Do I feel European?

by Lea LEB

The question >Do I feel European?< is not very easy to answer. Sure, my heritage country is part of the EU. I have been attending a European Middle School for four years with many different cultures, students and teachers. I am friends with students from other countries but does that really make me feel European?

So, there are maybe some things you should know about me and my life.

The things I like about my school are the pupils with different cultural backgrounds. I also really like my teachers. In my class we have 17 different cultures which is amazing. But even if I`m surrounded by those 17 cultures every day, I don´t know if this makes me feel European.

I learned a lot about the different cultures in my class because we did a presentation about our heritage countries. Honestly, I`ve forgotten most of the information because I was busy preparing my own presentation and I tried to do my best. This makes me question if I feel European for knowing some bits of information about other countries?

Does it make me feel European just because I can speak German, English and a little bit of French? Does it make me feel European just because I`m living in a EU-member state? Well, I still don´t know the answer to this question.

For sure I have also visited some other EU-member states, e.g. the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Italy and Germany. But I´m still questioning myself if that makes me feel European?

I have learned a lot about the European Union, too. I know that in 2012 the European Union was awarded for the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. I also know something about the European institutions, e.g. the European Commission, the European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Court of Justice, the European Parliament and the European Court of Auditors. All EU institutions debate, propose and make decisions. But does that knowledge that I have gained about the European Union make me feel European?

I really like and support what the EU stands for and what it does. I also think about studying in another EU-country, maybe the United Kingdom or France.

But to feel European what do I need to do? And how does it feel? Is it a feeling of joy or it it a feeling of anger? I don´t know if I feel European?

And that´s my answer for the moment – I just don´t know right now how it feels to feel European.

About myself:

Hello my name is Lea Anna Leb. I'm 14 years old and I have been attending the European Middle School in Neustiftgasse 100 for 4 years.

I live in Vienna and I really like drawing, listening to music and writing songs. I also like playing the guitar. I also usually like to hang out with my friends in my free time or read a book. I'm very interested in photography, that's why on the one hand I enjoy taking photographs with my camera and on the other hand I would like to make a living out of it.

Do I feel European?

by Noa BECI

I find this question to be both interesting as well as difficult to answer.

For, you see, there are different ways to interpret it. I mean, it´s obvious that I´m European, as it´s the continent I live on.

But to FEEL European? What is it even like?

To me, feeling European is entirely subjective. Meaning, you´d get different answers if you asked such a question to numerous European citizens. I personally believe that you have to be a EU citizen to haven even the smallest grasp of this kind of feeling.

The EU has countless of benefits. For example, you get the freedom to travel from one member state to another, and study or work there if you wish to do so. You can also have access to national health care benefits, and the list goes on. With these advantages in mind, I wonder to myself how someone from a developed country such as Switzerland would feel, in comparison to a German citizen.

Anyway, I´m not a EU citizen, considering my country, Albania, isn´t part of the EU yet. However, I´ve definitely been to numerous EU countries: Greece, Belgium, France, Italy and Spain. All countreis were beautiful yet so different from each other at the same time. And now that I know what Europe stands for, which is >United in Diversity<, I can safely say that it signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent´s bountiful cultures, traditions and languages.

I wish to embrace the EU´s domocratic values, standards, and repsect for man´s dignity and freedom someday. But for me, it´s still a proceess of whether I truly feel European and whether I´m willing to say it with full confidence, However, I believe it´s only a matter of time before I find the appropriate answer to this question. After all, it hasn´t been too long since I have moved to Austria (in September 2019) and there are plenty of things I have yet to experience and acknowledge.

After I had arrived in Vienna, I got to see numerous cultures, especially in my class 4A, the European Middle School in Vienna, such as Austrians, Croatians, Polish, Serbs, Syrians, Afghans, Indian, etc. I´ve made plenty of friends as well!

I find it fascinating how cultures, although in the same continent, manage to be so different from one another. It genuinely makes me feel welcomed, as if I´m being told, "It doesn´t matter that you´re from somewhere else, you´re still equal and have the same rights as the others."

In conclusion, I´m sadly incapable of answering your question in a straight forward manner at the moment. However, it made me think a lot about my current situation and where I stand. And it seems that there lies a great future ahead of me.

About myself:

My name is Noa Beci. I am 14 years old. I'm Albanian but I was born in Israel due to my father's work as a diplomat. I've also lived in Montenegro for several years. I recently moved to Vienna and I'm trying my best to learn German. One of my favourite hobbies is drawing which I'm very passionate about. I also enjoy writing in my spare time.