • Staff from FEDASIL, Red Cross, and Caritas shelters • Social services
Youth services • Medical professionals • Public Centers for Social Welfare (CPAS) • Social workers • Immigration Office staff
Services for unaccompanied minors (UFM) • Youth support services • Educators • Municipal prevention services
International organizations • Embassy personnel • Trade unions • Services for migrants and homeless persons

OUR TEAM

In the early days, PAG-ASA's team consisted of just four workers, supported by a large team of volunteers. Each member took on multiple roles, providing everything from administrative and legal support to psychosocial assistance, while also managing the day-to-day operations of the shelter. With unwavering commitment, they laid the solid foundations of our organization.

Over the years, our team has grown and specialized to meet the increasing number of referrals and people supported, as well as the increasingly complex context. PAG-ASA has chosen to hire professionals from various backgrounds, each bringing their experience and expertise. This evolution has allowed us to develop our approach, offer more diverse and tailored responses to the needs of victims and their different profiles, while strengthening our ability to face the growing challenges related to tackling human trafficking both in the field and at the political level.

Today, our team consists of 37 workers and 10 volunteers!

37

employees

6

administrators

10

volunteers

On 01/10/2024

Director

Sarah De Hovre

**Administration,
Finance, and
Infrastructure**

Ayten
Cathy
Lirim
Nathalie Pi.
Sylvette
Brahim

**Training and
Communication**

Ilse
Mara

**Psycho-social
support**

Aïsha
Amandine
Anne-Sophie
Annelies
Ayako
Babette
Charlotte
Eva
Ilse
Joke
Judith
Liesbeth T.
Maaïke
Marie
Nathalie Pr.
Ruban

**Legal
support**

Anna
Anne-Marie
Enisa
Kelly
Liesbeth S.
Lotte
Mari
Mary
Melanie
Mylène
Sally

**Night Shift
Workers**

Arthur
Nilo

Volunteers

Alina
Karel
Katarina
Laure
Lieve
Masha
Mike
Mourad
Roos
Teodora

Board of Administration

Jozef DE WITTE (President)
France BLANMAILLAND
Linda CONINGS
Julie LEJEUNE
Annelies VANGOIDSENHOVEN
Johan VANGENECHTEN

WITH THE SUPPORT OF



With thanks to our individual donors and the organizations that have supported us financially over the years:

AG Solidarity • Aureus Ars & Scientia • Cera • Euroclear Belgium • Fondation Reine Paola • Fondation Samilia
Fonds Cecilia Ramos • Fonds Jean Praet • Fonds Kornelia Dirichs • Fonds Westmalle • Innerwheel II Antwerpen
KBS-FRB • Orea Capital • Rotary BXL Vesale • Soroptimist International Belgium • Talitha Koum • United Fund for Belgium
Vzw Oever • Vzw Overmolen • Vzw Welzijnszorg • Zusters van Liefde Roeselaere

If you would like to give us a little financial boost, you can make a transfer to our account number BE20 0011 7035 9156 under the name of PAG-ASA asbl.
PAG-ASA can issue tax exemption certificates from 40 euros per year.

Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français
Dit verslag is ook beschikbaar in het Nederlands
Via: info@pag-asa.be / www.pag-asa.be

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