

2024 International Election



Candidate for

Director – Development

Eivind Olsen

Mensa Norway

Campaign statement

I was elected as Director of Development during the summer of 2023, after the previous had resigned. Since then, I've been connecting with people, hearing which obstacles they face, and trying to help where I can.

Some obstacles have to do with communication. We have members in very different time zones and societies, using different languages. It doesn't help that for a while we have had an unreliable e-mail service that has often prevented e-mails from being delivered!

We have agreements with some national Mensas to help with testing in nearby areas, with plans for more. This lets us have development at a reasonable cost, and doesn't require us to send someone around the globe.

I have a solution for the main e-mail problems which I'm currently working on implementing.

The new adaptive test we've been hearing about is getting closer now.

Every country has a unique situation, but have things in common. First, to get new members we must have the right people; we need to get word out to pique people's interest in testing and wanting to become members. Second, we must work to keep members by providing a fulfilling and fun environment with internal and external activities.

Biography

I'm Eivind Olsen, a 47-year-old Norwegian working in IT.

When I'm home, I live with 1 fiancée, 0-4 offspring (depends on the week), and some cats going by the names Hodor, Pucifer, and Lille. I also have some boardgames – they are a great excuse to spend time with friends. Other hobbies include listening to lots of different music, movies, reading books, brewing beer, 3D-printing, and hiking. And spending time on Mensa, of course.

Communication is important. I speak several languages – a few (not all) of which can even be understood by native speakers as well!

I've been a Mensa member for 10 years now, and active since 2015 – initially by organising activities in my local group, before becoming chair of that group, national test coordinator, deputy in the national board, vice chair, and from the end of 2018 until July 2023 I was the chair of Mensa Norway.

Answers to IBD questions

1. What do you see as the most important aspect of the role for which you are standing?

The Director of Development is vital in helping us grow into new regions. To do this it is necessary to work together with the local members so that we may together do what we can to raise awareness of Mensa in the region, and to attract members. Help can come in many forms, depending on the situation. It could be by launching suggestions and ideas, moral support, financial backing, by ensuring the right people connect, or by making sure problems get fixed.

2. Why have you volunteered for this role, and what in particular qualifies you for it?

At the time I volunteered for this role in the summer of 2023, I was chair of Mensa Norway. We've had good growth every year for a while now, even during the pandemic. While it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly why that is, some possible factors can be: attracting new members while still working to keep existing members, having some activities online, and generally doing our best to create a nice, non-hostile environment where the members can feel at home.

During the relatively short time since I took over the role as Director of Development, I have learnt a lot about what works internationally – and what doesn't, and taken steps to improve matters.

3. What do you see as the most important issues facing international Mensa at the present time and in the next few years?

The pandemic and global economic climate has led to a decline in willing volunteers in many countries. Some countries also have the experience that whatever worked well before might not have the same effect now. We need to get more people to see the shared benefits of being volunteers, and to see how we all can make an impact in different societies.

We will have a problem if the average age of members only rises. Sure, it's a sign that we must be doing something right when people decide to keep being members for several years, but we also need new members.

We need a solid foundation we can build on top of, and this sometimes means we must fix the annoying underlying problems.

4. What do you wish to achieve during your term of office?

During the coming term, I'd love to see how initiatives we've recently started will bear fruits.

Some existing initiatives must be completed to put us in a better position for future growth globally – one example being the adaptive test. With that test in place, we can easier provide testing in multiple countries.

I want to help us get DIMs where there is no local Mensa, help Emerging Mensas attain (and retain) Provisional National Mensa status, and help PNMs attain Full National Mensa status. How many of each? As many as possible, of course!

For the coming term, I'm hoping I'll be given the opportunity to help bring even more countries into the fold, and to build something my successor can make even better! We are standing on the shoulders of giants, and even though we may not be giants ourselves, every bit we do to improve things will help.