



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on November 8, 2018

69-year-old Dutchman Suing to Change His Legal Age to 49

From a purely chronological standpoint, Dutch entrepreneur Emile Ratelband is 69 years old. But, taking the saying “You’re only as old as you feel” to heart, he is asking a court to allow him to knock 20 years off his legal age, arguing that it’s no different from allowing someone to change his gender to correspond with his feelings.

Ratelband wants his hometown of Arnhem, southeast of Amsterdam, to change his official birthdate from March 11, 1949, to March 11, 1969.



“Because nowadays, in Europe and in the United States, we are free people,” Ratelband told the [Washington Post](#). “We can make our own decisions if we want to change our name, or if we want to change our gender. So I want to change my age. My feeling about my body and about my mind is that I’m about 40 or 45.”

Ratelband, a motivational speaker and author, says he gets regular checkups from his doctor, who told him he has the body of a 45-year-old. He claims to have low blood pressure, excellent joint health and eyesight, and A-1 mental health.

A few people, naturally, have questioned his sanity. When he presented his request for an age change to Arnhem officials, they asked, “Are you crazy?” He assured them that he was not and instructed his lawyer to sue the city to get what he wants. In addition, noted the *Post*:

Adopting the playbook used by transgender people suing to alter their birth certificates, which often requires submitting to psychiatric evaluation, Ratelband agreed to see professionals to ensure he wasn’t a “victim of the Peter Pan syndrome,” as he put it. He convinced experts that he wasn’t deluding himself, he said, and that he understood the consequences of his actions.

Ratelband argues that being 49 again, in law if not in fact, would have a variety of benefits.

“When I’m 69, I am limited,” he [told the court](#). “If I’m 49, then I can buy a new house, drive a different car. I can take up more work.” He told the *Post* he often has difficulty finding work as a trainer and life coach because people think he can’t “speak the language of young people.” Being “younger” would, he believes, allay such concerns.

Ratelband also thinks being younger will help his romantic life.

“When I’m on Tinder and it says I’m 69, I don’t get an answer. When I’m 49, with the face I have, I will be in a luxurious position,” he explained. (Ratelband clearly does not lack for self-esteem; he also told the court he is a “young god.”)

Of course, on a dating site, he could just lie about his age. “But I don’t want to lie,” he told the *Post*. “If you lie, you have to remember everything you say.”



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Ratelband said the judges “laughed like little girls” when he first presented his case. “But,” wrote the *Post*, “after he delivered an inspirational speech about how modern society had freed itself from the false gods of money and government and religion — ‘nowadays, we are free people,’ he reportedly told them — they became more receptive, in his telling.”

“Transgenders can now have their gender changed on their birth certificate, and in the same spirit there should be room for an age change,” he told the court.

According to the [Guardian](#), “The judge conceded that the ability to change gender was a development in the law. ‘I agree with you: a lot of years ago we thought that was impossible,’ he said. But he asked the applicant how his parents would feel about 20 years of Ratelband’s life being wiped off the records.”

“For whom did your parents care? Who was that little boy then?” the judge asked.

The judge also pointed out that letting people change their age would mean legally deleting part of their lives.

Ratelband wrapped up his argument in one sentence: “It really is a question of free will.” If one can change his gender at will, why not his age — or, for that matter, his height, weight, or any other characteristics?

Ratelband will soon learn how persuasive he is. The court is set to issue a written decision within four weeks.

Image: screenshot from [YouTube video of interview with Ratelband](#)



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