To school in Antwerp



atlas

Practical information on enrolment and education for non-Dutch-speaking under-age newcomers and their parents



Dear parents

Is your child new to Belgium? Will your child be attending school in Antwerp for the first time? In that case, Atlas, integratie & inburgering Antwerpen *[civic and social integration]* can help you.

- Atlas will help you **find a first school** for your child.
- Atlas is also at the service of **parents who have recently arrived in Flanders**. Do you want to learn to speak Dutch? Do you want to find out more about living in Antwerp? You are welcome at Atlas.
- If you have any **questions**, please contact Atlas:
  atlas · integratie & inburgering Antwerpen
  Carnotstraat 110, 2060 Antwerpen
  03 338 70 70
  atlasminderjarigen@antwerpen.be
  www.atlas-antwerpen.be/contact
- Request an appointment on
  www.atlas-antwerpen.be/afspraak-school-kind.

This booklet is also available in **Spanish**, **French**, **English**, **Polish**, **Russian**, **Arabic**, **Turkish**, **Portuguese**, **Bulgarian**, **Persian (Farsi)**, **Romanian** and **Pashto**.

To school for the first time

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To school for the first time

When can my child start attending school?

- In Belgium, every child is **entitled to education**.
  Even children without valid residence documents.
- Your child can start attending nursery school when they are 2 years and 6 months old. A toddler aged 2 years and 6 months can start attending school on either of the following moments:
  - after the summer holiday (September)
  - after the autumn break (November)
  - after the Christmas holiday (January)
  - on the first day of school in February
  - after the spring break (February - March)
  - after the Easter holiday (April)
  - after Ascension Day (May)
- Children aged 3 and older can start school right away.
  They do not have to wait.

Caution!

You can register your child up to **a year before starting** nursery or preschool. Ask Atlas for more information as soon as your child is **1 year old**.

Does my child have to attend school?

Preschool is not compulsory until the age of 5. From 5 years of age, education is compulsory.

Attending preschool is very important. Your child will be learning Dutch and will have the opportunity to play with other children. Ask Atlas or the school for more information.

When does my child have to start attending school?

Compulsory education starts on 01 September of the year in which your child turns 5. From that day onward, your child will have to attend education.

Compulsory education ends when the child turns 18.

Will my child be learning Dutch at school?

Is your child younger than 12?

In this case your child can attend any school that has vacancies.
Your child will be assigned to a class with children of the same age.
Your child will regularly receive extra support to learn Dutch.

Is your child older than 12?

In this case your child can attend a school that organises separate classes for children who do not speak Dutch yet. These are called Reception Classes for non-Dutch-speaking Newcomers (OKAN) *[Onthaal Klas Anderstalige Nieuwkomers]*. In this class, your child will learn Dutch as quickly as possible. They will also be taking other classes. When your child has improved enough, they can attend regular classes.

Learning to speak Dutch better

In order to learn Dutch well, it is important for your child to always attend school. Your child can also practice Dutch by taking part in extra-curricular activities. You can find information on sports and leisure at the city of Antwerp youth service or at Atlas. Read more in 'What can my child do outside school hours?'.

Finding a school

Can I choose a school myself?

- You are free to choose a school for your child.
  Even if your child is not yet registered in the municipality or has no residence documents yet, they can still attend school.
  Does the school have vacancies? Then the school must register your child.
- You must agree to the school's house rules and educational project.
  Ask for the house rules and read them carefully.
  The school will always ask you to sign the school's house rules.
- To start in a specific year and study programme of secondary education, your child must meet the requirements.

If you need any help, please contact Atlas.

How do I select a school?

- Every school in Flanders is obliged to organise quality education. Nevertheless, all schools are different. Every school has its own approach. Every school has its own emphases.
  Think carefully about what you consider important for your child. And find a school that fits this best.
- Children up to the age of 12 who do not speak Dutch yet can attend any school.
- Children between 12 and 18 attend a school that provides OKAN classes.

If you need any help, please contact Atlas.

Where can I find information on schools?

- Is there a school you want to get to know better? Visit the school and ask the principal for information. Many schools organise an information day every year, at which occasion you can visit the classrooms.
- You can also ask friends, family, or neighbours whether they know a school and what they think of that school.
- Many schools have a website where you can find a lot of information.
- The most important rules, agreements and information can be found in the school's house rules. Ask for the house rules and read them carefully. When enrolling your child in a school, you must agree to these rules.

Information on the schools in Antwerp can be found here:

- www.onderwijskiezer.be
- www.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-en-vorming
- www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be
- the Meld je aan Antwerpen brochure. Feel free to ask for a copy from Atlas.



How do I enrol my child in preschool or in a primary school?

Looking for a school for the current school year?

Go to the school of your choice.

- Are there any vacancies? You can enrol your child.
- If the school has no vacancies, you cannot enrol your child.
  The school must always provide you with a document: a student refusal based on capacity or priority rules. This document is official proof that your child cannot enrol.

If you cannot find a place in a school nearby, please contact Atlas.

Looking for a school for next school year?

- Register your child on the www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be website.
  Registering your child means informing in advance in which schools you would like to enrol your child.

If you need any help, please contact Atlas.

- After registering, you will receive a letter or an email:
  - Are there any vacancies? You will see in which school you can enrol your child and when you should do so.
  - Is there no vacancy for your child for the time being? You will receive information about what you can do to find a vacancy.

Caution!

Registration does not equal enrolment. You will still have to go to the school to enrol your child.

How do I enrol my child in a secondary school?

Looking for a school for the current school year?

Go to the school of your choice.

- Are there vacancies? You can enrol your child. It is best to make an appointment with the school to enrol your child.
- If the school has no vacancies, you cannot enrol your child. The school must always provide you with a document: a student refusal based on capacity or priority rules. This document is official proof that your child cannot enrol.

If you cannot find a place in a school nearby, please contact Atlas.

Looking for a school for next school year (first year A or first year B)?

- Register your child via the www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be website. Registering your child means informing in advance in which schools you would like to enrol your child.

If you need any help, please contact Atlas.

- After registering, you will receive a letter or an email:
    - Are there any vacancies? You will see in which school you can enrol your child and when you should do so.
    - Is there no vacancy for your child for the time being? You will be given information about what you can do to find a vacancy.
- To register for the first year A, you need a certificate from primary school. If you do not have such a certificate, your child will go to the first year B.

Caution!

Registration does not equal enrolment. You will still have to go to the school to enrol your child.

Is your child already enrolled but you are looking for another school?

Please contact the *Centrum voor Leerlingenbegeleiding [Pupil guidance centre]* (CLB) of your current school.

Are you looking for a school for next school year for higher years?

Visit the school of your choice.

If your child only speaks a little or no Dutch

They will attend an OKAN class to learn Dutch. Atlas will help you find a school with OKAN classes. Feel free to contact Atlas.



Overview of education in Flanders

Aged **0 - 2.5** Day care or nursery

Preschool

Aged **2.5 - 5**

- **aged 2.5** → toddler class
- **aged 3** → 1st preschool
- **aged 4** → 2nd preschool
- **aged 5** → 3rd preschool

Start of compulsory education

Primary school

Aged **6** to **11**

- **aged 6** → 1st grade
- **aged 7** → 2nd grade
- **aged 8** → 3rd grade
- **aged 9** → 4th grade
- **aged 10** → 5th grade
- **aged 11** → 6th grade

2 options

Certificate ↙ ↘ No Certificate

Secondary education or secondary school

Aged **12** to **18**

Your child chooses a study programme

- 1st cycle
- 2nd cycle
- 3rd cycle

End of compulsory education

Adult education / Higher education / Work

+18

- → Vocational training
- → Adult secondary education
- → Associate degree studies
- → University college or university

Education in Flanders

Nursery and preschool

- Nursery and preschool are for children aged 2.5 to 5. Preschool is **compulsory** from the age of 5.
- In preschool your child will learn by colouring, painting, or doing craft work. They will also learn Dutch by singing, listening to stories, and playing with other children. This way, children evolve faster. They learn as they play.

Primary school

- Children aged 6 to 11 have to attend primary school. Primary education is **compulsory**.
- In primary school children learn to read, write, and count. They are taught history, world orientation and 'learning to learn'. They start learning French as a second language and learn how to interact with each other in a good way.
- A school that incorporates a primary school and preschool is called 'basisschool' *[school for basic education]*.
- Occasionally, a child can have an early start in primary school or an extended programme in preschool or primary school. If you have any questions about this, please ask the school for more information.

From primary school to secondary school

The school evaluates your child's basic knowledge. If your child has satisfactory results, they will receive an attestation (diploma or certificate).

Primary school

aged 6	→	1st grade
aged 7	→	2nd grade
aged 8	→	3rd grade
aged 9	→	4th grade
aged 10	→	5th grade
aged 11	→	6th grade

Will your child receive the primary education certificate?

YES

Your child will enter the A stream

Your child will be taking mainly theoretical classes.

After secondary education, your child will typically pursue further studies at a university college or a university.

NO

Your child will enter the B stream

Your child will have more practical and technical classes.

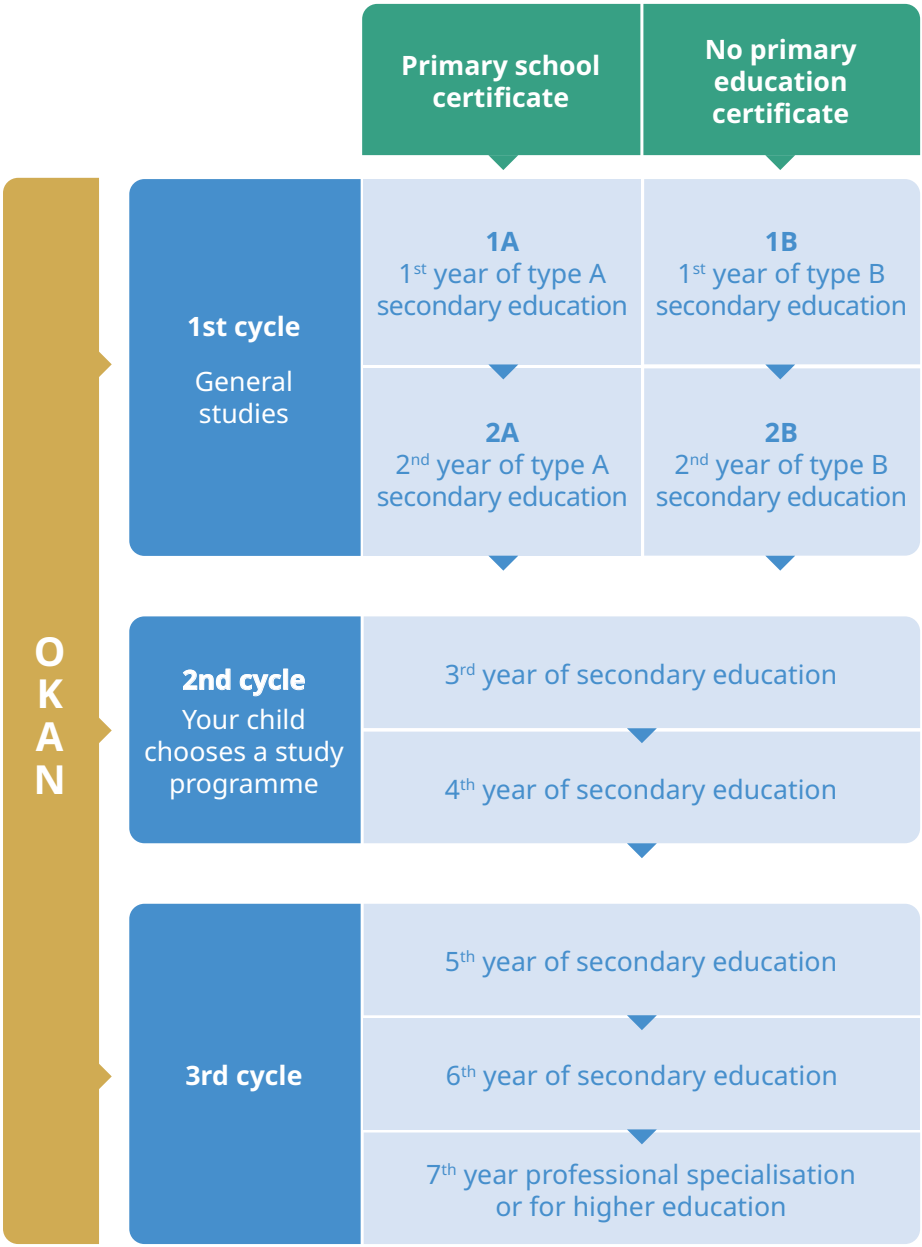
After secondary education, your child will typically start working.

Secondary school

- Adolescents aged 12 to 18 attend secondary school. Secondary education is also **compulsory**.
- Secondary education consists of 6 years, split up into 3 cycles:
    - 1st cycle: year 1A or 1B, and year 2A or 2B
    - 2nd cycle: years 3 and 4
    - 3rd cycle: years 5 and 6 or 7
- The first two years of secondary education are general education years. Your child will discover the following:
    - What am I good at? (talents)
    - What do I like doing?
    - What do I find interesting?
    - What do I want to do after secondary education? (study or work)



- In year 3, your child will choose either a programme aiming at higher studies or a programme focusing on working after second education. Your child will choose a study programme within these educational domains:
    - economy and organisation
    - arts and creation
    - agriculture and horticulture
    - society and well-being
    - sports
    - STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)
    - language and culture
    - food and hospitality
- That choice will determine your child's goal:
    - Your child will be preparing for **higher education studies**. (doorstroomfinaliteit) [*continuation finality*]
    - Your child will be preparing for either a job or further studies in a **creative or artistic direction**. (dubbele finaliteit) [*double finality*]
    - Your child will be preparing for either a job or further studies in a **technical direction**. (dubbele finaliteit) [*double finality*]
    - Your child will follow a lot of **practical classes**. Your child will be able to start working immediately after secondary school. (arbeidsmarktfinaliteit) [*labour market finality*]
      In order to obtain a secondary education diploma, your child must complete a 7th year. This is a specialisation year for a particular profession, or to prepare for higher education.


Primary school certificate
No primary education certificate
OKAN
1st cycle
General studies
1A
1st year of type A secondary education
1B
1st year of type B secondary education
2A
2nd year of type A secondary education
2B
2nd year of type B secondary education
2nd cycle
Your child chooses a study programme
3rd year of secondary education
4th year of secondary education
3rd cycle
5th year of secondary education
6th year of secondary education
7th year professional specialisation or for higher education

OKAN classes

What is OKAN or "Onthaalklas anderstalige nieuwkomers"?

[reception classes for foreign language speaking newcomers]

OKAN is a class for children who speak little or no Dutch.
Your child is entitled to OKAN if:

- your child is new to Belgium.
- your child is between 12 and 18 years of age.
- your child speaks little or no Dutch.

Your child will take Dutch lessons for 1 year.

What is interesting about OKAN?

- Your child will quickly learn to speak, read and write Dutch.
- Your child will also attend other classes: maths, history, sports (PE), practical classes, ...
- Your child will learn skills that are important at school.
- Your child will be preparing for secondary education.
- Your child will meet other children who are new to Belgium.

What after OKAN?

- The teacher will help your child and give advice on which studies will be appropriate for them.
- Your child will attend a secondary school class.
- Your child will be following a training at VDAB *[Flemish employment and vocational training office]* or in adult education. For instance: Ligo, CVO *[adult education centre]*, etc.

Dual learning

- From the age of 15 or 16, students can start dual learning. Dual learning is interesting for young people who want to prepare well for a job. They learn in class and at work (minimum 28 hours).
- Dual learning in secondary education can be done in:
    - a school with a full-time education programme
    - a centre with a part-time education programme (CDO)
    - a SYNTRA teaching location.
- You can obtain a secondary education diploma through Dual Learning.
- More information is available on www.onderwijskiezer.be/v2/secundair/sec_duaal_leren_info.php.

Education for children with special educational needs

- Children and adolescents with disabilities, learning difficulties or behavioural disorders can attend class in regular schools. In such cases the school will discuss with the parents and the pupil guidance centre (CLB) what is needed to allow the child to attend class and whether the school can provide this. Together with the CLB, you will look into whether your child can receive extra guidance at school.
- If attending class in a regular school does not work out, your child can attend a school for **special needs education**. For this you need an access report from the CLB. There are several distinct types of schools in special needs education, each providing lessons adapted to the child's specific care needs.

Good to know

When is school open?

- The school year starts on **01 September** and ends on **30 June**.
- Your child must attend school:
    - Full days on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday.
    - Wednesday mornings
- Your child does not have to go to school:
    - On Wednesday afternoons, on Saturdays and on Sundays
    - During the school holidays
- Make sure your child arrives on time. Arriving late is not pleasant for your child, and it disturbs the other children.

When are the school holidays?

- At the time of enrolment, ask the school for a school calendar. It will show all holidays and other days off for the entire school year.
- All schools will be closed for these annual holidays:
    - Autumn break
    - Christmas holiday
    - Spring break
    - Easter holiday
    - Summer holiday

What if my child is not able to go to school?

- Your child has to attend school every day. That way they will not miss any classes.
- It takes a **good reason** for your child not to attend school:
    - your child is ill.
    - your child has an appointment.
    - your child is taking part in specific religious celebrations.
- What if your child is not able to attend school for one day? Discuss this in advance with the school manager.
- Is your child sick? Please call the school.
- The school will always ask for a **supporting document**. This may be a doctor's certificate, or, in some cases, a note from the parents. Ask the school what kind of proof is needed.

How much does school cost?

- Enrolment in a school in Belgium is free.
- You do have to pay for some things:
    - Food and drinks
    - Lunch break supervision
    - Supervised care before and after school hours
    - Excursions
    - Swimming
    - etc.
- In secondary education, you also pay for the schoolbooks.
- These additional costs vary from school to school. The school will provide you in advance with an expense list. Thus, you know how much you will have to pay over the full year. Ask for the list at enrolment!
- If you are unable to pay an invoice, please discuss it with the school.



Who can help out with the school costs?

Education allowance or student grant

In some cases, the Flemish government will bear part of the school or training costs. Are you entitled to a pre-school, primary or secondary **school allowance**? You will automatically receive the allowance. You do not need to file an application.

For higher education you can apply for a **study grant**. Whether you are eligible for a grant depends on the composition of your family, your residence status, and your financial income. If your income is too high, you are not eligible for a grant.

For more information,

- Please call the toll-free telephone number 1700.
- Go to www.studietoelagen.be.
- Contact the student facilities department (Stuvo) at your university or university college.

Social centre financial support

If you are on a social integration income (leefloon), the Antwerp social centres can help you out with some of the school costs. Ask your social worker for more information.

Is supervised care available before and after school hours?

- Most schools provide supervised care before and after school hours.
- Check with your school when supervised care is available:
    - in the morning, before school starts
    - in the afternoon, when school is out
    - Wednesday afternoons
- During the holidays there usually is no supervised care. Ask your school about this as well.
- You will have to pay for the supervised care. Ask the school in advance how much it will cost you. You can enter the costs, for which you will receive a certificate, as a tax deduction.

Can my child have lunch at school?

- Your child can stay in school to eat their lunch.
- The children have to bring their own lunch. They eat together and must stay in school.
- Only those children who go home to have lunch can leave the school premises. The parents have to authorise this.
- Supervision is provided before, during and after lunch. Most schools charge a fee for this.

Does my child have to see the school doctor?

- All children at school must see the CLB doctor every couple of years.
- The doctor will examine your child's health. The doctor also administers vaccines. For this, your authorisation will be asked beforehand.
- If your child is aged 14 years or older, they do not have to see the CLB doctor anymore. You do need to inform the CLB, though.

What if my child encounters problems at school?

- Some children experience problems at school. They do not feel happy in class, they do not understand what is being taught, they are being bullied or are bullying others.
- Do you notice something wrong with your child? You can discuss it with:
    - the school management
    - the teachers. During the class council they discuss the students, their results, and their behaviour.
    - the CLB. All schools work with a CLB.

What does the CLB *[pupil guidance centre]* do?

- In order to learn well, your child should feel comfortable at school. The CLB helps to achieve this.
- The CLB listens, consults, informs, and gives advice. Whenever there is a problem, the CLB will help find a solution.
- With the CLB you can discuss study choices, behaviour at school, skipping classes, concentration issues, marks, making agreements, learning to choose, self-confidence, participation, opportunities and much more.
- The CLB employs educationalists, psychologists, psychological assistants, social workers, doctors, and nurses. Sometimes they also have a speech therapist or a physiotherapist. All these people collaborate to help your child as much as possible.
- All students, parents, teachers, and school managers can submit questions to the CLB. Everything always revolves around the child. No information is shared without authorisation. The CLB respects your privacy.

As a parent, you can anonymously ask the CLB questions using the CLB chat at www.clbchat.be.

How can I help my child?

How do I stay informed about what is happening at school?

Diary

- In the diary you can see what your child has been doing at school. The teacher occasionally writes things in the diary you need to know about or read. Therefore, check your child's diary every day.
- Many schools also use digital platforms for communication. You will receive more information through the school.
- Is there something you want to inform the school of? Then make a note of it in the diary or call the school.
- If you do not understand Dutch well, you can ask to mark what is positive in green and less positive things in red.

Parent-teacher contact

- Parent-teacher contacts are organised a couple of times a year. The teacher will then inform you how your child is doing. It is really important you attend.
- If you do not speak Dutch, please bring an adult who does speak Dutch or contact the school.

Helping out at school

- Schools like it when parents help out at school. For instance: parents can give a hand at festive occasions or bake cookies for the school party. Sometimes parents come along on excursions.
- You can also join the parents' council or attend a parent group.
- Do you want to lend a hand at school? Or do you have questions? Talk to the teacher, the principal, or the school manager.

Can I help at home?

Homework

- Your child must do their homework themselves. You can help your child a little, for example by showing interest. Or you can ask questions about what they have learned.
- Is there something your child does not understand? Have them ask the teacher additional questions. Problems can be discussed at the parent-teacher contact.

Speak your own language

Your child will learn Dutch at school. At home, you can speak your own language. This too is very good for your child.

More Dutch

You can provide your child with extra opportunities to learn Dutch. Have them watch Dutch-language programmes on TV. When there is no school, your child can join other children in a sports club or a youth organisation. That way they can practise their Dutch.

DocAtlas for children aged 16 and over

DocAtlas is a library filled with Dutch-language practice material.
The address is Sint-Andriesstraat 2, 2000 Antwerp.

More information can be found on www.thomasmore.be/docatlas.

The library

Wherever you live, there is always a library nearby. You can register your child for free and you can immediately take material home. At the library, you can also look up information for your child's homework.

More information on www.antwerpen.be/bibliotheek.

Questions about education?

Raising a child is not always easy. If you have a question or if you need more information, you can always inquire at **Huis van het Kind** near you. Learn more on www.antwerpen.be/huisvanhetkind or send an email to huizenvanhetkind@antwerpen.be.

What can my child do outside school hours?

- Your child can do a lot of things when there is no school. For example, your child can do sports, take art classes, learn to play a musical instrument, or visit the library. They can do so throughout the school year as well as during the holidays.
- During the school holidays there are playgrounds or holiday camps. Your child can play there with other children. There will be adults present to supervise the children and organise activities.
- Looking for something near you? Or do you have any questions? If so, please contact team Vrije tijd [the Leisure Team of the City of Antwerp]. They can offer personalised advice and help you find suitable activities. Learn more on www.antwerpen.be/product/team-vrije-tijd or send an email to vrijetijdsbemiddelaars@antwerpen.be.



Useful websites

- **Information on education in Flanders**
  www.onderwijskiezer.be
- **Flanders Ministry of Education website**
  www.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-en-vorming
- **Information on study grants**
  www.studietoelagen.be
- **Volunteer organisation of, for and by parents of children with special needs**
  www.oudersvoorinclusie.be
- **Registering for primary and secondary education in Antwerp**
  www.meldjeaan.antwerpen.be
- **Help finding a school in Antwerp**
  www.atlas-antwerpen.be/school-voor-je-kind
- **School holiday activities**
  vakantiekiezer.antwerpen.be

CLBs in Antwerp

- **GO! community education Antwerp CLB**
  www.clb-antwerpen.be
- **Free education CLB**
  www.vrijclb.be/vrij-clb-de-wissel-antwerpen
- **City education CLB**
  www.stedelijkonderwijs.be/clb
- **Province education CLB**
  www.provincieantwerpen.be/nl/locaties/clb-leerlingen-begeleiding

Colophon

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R.E. (responsible editor): Sandy Peeters, Carnotstraat 110, 2060 Antwerpen.

atlas · integratie & inburgering Antwerpen
Carnotstraat 110, 2060 Antwerpen
03 338 70 70

atlasminderjarigen@antwerpen.be
www.atlas-antwerpen.be



Vlaanderen
is divers