



EUROPEAN  
SPERM·BANK

# Thinking of the future

Communication on progress 2020



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*'Our primary focus is on creating healthy babies'*

Annemette Arndal-Lauritzen



# STATEMENT

## from our CEO

I'm very proud to present our first Communication on Progress (COP) report which summarises our actions in line with the requirements of our participation in the UN Global Compact.

Working in a sperm bank is unusual and very rewarding. I'm humbled that our existence plays a part in giving life to new human beings. As a sperm bank, we're often perceived as just the supplier of a product. However, it's always been part of our DNA to take extra responsibility.

Although donors only donate for a short period of time, they have made a decision that will be with them for life. So have the parents who choose sperm donation. We understand and appreciate this long-term impact, and thinking of the future of donors, parents and, in particular, the children informs every action and decision we make.

Our primary focus is on creating healthy babies. But we also want to make sure that current as well as future generations of donor children grow up in a healthy world and that their families are on an equal footing with any other type of family. Committing to the 10 principles of the UN Global Compact has been a natural but also necessary step to fully show our commitment to responsible business practices.

We have chosen to make the following sustainability development goals our main focus:

- / Good health and well-being
- / Gender equality
- / Peaceful, just and strong institutions

Finally, I'd like to say thank you to all our employees. They are the backbone of our commitment. And they do an amazing job staying true to our values and our overall purpose. You'll meet several of them in this report.

Also a big thank you and respect to the clinics around the world who are an essential partner in giving the gift of life. And last but not least, the women, couples and donors who choose us.

With this Communication of Progress report, we state our support for and commitment to the UN Global Compact and the 10 principles.

# WELCOME TO EUROPEAN SPERM BANK

European Sperm Bank was founded in Copenhagen in 2004. We have offices in Denmark, England and Germany and employ over 100 people. Our main office is in Copenhagen from where all our overall business is handled.

We're a world-leading supplier of sperm and adhere to high-quality standards and processes that are always legally compliant. Since 2004, we have helped deliver more than 40,000 babies.

We're built on strong values, and our entrepreneurial mindset aims at delivering the best experience and best guidance to the many women and couples who need it.

We believe that women and couples should be able to have the family they dream of. Whether you are a donor, donor child or a single woman or couple in need of donor sperm, you will be met with an open mind, free from prejudice.

Since 2019, we have been owned by the Nordic private equity fund, Axcel, who focuses on responsible development. This ownership has allowed us to expand our business further to give as many people as possible the child they wish for in a secure way.

**Mission**

Giving the gift of life

**Purpose**

We want to create healthy children in an open-minded society

**Values**

Warm, transparent, quality-driven, entrepreneurial

**Cities**

Copenhagen, Aarhus, London and Hamburg

# The sperm bank industry

*We are one of the leading sperm banks in the world. We have a strong focus on quality and compliance and are founded on the principle of always thinking of the future.*

At European Sperm Bank, we recruit sperm donors in Denmark, Germany and England.

We process and store the sperm which is used by fertility clinics around the world to help women and couples have their dream child.

Legislation varies significantly from country to country. Some countries require that the fertility clinics choose the sperm directly from us and use it as an integral part of their treatments. Other countries allow for the recipients to contact us directly and choose the donor that is right for them and then get the sperm shipped to the clinic. Most countries allow for both options. We strive to be as accessible as possible to everyone who needs our services within the limits of the law.

Having an engaging website where women, couples and clinics can access our sperm donor profiles is an essential part of our business. During the last couple of years, this has led to a shift towards more recipients being allowed to choose their donor themselves.

To operate as a sperm bank in Europe, you need to have a license according to the EU Tissue Directive. The directive requires us to follow extensive regulations at an EU level and on a national level. Being compliant is a top priority for us, so we have stringent processes to implement this throughout our business. Sometimes we work to challenge the law if we think there are things in the current regulatory framework that are not optimal for our donors, the children or the parents. On page 37, you can see some examples of that.

We're always thinking of the future, and we respond to

developments in society, in our industry and in technology to make sure we have the best and most responsible processes and high-quality services. For example, we developed a new genetic donor and recipient screening test, GeneXmatch, that can increase the chances of having a healthy child.

#### **Together we make dreams come true**

We have a close relationship with fertility clinics from all over the world and we do our best to make the collaboration as smooth and secure as possible.

Through barcoding, double witnessing, repeated controls, and in-room deliveries, we ensure traceability of every donation from the time of procurement until they are received at the clinic. If straws are returned to us, they are automatically quarantined and will only be released back into stock if complete traceability and unaffected quality can be verified.

When a customer gets pregnant, it's the responsibility of the clinic to report the pregnancy to us. This is extremely important as this is one of the methods, besides e.g. pregnancy slots, we use to make sure that pregnancy limits are adhered to. Pregnancy limits are the number of children that can be born with a specific donor in a certain country. These limits are decided at a national level.

#### **Focusing on the donors**

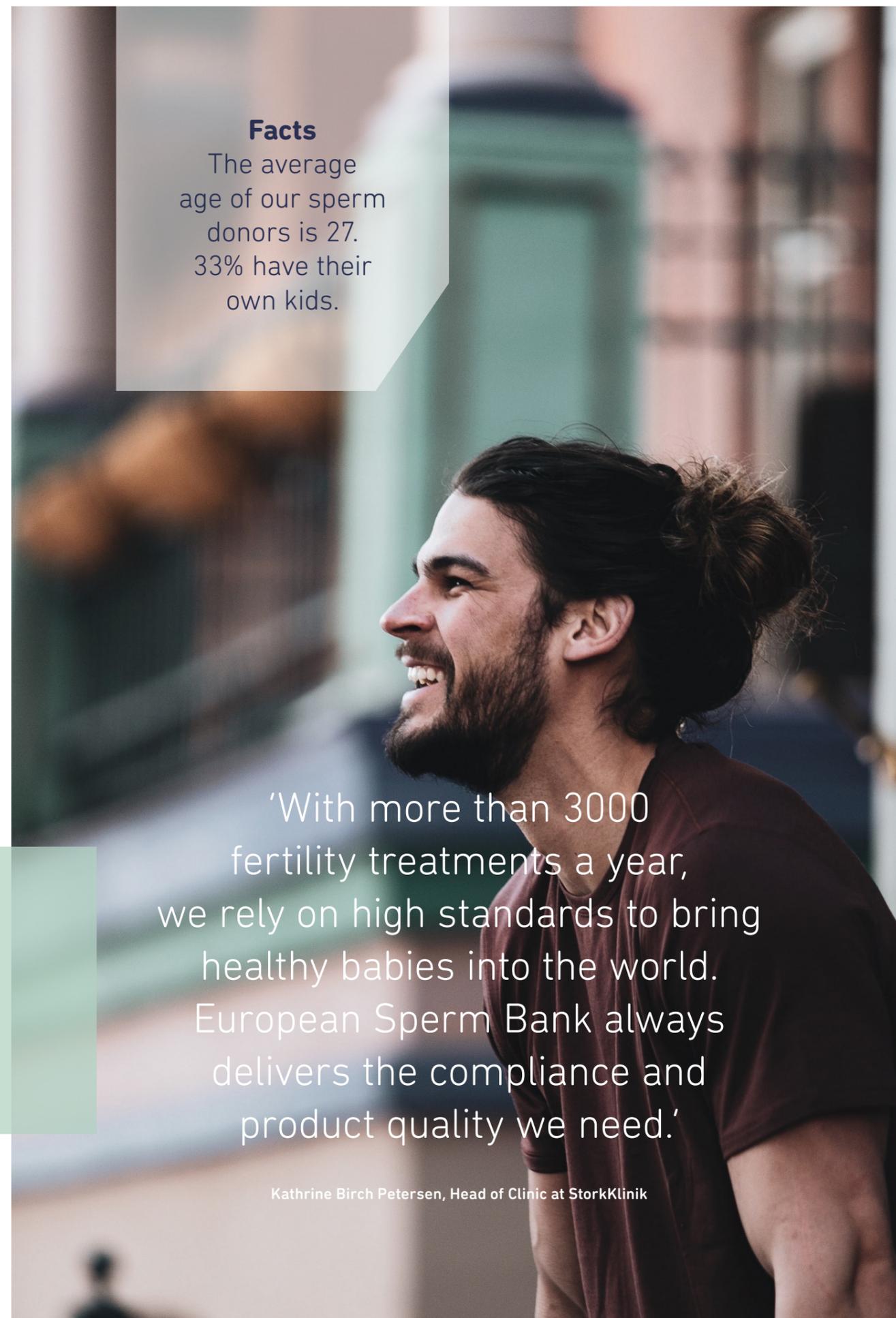
We recruit sperm donors in Denmark, England and Germany from all walks of life. You can apply to become a sperm donor from the age of 18 to 45. Our recruitment activities include offline events, ads on the street and

#### **Facts**

The average age of our sperm donors is 27. 33% have their own kids.

'With more than 3000 fertility treatments a year, we rely on high standards to bring healthy babies into the world. European Sperm Bank always delivers the compliance and product quality we need.'

Kathrine Birch Petersen, Head of Clinic at StorkKlinik



digital marketing. If a man is interested, he submits an online application. A potential donor then needs to go through several steps to be accepted into our programme as you can see on the adjacent page.

It usually takes 3-6 months to be approved as a donor, and we set the bar high: only 5-7 % of donor applicants are accepted as sperm donors.

#### Meaningful donor profiles

As part of the recruitment process, the donor fills out information that can be included in his sperm donor profile. This profile consists of information and data about the donor to give potential customers and the donor children the best possible idea of him.

A sperm donor profile consists of everything from a description of his physical appearance, interests, family medical history, a baby photo, a handwritten note to an audio recording of the donor's voice.

#### The token of appreciation

When a donor has been approved, he can start donating. Donors are contractually obliged to donate four times a month and to stay with us a least for a year. Most donors donate a couple of times each week. Donors don't get paid, but they do get compensated for their time and effort. The compensation is regulated by law in Denmark and England and follows a similar level in Germany, around 40 Euro per approved donation.

#### Storing sperm safely

Once processed and filled into straws in our laboratories, we store the sperm in liquid nitrogen tanks at minus 196 C.



## The seven steps in our donor application process

### 1 Donor application

The donor candidate submits an online application and books a day and time for the first sperm sample.

### 2 First sperm test

The donor candidate visits one of our sites and supplies his first sperm sample. 80% of applicants don't have the sperm quality needed to proceed beyond this step.

### 3 Interview and the second sperm test

The potential donor is invited for a second sperm analysis and an interview where he receives counselling about what it means to be a donor with us.

### 4 Review of family medical history

The potential donor's family medical history is reviewed by our Medical Director. This is done in order to minimize the risk of the donor being a carrier of a dominant hereditary disease.

### 5 Medical check

A specially trained GP performs a thorough physical examination of the donor candidate.

### 6 Test for infectious and genetic diseases

We screen the donor candidate for a range of infectious and genetic diseases. At this stage, he also completes a personality test.

### 7 Interview and profiling

The donor candidate completes his profile information and writes a message to children conceived with his sperm. After this, the donor is approved.

# How we work with the 10 principles

*Every day, we make a huge impact in many people's lives, from the donors to the donor children. This is due to the nature of our product and our market-leading position. That's why it's so important for us to be compliant and responsible in all our practices.*

As an international company working across borders and with donation centres in several countries, it's a given that we should support the UN Global Compact, the worlds' largest corporate sustainability initiative.

We manage our business activities with respect to the 10 principles of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. We have just started working with and selecting the relevant sustainable development goals (SDGs). Even though we touch on several of the goals, we have decided to focus specifically on goal 3) Good health and well-being, goal 5) Gender equality and goal 16) Peace, just and strong institutions.

### 3: GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

We're more than just a supplier of a product. We care about the well-being of donor children and work hard to give them the best possible conditions for thriving in life.

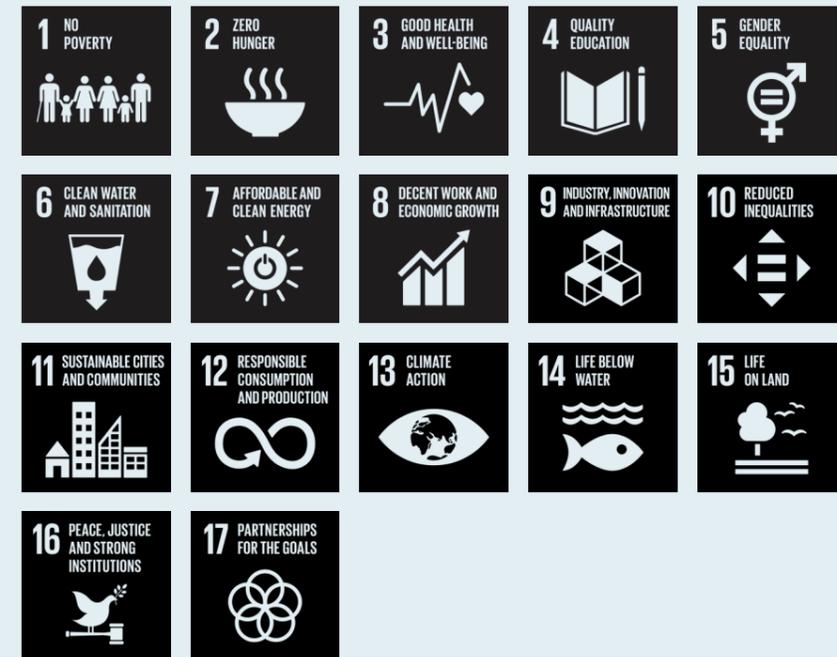
Our extensive medical screening procedures are established to ensure that we do everything we can to ensure that children are physically healthy. But we also do our part to safeguard the mental well-being of donor children. We do so by offering counselling to future parents, working to break down the taboos surrounding sperm donation and collaborating with the donor children community to improve our processes and learn from their experiences.

Our Child-Donor programme includes a well-planned process for supporting donor children (as well as donors) in the event of donor children seeking out more information about their heritage.

### 5: GENDER EQUALITY

**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

We believe it should be every person's right to define their own family no matter their relationship status or sexuality. Therefore, we fight taboos surrounding sperm



donation or sexuality and we do our best to influence both legislation and individual fertility clinics to accept, support and assist all loving family choices.

### 16. PEACE, JUST AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

**Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies**

Transparency and quality are two of our four core values. So naturally, we want to promote good business conduct when dealing with our customers, donors and business partners - and of course, it is at the top of our agenda to be compliant with all relevant legislation. But we also fight for what is right and do our part to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of their sexuality or otherwise treated unfairly in their fertility journey. This means that we invest ourselves socially and politically to influence society's perspective on us, our donors and the families.

**Our process /** Being a responsible company has always been a part of our DNA. But in 2020 we had a specific focus on identifying and planning our sustainability activities more systematically in order to make a difference on a larger scale.

Our starting point was a thorough ESG analysis and report from EY, which we used as input to a one-day workshop involving all employees from across countries, identifying activities relevant for different stakeholders.

Based on the findings from the workshop, we had a management workshop leading to the development of our Sustainability Strategy as well as our Sustainability

Policy, including discussions about relevant frameworks and identifying the relevant SDGs and measures.

The core of our ESG strategy is captured in four strategic pillars that all tie in with the ten principles of the UN Global Compact.

**The pillars are: Supporting families, impacting society, acting responsibly and caring for our planet.**

Our process has only just begun. But we're happy to feel the support and engagement among our employees for this endeavor and to experience the increasing demands for greater sustainability across our industry.

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES

# Equal access to assisted fertility

*We believe that all family forms should have access to assisted fertility options and that no one should be discriminated due to their family background.*

We consider it our responsibility to support, guide and stand up for all types of families who choose assisted fertility. And we make sure they know we're here for them for life.

We live in a world where more and more people have to deal with fertility issues for various reasons. The sperm quality of men in the Western world is declining, more women want children at a later age, and family structures are changing.

More babies are born with the help of assisted fertility into families that are diverse and unconventional. Multi-faceted family forms have replaced the traditional family of a mother, father and two children. In Denmark alone, we have 27 registered family forms.

At European Sperm Bank, we want to make sure that all donors, parents with donor children and donor children are well-informed, treated professionally and recognised by society.

### **We do this in two main ways:**

/ We provide nuanced information and guidance about the things you need to consider when choosing the alternative route and help women and couples make the best possible decisions for their family's future. This includes working with mums or families who have already used a sperm donor, so prospective mothers or fathers can see successful examples.

/ We constantly strive to find new clinics worldwide that will help women with fertility treatments, no matter what their family situation is or which country they reside in. Some countries have restrictions on who can be a recipient of donated sperm; in other countries, women and couples face cultural limitations and sometimes stigma.

*'Deciding to become a solo mum was the most powerful journey and I want to cheerlead others to embark on the most enriching and luminous chapter ever: parenthood'*

Holly Ryan



# Supporting the journey to parenthood

*Our new partnership with Fertility Care Institute puts a clear focus on mental health.*

In 2020, European Sperm Bank entered into a partnership with the organisation Fertility Care Institute to focus on the mental health side of fertility treatment.

For many people, it can be overwhelming to undergo fertility treatment with donor sperm. There are many fundamental questions and unfamiliar situations to consider, and it can have a huge impact on the individual's mental well-being.

Research shows that the consequences of involuntary infertility can be significant. Loneliness and social isolation are pervasive factors. Reactions such as depression, stress and sick leave can become bigger problems over time.

"Going through fertility treatment and being involuntarily infertile can have a huge psychological impact on people, but it's not often talked about. We need to focus on mental health and make sure that people talk with like-minded people, a dear friend or a professional during the process. That's why we're so happy to work with European Sperm Bank on this initiative," says Abalone Tholstrup, Founder & Director of Fertility Care Institute

Together with Fertility Care, we offer women and couples the chance to be part of an online group. We facilitate the first three online meetings, during which participants receive advice and ask our experts any questions they have. It's also a chance to meet and share experiences with like-minded people from similar backgrounds.

Our ambition is to run a group each month. We want to give the participants the best possible starting point for their fertility journey and offer coping strategies to support overall health and well-being.



*The knowledge centre Fertility Care Institute is an organisation focusing on the social-psychological aspects of fertility treatment. Founded in 2019, the organisation supports a meaningful life for all involuntarily childless people in Denmark, whether a child comes or not.*

# Healthy and happy children are our top priority

*The number of donor children born with the help of our sperm donors is our true bottom line. But our commitment goes far beyond a healthy pregnancy. We believe that health is only one part of the picture – we also want to support donor children in having a good life.*

We strive to bring healthy babies into the world. That's why we've made getting approved as a sperm donor at European Sperm Bank an extensive process. Only 5-7% of the applicants live up to our strict criteria.

## Testing and screening

Our sperm donors need to go through multiple steps, including sperm tests, interviews, medical tests and genetic testing.

## Genetic testing includes the following diseases:

- / Cystic fibrosis
- / Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)
- / Non-syndromic hearing loss and deafness (DFBN1)
- / Alpha and beta-thalassemia and sickle cell anaemia
- / Tay-Sachs

On top of the genetic screening we also look at the donor's family medical history. The family medical history is an important tool to identify patterns within the donor's family that increase the likelihood that a health condition is hereditary, requiring additional specific genetic tests or genetic matching with a recipient.

We're extremely critical. We will always say "no" rather than accept a known risk when approving candidates. We evaluate and choose the best testing methods and

practices to give everyone peace of mind that genetically bound diseases are not a risk.

During the screening process, it's also important for us to make it absolutely clear to the donor that being a sperm donor is a choice for life. That's why we counsel the donor to make sure they fully understand what this means – especially regarding children and the future.

## GeneXmatch

Knowing that our donor screening only accounts for half of a child's genetic makeup, we knew we needed to do more. That's why we developed a new product called GeneXmatch in 2018.

GeneXmatch is an extra screening test that compares the prospective mother's genes with her chosen sperm donor. By matching their genes, we can determine if the woman and her donor carry mutations in the same genes. In other words, we can tell if a future child is at risk of inheriting a serious disease. That way, we're able to minimise the risk of a future child inheriting a serious genetic disease.

Our Medical Director Henriette Roed-Nielsen, a clinical geneticist with a PhD says:

**"GeneXmatch is a game-changer. We're used to prenatal**

**and newborn screening. But GeneXmatch introduces preconception screening. Basically, that means we've moved from treatment to prevention of a wide range of serious diseases."**

## Custom screening solutions

Doing what you can to protect your future child is even more important if the woman or someone in the woman's family is a carrier of a genetic disease. In these cases, we offer a specific screening test, a known carrier test, in order to make sure that the donor she chooses is not carrier of the same disease.

## Donor profiles

We strive to have the best and most comprehensive information in our donor profiles.

We believe that the extensive profiles are a good support for the children. As they grow up, the profiles can give them a better understanding of their genetic roots. That's why we also advise the parents to use the donor profiles as an active part of the dialogue with their children.

We started revising the donor profiles in 2020; all our donor profiles will be transformed into this new, best-in-class design in 2021.

# Understanding and improving the lives of donor children

*To help and support donor children, we're initiating an extensive survey focusing on their well-being.*

Our knowledge of donor children today is based mostly on dated research and data. For example, one common piece of advice to parents used to be that it was best for the donor child not to know the truth about their heritage. Today, there is more conviction that it's in children's best interest to know from an early age that they are donor-conceived.

That's why, beginning in 2021, we're initiating an annual survey of our customers with donor children.

"We hope that the insights from the survey will help provide a more nuanced understanding of donor children, and that we can use this knowledge to increase their general well-being. When the children are young, we depend on parents to answer for them. As they grow older, we hope they will answer themselves, providing unique insight into their lives, attitudes, health and happiness."

Tanya Kolding Stenz, Director of Strategy & Development, European Sperm Bank.

The data collected in the survey will be used to broaden our understanding of donor children's well-being and refine our communication and offerings to both donor children and their families.

We have developed the survey questions with the help of donor children, professionals, organisations and families with donor children.



# Thinking ahead and taking responsibility

*We see it as part of our responsibility to have well-planned processes for supporting children and donors now and in the future.*

At European Sperm Bank, our commitment doesn't end when the child is born or when the donor finishes as a donor with us. We want to make sure that we have well-planned processes that support the donor child and the donor later in life.

Developed during 2020, the donor child programme involved several employees as well as therapists, donor children and donors. Annemette Arndal-Lauritzen, CEO at European Sperm Bank elaborates on the process:

"Respecting all parties in the process is paramount for us. We want to make sure that the donors, the families and the children are taken well care of. But it's also important to remember that when you decide to use a sperm donor, it's a donation, not a relationship you get."

### **The Child-Donor Programme**

When you visit the donor profiles on our website, you can view comprehensive and descriptive information about the donor. In many countries, women or couples choose which sperm donor they want to use themselves. In other countries, they can also choose whether they want an ID release or No ID release donor.

In Denmark, it's possible to be either an ID or No ID release donor. In England and Germany, you can only choose to be an ID release donor. The only difference between the two types of donors is that if you're the child of an ID release donor, you're entitled to find out the identity of the sperm donor when you're of legal age.

Based on our experiences from other countries and con-

versations with adult donor children, we know that some of the children hope to get more than the donor's identity. Some will potentially hope to get in contact with the donor.

"To make sure that this contact is as beneficial as possible, we have developed a process that is more robust and thorough than most other sperm banks. We make sure that the needs of the donor as well as the donor children are respected. For example, both the donor and the donor children are offered a session with a family counsellor to discuss expectations and implications before a potential contact," continues Annemette Arndal-Lauritzen.

We also see it as part of our responsibility to guide the donor throughout the process, both when he is donating with us and later in life. We advise him on things like technology and DNA testing, making sure he knows the implications of taking one of the consumer DNA tests on the market. As part of our Child - Donor programme, we're planning different initiatives to make sure that we regularly contact donors, even after they have stopped donating.

### **Facts**

In Denmark, one in every ten children is born with the help of fertility aid and roughly 1% is conceived with the help of a donor.



### Facts

A sperm donor can be used by multiple families across several countries. The law of each country regulates the number of families a donor can donate to. In Denmark, for example, one person's sperm donation can be used for a maximum of 12 families. In England, this limit is 10 families.

## The search for donor half-siblings

Some donor children – as well as parents – also want to find donor siblings. Donor half-siblings are genetically related to each other because they were conceived with the same donor's sperm.

Following the growing interest for donor half-siblings, and in order to provide a secure access to families with children from donors, we are initiating a bigger survey during 2021 to clarify the needs and potentially launch a registry in 2022. we want to provide access to families with children from donors.

"I have met several donor families in my practice who have been searching for donor siblings. For some, it's simply a question of curiosity. For others - especially the children - it's an attempt to gain a more complete sense of identity," says Henriette Cranil, psychologist and mum to two donor children.

Donor children are curious about things like if they look alike or share the same interests, but it can also be a specific interest in their genetics.

Unfortunately, there is no safe or controlled platform for the search for donor half-siblings in the EU today. This could potentially lead to problems, including wrongful matches or difficulties with GDPR.



# Getting a better understanding of donor children

*We're collaborating with organisations with a specific focus on donor children to increase and refine our understanding of donor children.*

During the last couple of years, European Sperm Bank has reached out to several organisations that focus on the conditions of donor children and their families. In Denmark, we are collaborating with Donorbørns Vilkår.

Donorbørns Vilkår was founded by several grown-up Danish donor children in 2018. They aim to create the best terms and conditions for donor-conceived people.

We began collaborating with Donorbørns Vilkår to gain more insight into donor children and spread knowledge and information about how to best support this group of children as they grow up.

We have held several evening seminars at our offices with Donorbørns Vilkår, switching to online meetings when COVID-19 prevented us from meeting people in person.

## Two of the most significant themes for the meetings were:

1. "How to tell your child that it's donor-conceived"
2. "Searching for donor-half-siblings"

At the meetings, participants were able to get advice

from experts and hear stories – both good and bad – from grown-up donor children. These meetings have been a great success. The physical meetings were booked within a day after being announced on our website. So far, the meetings have been free of charge, with a limit on the number of registrants.

"Together with European Sperm Bank we can spread knowledge and be in dialogue with families with donor-conceived people about relevant topics. Our collaboration builds on a common set of values to create the best conditions for donor children growing up. We may disagree on what this concretely entails, but we meet in dialogue and are curious about our different points of view", says Bodil Skov, co-founder of Donorbørns Vilkår.

We aim to continue this highly productive collaboration and to develop our relationships with similar organisations across Europe.

In 2020, European Sperm Bank supported several organisations focusing on the well-being of donor children, including Donor Conception Network in the UK and Donorbørns Vilkår in Denmark.

## ACTING RESPONSIBLY

# Our employees - the backbone of our company

*Helping others make their dreams come true is probably one of the best and most purposeful jobs in the world – but it also demands a lot from our employees. We want to make sure we have a good working environment with strong values and where people can develop on a personal and professional level.*

We believe that happy and engaged employees deliver the best results. And we want to offer a safe and healthy work environment with a supportive culture for our employees.

Our values are deeply rooted in our company. They guide everything we do, from the way we greet our donors in the reception area to how we handle an express delivery. These values were formulated six years ago together with our employees – and the majority of these employees are still with us today.

Here is what some of our employees say about our values:

**Roja Barikbin, Office Manager/Donor coordinator, Hamburg**

European Sperm Bank has some solid values. For instance, the value of being warm and welcoming is something we live by as colleagues, when we greet donors and even in our daily office life. It makes it easier to be working at a hub, at a distance from the head office.”

**Annika Strøm, Client Service, Copenhagen**

“Being quality-driven is so much more than just making sure we have the best products. Quality for me is how we talk to and guide our customers and always being ready

to go that extra mile. We know just how important our actions are for our customers.”

**Laura Willson, Office Manager, London**

“European Sperm Bank welcomes each employee’s views, opinions and ideas which creates new opportunities, whilst allowing us to learn and grow from our experiences and to become the entrepreneurial company that we are today.”

**Thomas Ebbesen, Head Laboratory Technician, Aarhus**

“We thrive to deliver high quality in the way we handle our donors, from their first experience on the website to the day they leave the donor programme and beyond. We walk the talk!”

**Lars Brink Christensen, Digital Specialist, Copenhagen**

“When joining European Sperm Bank, I was amazed by the knowledge, dedication and quality of work from my co-workers. Whether it’s a student assistant working a few hours a week or a full-time employee, I always have the feeling that all assignments are handled with full dedication, with the result of delivering very high quality every time. We are helping dreams come true, and that requires that we do our best in each step of the way.”

**Low power distance**

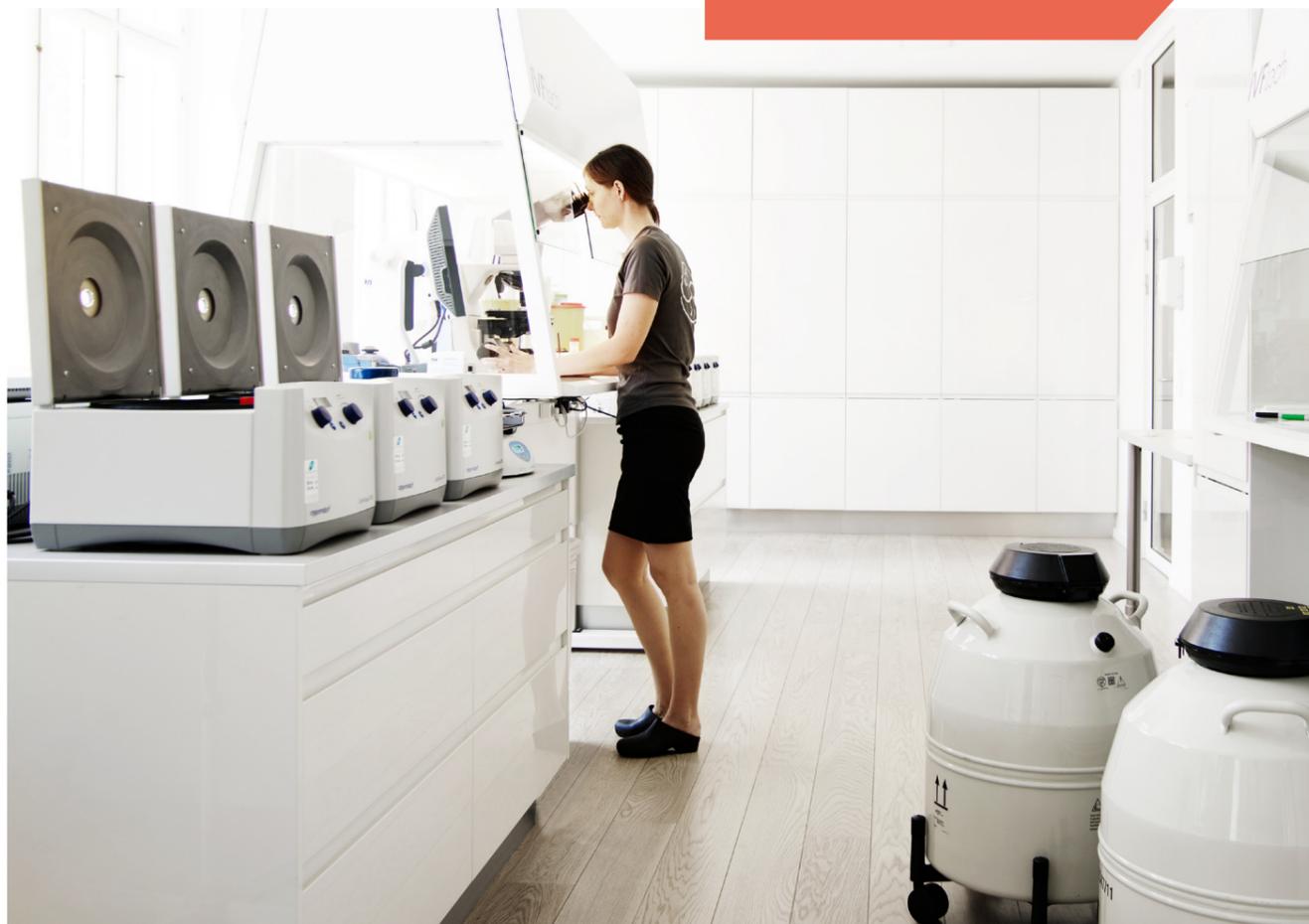
We believe in employee involvement and have a typical Danish business culture with "low power distance". All employees participate in events like strategy seminars, company meetings and social events such as Christmas parties. Our company meetings, where we share knowledge and updates and where everyone can ask questions, are held every second week and are for all full-time employees across countries.

**Our onboarding processes**

We believe that a comprehensive onboarding process is essential for our new employees to understand our protocols and processes fully. That's why our onboarding process is a mix of intensive peer-to-peer training with specific instruction from our Standard Operating Procedures.

Our Quality Management System was extensively revised during 2020 and is something that all employees need to adhere to and work with daily. The Quality Management System also monitors progress and document training.

We strive to achieve a balance of men and women in our staff. However, as a business in the fertility industry it's no surprise that we attract many female employees. The average split is 70:30 women vs men. We're proud that this pattern is also reflected in our management team, where 69% are women.



## Continuing education for all employees

We believe in continuous education and training for our employees. We have had several initiatives during the last year to support individual development and improve the customer experience. These include:

**Give Life to Your Leadership programme**

A twelve-month international programme for our team leads, covering a range of leadership disciplines closely linked to our values and processes.

**Increasing the level of counselling**

To ensure our client service employees can give the best and most comprehensive counselling, we have run several workshops and provided individual coaching.

**Sales Management**

Together with an external provider, our Sales team has participated in a training program focusing on the disciplines of great sales management.

**Investing in our internal talent pipeline**

We also have commercial trainees. These are young, talented employees studying for a graduate diploma degree in business administration (HD) and participating in selected commercial projects.

## Working Environment Assessment

According to Danish law, it is mandatory to conduct a Working Environment Assessment (APV) every third year. During this, all employees are asked to evaluate their physical and psychological working environment.

The results have been collected in a report, which is available to all staff. The H&S Committee monitors the progress of the report's findings, and regular updates are communicated during company meetings.

From November 2019 to February 2020, the traditional surveys were replaced with five dialogue workshops across all branches of the business. The new approach secured a more open and transparent dialogue, enabling us to focus on what had a real impact on their employee engagement and work environment.

In general, the overall assessment of our work environment is as follows (on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being very bad and 10 being very good):

	Copenhagen (laboratory)	Aarhus	Copenhagen (office)	London	Hamburg	Total
<b>The physical work environment</b>	7,5	8,2	7,0	7,7	8,6	7,8
<b>The social aspects and atmosphere</b>	9,1	9,6	8,7	8,5	8,8	8,9
<b>Communication</b>	6,8	7,5	6,2	5,2	7,6	6,6
<b>Opportunity to affect own work day</b>	8,0	6,1	7,1	6,0	8	7,0

# Promoting business ethics

*Denmark is seen as one of the most non-corrupt countries in the world. Working with customers and partners worldwide, we feel we have a natural obligation to promote good business ethics internally and externally.*

At European Sperm Bank, we have always been committed to running a responsible, ethical and compliant business. Transparency is one of our core values. So naturally, we want to promote good business conduct when dealing with our customers, donors and business partners.

We encourage our employees and partners to raise their concerns about irregularities or wrongdoing. In 2020, we implemented a Code of Conduct & Business Ethics that covers:

- / Anti-corruption
- / Donations and gifts
- / Conflict of interest
- / Fair competition
- / Transactional fraud

The code of conduct is a mandatory read for all employees as well as partners.

This policy is supported by our whistle-blower policy. Employees and stakeholders can report potential misconduct by accessing our online reporting portal, launched in 2020, which provides full anonymity via Secure Postbox. All communication to and from the whistle-blower portal is encrypted, and no IP addresses are logged.

The link is accessible at [www.europeanspermbank.com](http://www.europeanspermbank.com).

To further mitigate the risk of compliance violations, we also use our Quality Management System to train our employees in all relevant compliance topics.

These initiatives emphasise that we do not tolerate any form of forced, compulsory or child labour by our affiliates. Nor do we accept any form of discrimination.

*'As quality of service and being compliant is at the core of what we do, I always recommend our employees to check our QMS system first thing in the morning so that it becomes a habit. When they drink the first cup of coffee, they should also check D4.'*

*Sarah Morgan, QA Specialist.*

## IMPACTING SOCIETY

# Breaking down taboos

*Despite the increase in people undergoing fertility treatment worldwide, it's still not widely talked about or even acknowledged as necessary. We want to help change this.*

The prevalence of people using a sperm donor or being a sperm donor is increasing across the world. Denmark has, for many years, been a world leader within fertility treatment and a favourite destination for many fertility travellers. However, there is still a big taboo surrounding the whole subject of fertility treatment.

We believe it should be every person's right to choose their own family type and expect openness and respect for their choices.

To address the taboo of sperm donation, we use our communication channels, from social media to PR, to talk about how normal using fertility treatment is. We also support different initiatives; for example, in 2020, we supported a very authentic and honest podcast from a hetero couple who have been helped by one of our sperm donors.

"There are so many people who have problems with fertility. So why don't we speak openly about it, especially when infertility is such a common problem? We can help others if we start by being open ourselves," says Kristoffer, who is infertile and a proud dad to Meta.

In early 2021, we launched a new donor recruitment campaign. Our approach - "A donor is a donor" - seeks to break down the taboo around sperm donation. We want to recognise and acknowledge the role that all kinds of donors play in helping other people.

A 2019 survey conducted by Wilke for European Sperm Bank among the Danish population showed the following:

/ 31% of respondents didn't think that same-sex couples should be allowed to get fertility treatment.

/ 37% of respondents didn't think that singles should be allowed to get fertility treatment.

/ 60% think it's difficult to talk about having difficulties conceiving a child.

And in a 2017 survey from YouGov among the Danish population, 75% of respondents said that they think being a sperm donor is taboo.

**Facts**  
25 million people in the EU struggle with infertility.



# Challenging the law to improve conditions for sperm donors

*Our job is not just to comply with the law. We also want to influence it so we can improve the lives of the people we work with.*

Our product is unusual by nature and has lifelong impact on donor children, their families and the donors themselves.

We want to provide a sense of safety and security for everyone involved, so it's vital that we are compliant with the relevant legal regulations in the countries we work in and with.

Sometimes we disagree with the law because it puts our donors, children, or families in unreasonable situations. When that happens, we need to challenge policymakers to do better. We have listed a couple of examples of our actions to improve legislation below.

## **Of course, you can be a sperm donor if you are homosexual.**

In Denmark, until the beginning of 2020, if a man had sex with other men, he could not be a blood donor. This limitation was due to a perception of risky behaviour - that these

men were more prone to getting infectious diseases.

As with blood donation, gay men or men who have sex with men were not accepted as sperm donors for many years. In some sperm banks, this is still the case.

At European Sperm Bank, we received several messages from men who found that this exclusion was discriminating and based on outdated perceptions. We took matters into our own hands. In 2019, our Medical Director, together with the Danish Health Authority, developed a safe process that allows men who have sex with men to be accepted as sperm donors at European Sperm Bank. And we're proud that we pushed this industry improvement.

"I was really upset when I found out that being homosexual, I couldn't become a sperm donor. I felt really discriminated against and that this just wasn't right. I had several friends who really needed help conceiving. I had

a productive dialogue with European Sperm Bank, and I'm so happy that the process has now changed" Mads Staugård.

## **Challenging the frequency of blood tests**

Under current EU legislation, we had to take a blood test every time we received a donation. This is to test for HBV, HCV and HIV. However, we felt that this was an unnecessary violation of our donors who donate every week, often over a long time. The current approach in the EU directive is based on one-time donations, such as organs.

Working with the Danish Health Authorities, we have pushed the alternative protocol already implemented into Danish law on an EU level. The alternative protocol has been acknowledged by the ECDC. The new protocol requires blood tests for non-partner semen donors at the first semen donation and every three months after that, as long as donations are ongoing.



Poster from our donor recruitment campaign in 2020

The EU Competent Authorities for Tissues and Cells made the following statement in the Competent Authorities on Substances of Human Origin Expert Group (CASoHO E01718) 13-14 May 2019 Summary Minutes: "This concluded the discussion on this topic, with a confirmation that the Danish sperm donor testing protocol can be considered a more stringent requirement for the non-partner donor testing provisions in EU legislation, and is therefore in line with EU legislation."



## CARING FOR OUR PLANET

# Reducing our footprint

*We pride ourselves on thinking about the future. Having made that promise, it's impossible not to consider the planet – where the donor children will live. That means we need to continually review our impact on the planet as a business.*

The central pillar of our environmental activities is scheduled to be developed in autumn 2021. This plan will focus on how we can become CO2 neutral.

Sperm banking has very little production input, but as with all other businesses, we use electricity and water etc. Our main areas of environmental impact are:

/ the transportation of the sperm and our colleagues across the globe.

/ the plastic elements we use when processing the sperm in the laboratories.

/ the liquid nitrogen that keeps the sperm at -196 C.

However, even though our environmental footprint is relatively small, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't try to make a difference for our planet.

### **The sperm bike – safe delivery in Copenhagen**

Danes might have come across the sperm bike driving around the streets of Copenhagen. The sperm bike is a big cargo bike that looks like a sperm cell, and it usually

attracts a lot of attention! The sperm bike has been an essential part of the company since our foundation in 2004.

But it's not just for fun. At the front of the sperm bike, there is a container that can hold a small tank. This tank is used to keep sperm safe during transport.

We use the sperm bike on a daily basis to pick up donations from our donation hubs and transport them to our lab at our head office or to carry specific sperm straws to the fertility clinics. It's a healthy and environmentally friendly way to get around - and it brings a lot of smiles.

We've also introduced the sperm bike in London, and we plan to do the same in our other locations.

### **Bulking shipments as often as we can**

In 2020, we delivered sperm straws to more than 90 countries and more than 5000 times during the year. We know that the transportation of sperm straws is our biggest footprint, so we do everything we can to bulk our shipments or to deliver the sperm on our sperm bike wherever possible.



# Key figures overview

## Definitions

**Total workforce:** The number of full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) at the end of the year. Temporary workers and student assistants are included.

**Management:** Includes C-level, Directors and team leads.

**Female workforce:** The share of full-time female employees of the total workforce.

**Maternity leave:** the period of absence available to women following the birth of their child.

**Paternity leave:** the period of absence available to men and female co-parents following the birth of their child.

**Work-related accidents:** accidents that have taken place during working hours or official business.

**Employee satisfaction:** the result of the working environment assessment survey as the total average across locations and company functions.

Employee data	Unit	2020 status
Total workforce	FTEs	112
Management	FTEs	22
Female workforce	%	70
Female managers	%	69
<b>Benefits</b>		
Maternity leave	Weeks	4
Paternity leave	Weeks	2
<b>Working environment</b>		
Work-related accidents	Number	1
Employee satisfaction	Rating (1-10)	7.3
<b>Compliance and security</b>		
Whistle-blower cases	Number	0
Data security issues	Number	0





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