

# The founder of the Danish sperm bank that exports to 80 countries in the world explains why Danish men love to donate their sperm



Thomas Moerman  
07 Dec 2016

European women apparently love Danish donor sperm. Germans, Serbs, Brits; all of them turn to the Scandinavian country to order little tubes with frozen sperm.

The latest addition to that list are the Dutch. The demand for Danish sperm is growing amongst women in the Netherlands, according to recent Dutch reports.

Cryos International claims to be the largest sperm bank in the world, and is located in Aarhus, Denmark. The company exports donor sperm to over 80 countries, and that compares to about 50 countries seven years ago, according to company information.



Foto: Flickr/Hans Splinter

Around 2,000 babies are born annually, thanks to donor sperm from Cryos. Business Insider Netherlands talked to Ole Schou, founder and CEO of Cryos, about the popularity of Danish donor sperm.

Schou declined to share financial details about the company or figures about how much donor sperm Cryos typically has in stock – but in terms of volume, Schou earlier mentioned “a hundred liters” of sperm. And the business is still growing.

“The only continent we don’t ship to is Antarctica,” Schou told Business Insider. “But perhaps there’s not such a high demand over there.”

For Schou, it all started in his college years with a dream he had 1981, about frozen sperm.

“I thought it was quite a peculiar dream myself,” he admits. But it was the starting point for a strange obsession that kept him busy ever since.

As a business student, he read tons of scientific literature on frozen sperm in his spare time. A couple of years later he finished this ‘self-study’ with a 400 page-report on the topic. Half of the study focused on clinical aspects, the other half on the business part. Some years later, in 1987, he founded Cryos International.

Even then, sperm banks were not a big business. Sperm freezing has been done since the 1950s, but there was never a real need for it. That all changed during the HIV-epidemic of the 1980s. Scientists found that the best way to test sperm for HIV, is to quarantine it in frozen form for 6 months.

All of a sudden there was a good reason for sperm freezing. Around the same time, fertility and artificial insemination became much more important topics. For Cryos, that meant they were in business.

## **Single women**

The typical sperm bank client has evolved over the years. The first clients of Cryos were heterosexual couples, with men that had fertility problems. Nowadays, about half of Cryos’ clients are single women.

“Often they are women that focused on their careers and initially didn’t think about having kids. In their thirties they might be in a hurry. And they might be a bit picky, too”, Schou says.

## **Anonymous sperm donors**

But that doesn’t clarify why Denmark is the sperm capital of the world. In most countries in the world, there is a serious lack of sperm donors.

The biggest obstacle in many countries, according to Schou, are laws that prohibit anonymous donations. “It’s a big negative for the supply system”, he says.

On top of that, the success of Danish sperm banks such as Cryos shows that prohibiting anonymous donations doesn’t really help. At least in the European Union – where transporting any type of product is easy within the Internal Market – women can just order their anonymous sperm from Denmark.

“I understand that politicians come up with these regulations for ethical reasons, but they forget about the power of the market. It’s not possible to enforce these types of rules, because people will just go to another country”, Schou says.

## **Danes like to help**

However, there's more to this than just anonymity. Belgium and France, for example, do allow anonymous donations, but aren't known for their booming sperm business.

This is why Cryos conducts surveys amongst its donors, to find out why they donate their sperm. It's a question that's still hard to answer, Schou admits, but he did find an interesting detail in the results: 46 percent of the Danish sperm donors also donate blood. "I think it has to do with the Danish altruism. We're a small country, and we like to help each other."

Apart from that, donating sperm just isn't a big issue in Denmark, Schou says. "We just don't have a lot of taboos. Even though we have a Lutheran culture here, we're quite open minded. And we were the first country to legalize pornography, too."