



**MENSA**  
INTERNATIONAL

**Mensa International Ltd.**  
Slate Barn, Church Lane  
Caythorpe, Lincolnshire  
NG32 3EL, United Kingdom  
Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1400 272 675  
mensainternational@mensa.org  
Reg. No. 848100  
[www.mensa.org](http://www.mensa.org)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

May 26, 2016

### ***Seven decades of inspiration and intelligence***

#### **Mensa celebrates its 70th anniversary**

Mensa, the “high IQ society”, celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. The society, currently with over 133,000 Mensans in 100 countries throughout the world, welcomes people whose IQ is in the top 2% of the population. Mensa provides an inspiring and fun environment for its members and facilitates their participation in a wide range of social and cultural activities. By declaration, Mensa is non-political and free from all racial, social or religious distinctions.

#### ***Once upon a time...***

The story of Mensa started in the 1940s. The idea of the three founding fathers - *Roland Berrill*, a barrister; *Dr. Lance Ware*, a scientist and lawyer, and *Sir Cyril Burt*, a professor of psychology – was to create a society for bright people, the only qualification for membership being a high IQ. The first brochure was printed on October 1, 1946, in Oxford, England – and this act marks the official foundation of Mensa. During its 70-year history, Mensa has undergone fundamental changes and has developed into a lively international community shaped by the diversity of its members.

#### ***Key milestones of transformation and growth***

The name “Mensa” itself comes from the Latin for “table”, and is one of the first words taught to people learning Latin; it refers to the roundtable where everyone is equal; “mensa” also recalls the saying “mens sana in corpore sano” (a healthy mind in a healthy body). Originally, however, Mensa was intended to be an “aristocratic” society, with a limited number of members, staying away from publicity and working as an advisory board to the government, providing intelligent and unbiased counselling. This, however, proved to be a dead-end, and in 1953, with the appointment of *Victor Serebriakoff* as Secretary, a new era characterized by growth and expansion commenced. Serebriakoff’s idea was to build Mensa as a forum for expressing and discussing opinions; he also declared that Mensa as an organisation should not have any kind of commitment to politics, ideology, religion or nationality and should not favour any race or social class.

**Chairman:** Bibiána Balanyi (Hungary)  
**Director Administration:** Therese Moodie-Bloom (Australia)  
**Director Development:** Björn Liljeqvist (Sweden)  
**Director Smaller National Mensas:** Tomas Blumenstein (Czech Republic)  
**Treasurer:** Rudolf Challupner (Austria)

Thanks to the active communication and campaigns, the number of applicants for testing increased rapidly and thus the membership grew during the second half of the 1950s. 1960 was a significant milestone in the history of Mensa as this marked the beginning of the internationalization of the society. By 1966, American Mensa had become – and has remained ever since – the largest national organisation. The principles and structure of Mensa International were laid down, with the main objective of assisting the foundation and supporting the operation of national Mensas, without interfering with their local activities. National Mensas are, therefore, largely independent, but their activities must comply with the Mensa Constitution and Mensa International's rules, as determined by the International Board of Directors (IBD). The Constitution of Mensa International was formulated and the first international elections were held in 1964.

Mensa is managed by elected officers, all of them volunteers – no member of its Executive Committee (ExComm) receives material compensation for his/her work. Mensa International is currently chaired by *Bibiána Balanyi* (42); she is the first Chair coming from one of the “smaller” national organisations and also the youngest person ever to fulfil this role.

There are active Mensa organizations in more than 40 countries and on every continent except Antarctica – and the list is constantly growing. Compared to 2006 when Mensa celebrated its 60th anniversary, the number of members has increased by almost 30,000 – this indicates a 27% growth in the last 10 years, counting over 133,000 members at the moment.

### ***The benefits of becoming a Mensan***

Mensa may seem like an exclusive, even elitist club from the outside. In truth, it is a most inclusive, diverse and colourful community with members from every walk of life, with no prevailing characteristic other than high IQ. Regarding their education, members range from preschoolers to high school dropouts to people with multiple doctorates. There are Mensans on welfare and Mensans who are millionaires. As regards occupations, the range is staggering. Mensa has professors and truck drivers, scientists and firefighters, computer programmers and farmers, artists, military people, musicians, labourers, police officers, glassblowers - the diverse list goes on and on.

*“Clearly, the greatest benefit Mensa provides is the opportunity to meet new people, establish connections and enjoy the company of friends. Based on a poll of its members, the top 3 notions associated with Mensa are friendship, the feeling of being at home and diversity. There are Mensans for whom the community provides a sense of family, and others for whom it is a casual social activity, or simply a stimulating opportunity for the mind. Intelligence is a common language and we want our members to feel inspired and connected” – says Bibiána Balanyi, International Chair of Mensa.*

---

**For further information please contact:**

Ivett Vancsik  
International Communications Officer, Mensa International  
[communications@mensa.org](mailto:communications@mensa.org)

---

**About Mensa**

Mensa (the word means „table” in Latin) is an inspiring round-table society, where race, colour, creed, national origin, age, politics, educational or social background are irrelevant. Mensa has over 133,000 members in various national organizations in more than 40 countries on every continent except Antarctica. Mensa has three stated purposes: (1) to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity; (2) to encourage research in the nature, characteristics and uses of intelligence; (3) and to promote stimulating intellectual and social opportunities for its members.

Membership in Mensa is open to persons who have attained a score within the upper two percent of the general population on an approved intelligence test that has been properly administered and supervised.

**Chairman:** Bibiána Balanyi (Hungary)  
**Director Administration:** Therese Moodie-Bloom (Australia)  
**Director Development:** Björn Liljeqvist (Sweden)  
**Director Smaller National Mensas:** Tomas Blumenstein (Czech Republic)  
**Treasurer:** Rudolf Challupner (Austria)