DATE
21 October 2026

REFERENCE
Nomination DR team Amalie Thorlund Jepsen, Astrid Fischer, Jonatan Placing and Asger Mow

TITLE OF PROJECT: Sædskandalen

Dear members of the Cavlingprisen Committee,

On behalf of the European Broadcasting Union's Investigative Journalism Network (IJN), I am writing to support the nomination of the DR team behind the investigation into the Danish sperm donor known as 'Kjeld'.

In May 2025, a medical study described 67 children conceived with one donor's sperm, ten of whom had developed cancer. DR saw the implication: the sperm came from the European Sperm Bank in Copenhagen. Its freedom of information requests in over 20 countries turned a case report into proof of systemic failure. The sperm, carrying a cancer-linked TP53 mutation, reached 67 clinics in 14 countries and was used to conceive over 200 children. Legal national limits were exceeded in Denmark, Belgium, Spain and Greece.

In October 2025, DR brought the case to the IJN, contributing sources and much of the research. The team grew to more than 30 journalists from 12 countries sharing data, documents and interviews. DR handled the Danish health authorities and the European Sperm Bank as sources. On 10 December 2025 twelve public service broadcasters published together the story was published simultaneously by DR, the BBC, DW, NOS, VRT, RTBF, SVT, NRK, Yle, RÚV, ORF and RTVE, each for its own audience. No single newsroom could have established the full picture alone.

The impact has been concrete. Many families were warned only after the case became public in 2025: DR documented that almost 40 percent of the 98 women treated with the donor's sperm in Denmark were not promptly informed by their clinic. Internationally, the investigation provided the first documented cross-border count of the children affected, at a time when EU health ministers, the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology and Belgian authorities are pressing for an EU-wide limit per donor and a European donor register. The health minister in Belgium wrote to the EU Council leader Ursula Von der Leyen citing the investigation and requesting a wider debate within EU states on limits for donor children across the continent.

DR has kept going through 2026, revealing that the European Sperm Bank sold sperm from 81 donors to more Danish women than the law allows, and that the authority had

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not carried out inspections the rules require. The health minister is preparing legislation to tighten the sector.

This is the kind of journalism the Cavling Prize rewards: a team that recognised the significance of a scattered story, pursued it with persistence across borders and over many months, and changed what families, regulators and policymakers know. We strongly endorse the nomination.

Sincerely,



Belén López Garrido
Senior Editor for Investigative and Collaborative Journalism
EBU News