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Translated by Maya Posch (www.mayaposch.com).

Thijs became Maya and can be registered without sex-reassignment surgery as woman.

A perfect boy, and girl in one

A man from Rijssen is allowed to register himself as woman at the registrar's office, without sex-reassignment surgery. After the birth a mistake was made, according to the judge.

By our correspondent

ANNETTE TOONEN

RIJSSEN. Thijs has become Maya. A woman, but with a penis. She is a hermaphrodite. An intersexual, according to her. She dislikes the official term for (developmental) reproductive organ conditions, *disorders of sexual development*. It suggests a disorder: “But it is no disorder, it is a twist in regular development.”

Maya Posch, currently 28 years old, was born as a “perfect boy”, whose body didn't show anything untoward, her mother says. During puberty this changed. Aside from beard hairs her breasts also grew. Her voice broke a bit, but she also got female hips. She was 21 years old when she decided to go through life as a woman. “Because if this is a man's body, then it is a very special man's body. A female role fit better.”, she says. A few years later Posch began to take hormone tablets which helped with this.

Whoever looks at her undoubtedly: does Posch look more like a man or woman? Her hair is long, her nails painted. Face and composure are feminine, with a slim waist. She walks in a feminine manner. Her shoulders are slightly wider than you'd expect for a woman, her voice maybe a bit lower. The hairs on her chin are being dealt with through electrical epilation.

Her life is a hell, Posch says. A quest. She visits hospital after hospital. Sometimes there's a minor victory, such as the recent judgement by the court. The battle to not be registered as man but as woman at the registrar's office has been won in her favour.

The court mentions 'a mistake' made at the time of her birth, when the male characteristics were registered but not the female. Her legal advisor, personal injuries specialist Yme Drost, calls it “a unique judgement” - someone with a penis who is allowed to be registered as female, a change in the registrar's office from male to female without the need for a sex-reassignment surgery in advance. “Finally legal recognition for her special identity.”

Posch had to, despite being infertile, undergo an orchiectomy (castration). This happened last October at the Asklepios Westklinikum in the German Hamburg. During this surgery an exploratory surgery was also performed, during which the surgeon concluded that Maya aside from a penis also has a (stuck together) blind vagina.

In 2007 a physician from a clinic in the German Mühlheim also saw a 'hidden vagina' on an MRI scan. Physicians in Duisburg confirmed this a few months later. Posch shows the documents: “A great diagnosis. I felt like I was in heaven. Finally, it was confirmed.”

Dutch physicians on the other hand never saw anything special – they saw no blind vagina and in blood and tissue they found only male chromosomes. Posch frequented during these years five hospitals in the Netherlands.

She recently sued the VU medical center in Amsterdam via the Medical Disciplinary Board. She finds that she wasn't treated correctly by the gender team there, a team which is specialised in the

treatment of transsexuals, of men who wish to become women or the other way around. "They said: 'You want to become a woman, right?' But I do not want a treatment, no transgender treatment. I just wanted to know which organs I have exactly." The VU medical center at this point does not wish to comment on these complaints.

Posch wants to keep her penis. "A penis is quite handy to have. Less chance of an inflamed bladder, and I do not have to strip off my bathing suit at the pool if I have to urinate. I'd see removal of my penis as mutilation. By removal of my penis I'd also lose sensitivity.

She speaks freely over her intersexuality. Openly she answers intimate questions. She feels attracted to both men and women, she says. Her mother thinks that her child has to be careful that she won't be used as "a toy". To her Maya is "a boy and a girl in one".

Publicity may help to get more understanding, Posch thinks. And to avoid that young children by whom it is unclear whether they have the gender characteristics of a boy or girl, get a gender assigned which doesn't fit them. "Let those children first grow up and then determine what they want." She has received many responses. Someone wrote: "What a relief to know that I'm not alone."

Boy or girl? For some babies the question remains

Specialized teams can determine the gender of babies for whom this isn't clear. Sometimes this decision is postponed.

By our correspondent

ROTTERDAM. In the Netherlands every year ten to twenty babies are born for whom it isn't immediately clear whether they are boys or girls. This says children's physician and endocrinologist Erica van den Akker of the academic medical center Erasmus MC in Rotterdam. But the number of babies for whom during the sex development in the womb something goes wrong is much larger. This involves hundreds a year.

All sex development conditions are called disorders of sexual development (DSD). It is a collective name for a number of conditions, such as the androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS), the adrenogenital syndrome (AGS), the condition of Klinefelter or the syndrome of Swyer.

In all of these cases did something during development go wrong related to the chromosomes, hormones and/or reproductive glands. Van den Akker: "Every embryo starts off with a dual gender. The first two months you can not see whether it is a boy or a girl. Once the chromosomes, the hormones and the reproductive glands begin to function normally does the embryo develop itself in the direction of a boy or a girl. For boys the reproductive glands, which are called testicles, begin to produce male hormone (testosterone). Testosterone ensures the external masculinization. For girls the reproductive glands (ovaries) begin to produce female hormone (oestrogens)."

But there are unborn babies with XX-chromosomes (female chromosomes) which during their development become more masculine and babies with XY-chromosomes which become more feminine. There are also children which are born with XX-cells and XY-cells, or with XXY- or XXXY-cells.

To determine the gender of a baby in cases where this is unclear, are the skills of a specialized team required. The Erasmus MC has such a team. "In such a situation usually more examinations are required to determine the gender. It also happens that we postpone the decision, or that later, once the child grows up, another choice is made."

Transsexuality and gender dysphoria are not the same as DSD. Van den Akker: “Gender dysphoria involves someone having an unpleasant feeling related to the biological sex. Gender dysphoria is often accompanied by the wish to be the other sex. The most extreme form exists among transsexuals which let their bodies be changed.” Transsexuals get treated in special gender centers in Amsterdam, Groningen and Leiden.