

Where does Europe end?

By Artur Barseghyan, 22

Debate about where Europe ends is at the same time a debate on where it starts. Beginning from fifties of last century when Community agreements were signed Europe became much richer and certainly bigger term than simply a noun indicating western half of Eurasian mainland.

In the quest of better understand Europe's personality, I found out rather more about that charming Phoenician woman. I was at the primary school when my country became member of the Council of Europe and then gradually I learned about pretty hot debate about Armenia's European identity. The existence of vital and disproportionately big Armenian diaspora on the other hand created confusion of terms for a teenager like me in the environment when you have got American Armenian, Russian Armenian, Lebanese Armenian, French Armenian and X Armenian friends. For my American Armenian and Egyptian Armenian classmates Armenia was certainly located in Europe, for Russian Armenians it's in a independent Caucasus which after Rose revolution in Georgia started to be associated with Europe. For your Swiss or French Armenian repatriated friends the geophysical location of your country is not that important than unsatisfying level of Europeanness. In all cases, in my personal experience, the point of reference for Armenia was Europe.

My textbooks never clearly stated about that, always using a complex phrase like "bridge between Europe and Asia" (interestingly in similar indications Europe always was mentioned first although alphabetically it is the second). I had chance to be in Brussels for EU institutions' open day and was equally unsatisfied by unclear position of the European Union on this level. I didn't find my country neither in interactive and educative maps or on the other gadgets prepared for that event nor EU-Armenia joint flag pins at Parlamentarium souvenir shop. This dissatisfaction however leads to me to think more and on regular basis of Armenia's place in the world and in Europe. The recent Brexit vote adds new element into debate on political, cultural and geographical boundaries of Europe.

Being non-believer in any faith, however I feel cultural attachment to the Armenian Christian heritage which represents millennia old struggle of my ancestors to uphold the values that they believed in despite unfavourable geopolitical conditions. I suppose that it was not only about commitment to the values which were once adopted and agreed in Armenian society but also strong cultural affinity to Europe. Nowadays, the main feature of Europe is not Christendom and if Armenia wants to maintain its traditional attachment to Europe, the nation should fully adopt and implement the principles of rule of law, democracy, social inclusivity and then Europe will not only end in Armenia but also start here.