EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The special online edition of the annual The State of the Union conference took place in unprecedented times, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which in just a short time drastically changed the lives of billions of people around the world. The entirely online event, held on 8 May 2020, was organised in little over a month with the purpose of bringing expert voices together to discuss the implications of COVID-19 for key policy sectors, and to deliver their perspectives to a global and virtual audience.

The conference theme “Europe: Managing the COVID-19 Crisis” encouraged high-level reflection on three key policy areas profoundly impacted by the pandemic: public health, the economy and global cooperation. Over 550 experts participated in the specialised audience while over 9000 people around the world live-streamed the three sessions of the conference.

The programme featured 23 prominent speakers, including Luigi Di Maio, Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Michel, President, European Council (EC), Christine Lagarde, President, European Central Bank (ECB), Paolo Gentiloni, European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Roula Khalaf, Editor, Financial Times, Jeroen Dijsselbloem, Former President, Eurogroup, Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mari E. Pangestu, Managing Director, Development Policy & Partnerships, The World Bank, Jeffrey Sachs, Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University, Alexander Stubb, Director, School of Transnational Governance, EUI, and Former Prime Minister of Finland and Giuseppe Conte, Prime Minister of Italy.

Interest was strong among local, national and international press and ANSA, Financial Times (FT), and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) served as Knowledge Partners of the conference. The State of the Union’s partnership with YouGov was renewed for a third year in a row, giving the audience an exclusive first look at global public opinion surveys conducted relating to COVID-19. In addition, the conference continued its commitment towards achieving gender balance among both the speakers and the audience and as a result, this year women accounted for 43,5% of speakers and 44,1% of the registered audience.

Social media promotion of the conference took place across multiple channels with particular focus on Twitter and Facebook. The @EuropeanUni and @EUISoU Twitter accounts featured 425.5K impressions whilst the paid and organic Facebook campaigns combined reached over 835 000 people, resulting in over 32 000 clicks to The State of the Union homepage.
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1. ORGANISATION AND CONTENT

- Scientific Committee
- Programme
- Speakers
This programme was planned and supervised by The State of the Union 2020
*Scientific Committee*:

- **Giacomo Calzolari**  
  Professor, Economics, EUI

- **Vincenzo Grassi**  
  Secretary General, EUI

- **Madeleine de Cock Buning**  
  Professor, School for Transnational Governance, EUI

- **Bernard Hoekman**  
  Director, Global Economics Research Area and Robert Schuman Chair, EUI

- **Renaud Dehousse**  
  President, EUI and Chair of the Scientific Committee, EUI

- **Marco Incerti**  
  Director, Communications Service, EUI

- **Jos Delbeke**  
  Professor, School for Transnational Governance, EUI

- **Brigid Laffan**  
  Director, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI

- **Peter Drahos**  
  Professor, Law and Governance, EUI

- **Ramon Marimon**  
  Professor, Economics Department and Pierre Werner Chair, EUI

- **Philipp Genschel**  
  Professor, Comparative and European Public Policy, EUI

- **George Papaconstantinou**  
  Professor, School of Transnational Governance, EUI

The State of the Union was coordinated by the SOU Secretariat, based within the Communications Service, and is the result of the collaboration and hard work of many departments and individuals across the EUI.
The theme of the special online edition, “Europe: Managing the COVID-19 Crisis”, was explored across three sessions:

- Morning session “COVID-19: Health Policy and Society”
- Afternoon session “COVID-19: Economic Policies for the Aftermath”
- Evening session “COVID-19: Global Cooperation”

Recordings of all sessions were uploaded to The State of the Union website in real-time.

The event was opened with welcome addresses from Renaud Dehousse, President, EUI, Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence and Enrico Rossi, Governor, Tuscan Region.

The speeches were followed by an institutional welcome from Luigi Di Maio, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy and a high-level address by Charles Michel, President, EC, in which he called for a new “De Gasperi plan” to relaunch Europe, which should prioritise “a caring society” premised on “individual and collective well-being”.

These interventions led into the first panel debate “COVID-19: Health Policy and Society”, moderated by Ellen M. Immergut, Dean, Social and Political Sciences Department, EUI and co-moderated by Assia Brandrup-Lukanow, MD Specialist in Public Health Medicine who guided discussions relating to the health emergency and its societal implications. Topics debated by Andrea Ammon, Director, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Dorit Nitzan, Regional Emergency Director, World Health Organisation and Xuejie Yu, Dean, School of Health Sciences, Wuhan University, included best practices for dealing with the pandemic, lessons learned about how to protect national health services from becoming overwhelmed, the long-term effects of the pandemic and strategies to improve responses to future pandemics.

Ellen M. Immergut also highlighted the work of YouGov, The State of the Union’s Data Partner, by drawing on recent YouGov surveys to launch discussions about how public compliance with lockdown measures varied in different countries and how public perceptions about government handling of the crisis are linked to the way government messages were communicated.

Christine Lagarde, President, ECB, opened the afternoon session with a high-level address in which she stressed that the European response to the crisis is “our Schuman moment” and called an EU common fiscal response “highly desirable”, adding it must be “swift, sizeable and symmetric”. This was followed by a high-level discussion between Roula Khalaf, Editor, FT, and Paolo Gentiloni, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs.
The evening session began with a high-level discussion between Roula Khalaf, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund, and Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund. Kristalina Georgieva cited the crisis as “an opportunity to build a better world” by creating economies that contribute more to society and increase resilience against climate change and poverty. She also noted that “it is hugely important to resist what may be our natural tendency to retreat behind our borders” when asked by Roula Khalaf about increasing tensions between China and the USA.

The dynamic panel debate which followed, COVID-19: Global Cooperation, was moderated by Nathalie Tocci, Director, Italian Institute of International Affairs and featured Mari E. Pangestu, Managing Director for Development and Partnerships, World Bank, Jeffrey Sachs, Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University and Alexander Stubb, Director, School of Transnational Governance, EUI and former Finnish Prime Minister. The speakers discussed how multilateralism is likely be boosted as a result of the crisis, the need for global cooperation on issues such as food security, the need for the concept of growth to be recalibrated to fit a green, digital and education-based agenda, and Europe’s potential to negotiate a unique intermediary position as a mediator between China and the USA.

Giuseppe Conte, the Italian Prime Minister, gave the concluding high-level address in which he underlined the need for increased solidarity. “Our continent will prevail only if it will be capable of staying united and implementing a coordinated response based on solidarity.”
Speakers represented academia, national and EU institutions, transnational organisations, think-tanks and the international press.

Women accounted for 43.5% of speakers, up from 33% in 2019, reflecting SOU’s ongoing commitment to achieving equal gender representation among speakers.

23 EXPERT SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS

3 PANELS

9 HIGH-LEVEL ADDRESSES

Andrea Ammon
Director, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

Jeroen Dijsselbloem
Former President, Eurogroup

Laurence Boone
Chief Economist, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

Paolo Gentiloni
Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs

Assia Brandrup Lukanow
MD Specialist in Public Health

Kristalina Georgieva
Managing Director, International Monetary Fund

Giuseppe Conte
Prime Minister, Italy

Ellen Immergut
Head of Department, Social and Political Sciences, EUI

Renaud Dehousse
President, EUI

Roula Khalaf
Editor, Financial Times
SPEAKERS

Christine Lagarde  
President, European Central Bank

Ricardo Reis  
A.W. Phillips Professor of Economics, London School of Economics

Luigi Di Maio  
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Italy

Enrico Rossi  
Governor, Tuscany Region

Charles Michel  
President, European Council

Jeffrey D. Sachs  
Director, Center for Sustainable Development, Columbia University

Dario Nardella  
Mayor of Florence

Alexander Stubb  
Director, School of Transnational Governance, EUI, and Former Prime Minister of Finland

Dorit Nitzan  
Regional Emergency Director, World Health Organization

Nathalie Tocci  
Director, Italian Institute of International Affairs

George Papaconstantinou  
Professor, School of Transnational Governance, EUI

Xuejie Yu  
Professor and Dean, School of Health Sciences, Wuhan University

Mari E. Pangestu  
Managing Director, Development Policy & Partnerships, The World Bank
YEAR-ON-YEAR COMPARISON: GENDER BALANCE OF SPEAKERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female, Male
2. ATTENDANCE

• Specialised Audience
• General Audience
Departing from previous years, the 2020 edition catered to 2 different categories of audience: the specialised audience who joined discussions in the virtual room, who had the privilege of submitting questions to the panel via the live-chat; and the general audience who live-streamed the conference from The State of the Union homepage. 798 experts registered for the virtual room, of which 564 joined on the day (71%), while over 9000 people around the world live-streamed the three sessions.

### Specialised audience

Experts invited by the EUI to join the specialised audience included academics, policy makers, diplomats, EU representatives, business and opinion leaders and civil society representatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Registered</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Institution</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>31.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/ Finance other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Institutions</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Institutions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomatic Representations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Institution</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Organisation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Firm</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>14.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Goverment Organisation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit Organisation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think Tank</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>8.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
44.1% of the experts who registered for the virtual meeting room were women, an increase from 43% in 2019. See below for comparative data on The State of the Union’s record of gender-balance for both speakers and attendees.

**Year-on-year comparison chart: gender balance of attendees**

General audience

As the conference was available to live-stream without registering, only certain data relating to user behaviour and location was gathered using Google Analytics.

For this data, please refer to ‘Website Statistics’ below.
3. WEBSITE STATISTICS

• Performance
• Geographical Overview
• Pageviews
• Traffic Sources
WEBSITE STATISTICS

This year the website took centre stage given the entirely online format of the event.

The website performed excellently

with **100% uptime** and **0.8 sec.**

average load time from all over Europe.

This ensured accessibility **both on desktop and mobile devices** which constituted **40% of all visits.**

General audience - geographical overview 8\textsuperscript{TH} May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>New Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9,152</td>
<td>7,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>1,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1,152</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pageviews**

18,240

**New Users**

\uparrow 11,598

than 2 May 2019
As in previous years, the conference reached international audiences with the highest number of views coming from Italy, Belgium, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and France. Whilst the traffic from the US appears non-relevant, this is a good sign as it shows the effectiveness of The State of the Union’s Centralised Websites Network on Search Engines (SEO).

The number of pageviews on 8 May is impressive as it is just short of the 19 000 views recorded at the 2019 edition on 3 May 2019 at Palazzo Vecchio. To contextualise this comparison, 3 May 2019 featured the very successful Spitzenkandidaten debate, which was subject to an extensive press coverage both on the day and in the months preceding the event.
As seen below, the video recordings page was the second highest viewed page with over 650 visits. This shows the value of uploading the recordings in real-time to give viewers the opportunity to catch up on missed sessions whilst the event is still live.

An analysis of the top 10 traffic sources to the website in the period from 30 April to 8 May show the successes of both the social media campaign and the advertising campaigns run by ANSA, FT and FAZ. Facebook appears 3 times in the top 5 sources and LinkedIn appears as the 10th highest traffic source, while all three websites of The State of the Union Knowledge Partners feature in the top 10 traffic sources.
4. COMMUNICATIONS

- Advertising
- Press
- Social Media
As noted above, visibility for The State of the Union was elevated through online advertising campaigns carried out by Knowledge Partners, ANSA, Financial Times, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. The campaigns consisted of banners promoting the link to The State of the Union homepage in the lead up to the event which appeared in the following sections of their websites:

**ANSA:** ANSA Mondo, ANSA Europa, ANSA Mediterraneo, ANSA Nuova Europa

**FT:** Home, World, US, Companies, Tech, Markets, Opinion, Work & Careers, Life & Arts

**FAZ:** Gesellschaft

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**ANSA Impressions:** 5 458 000
The event attracted coverage by both Italian and international media outlets, despite circumstances forcing the event to be smaller and narrower in focus than previous editions.

84 articles were published from international outlets including:

- **REUTERS**
- **FINANCIAL TIMES**
- **POLITICO**
- **THE IRISH TIMES**
- **Bloomberg**
- **The Guardian**

The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was the topic that featured most heavily across all outlets, with particular attention given to high-level addresses and discussions, such as those led by FT Editor Roula Khalaf. Statements made by IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and ECB President Christine Lagarde, topped international media coverage, as did the dispute between the German high court and the ECB.

52 press articles and 3 video reports were released by national outlets such as:

- **ANSA**
- **la Repubblica**
- **LA NAZIONE**
- **CORRIERE FIORENTINO**
- **LA STAMPA**
- **24 ORE**

The Italian national broadcaster RAI also covered the event, on both the TG1 broadcast which emphasised the address by President of the European Council Charles Michel; and TG Regione, its regional counterpart, which focused on how the European University Institute organised the high-level event remotely, relying on socially distanced staff.

In the Italian media, the addresses made by Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and Italian Foreign affairs Minister Luigi Di Maio also garnered the majority of the media coverage, alongside European Council President Christine Lagarde.

Overall, the online edition of The State of the Union garnered a good level of press coverage, thanks to the programme of high-level speakers and its focus on the political and economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall bulk of the articles and media items dedicated to the event was overall considerably lower than previous edition, but successful is adjusted to the smaller scaler of the special edition.

Please [click here](#) for social media figures from the 2019 edition.
SOCIAL MEDIA

The paid Facebook campaign
(1-8 May 2020)
Reach: 800,000+
Clicks: 30,000

12 Posts
710 Reactions
2584 Clicks
25.9k Reach

@EuropeanUni
@EUIsou

99 Tweets
425.5k Impressions
524 Retweets
1011 Likes

10 Posts
14.2k Impressions
632 Engagement
18.1k Reach

@europeanuniversityinstitute

European University Institute

10 Posts
21.9k Impressions
255 Reactions
445 Clicks
The social media strategy largely revolved around the @EUISoU Twitter account which was active from the end of February until mid-May and was supported by promotion on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn predominantly in the week leading up to the event.

The conference’s social media promotion was ‘officially’ launched on 27 February with a series of weekly tweets featuring the hashtag #throwbackthursday, setting a countdown to the actual date of the conference and featuring highlights of previous editions. The main hashtag used throughout this period was #SOUCOVID19.

For the first time in 10 years The State of the Union opted for a paid Facebook advertising campaign which targeted both a general and a female audience. The campaign ran between 1-8 May and reached more than 800,000 people, of which over 650,000 were women, resulting in nearly 30,000 clicks leading to the SOU homepage.

The social media promotion was successful in reaching a large audience, partly due to the fact that many prominent “influencers” communicated about the event through their own social media accounts such as Alexander Stubb, Director of the EUI’s School of Transnational Governance and former Prime Minister of Finland.

Given the short time that the conference was organised in, and the general challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 lockdown, the social media statistics from this year are positive and reflect what was a streamlined programme of three online sessions rather than the usual three-day on-site conference, defined by a high degree of social interaction and publicity.

Please click here for social media figures from the 2019 edition.
Twitter was the main channel used for social media communication around The State of the Union and is the only social network with a dedicated The State of the Union account: @EUISoU.

Activity on 8 May: @EuropeanUni & @EUISoU

Tweets: 62
Impressions: 144,5K
Retweets: 267
Likes: 554

The entire conference was live tweeted from the @EuISoU channel, including a series of tweets with standout quotes from the panels and high-level addresses.
The #SOUCOV19 Hashtag

The results of the real-time hashtag tracker on #SOUCOV19 on Twitter and Instagram between 6 - 12 May revealed the ECB and Kristalina Georgieva among the most engaging posts, a high positive sentiment level of users towards the hashtag and its contents, and remarkably higher activity among women in comparison with men.

This may be linked to the paid Facebook advertising campaign which targeted female users who may have subsequently engaged with the hashtag on other channels, as well as the high numbers of female speakers at the conference which may have been a ‘pull’ factor for women.
Top Posts

@ecb May 8
Coming up in 15 mins: ECB President Christine @Lagarde speaks at the European University Institute’s online State of the Union Conference. Follow live from 13:00 CET https://t.co/Bksc9AHPhU #SOUCOVID19...

@KGeorgieva May 8
Great conversation today with @FT chief editor @khalfroula at @EIiSoU. Incoming economic data for some countries is already below the IMF's recent forecasts. What we don’t know about the virus...

@EuropeanUni May 7
#COVID19 calls for global solutions! @EIiSoU #SOUCOVID19 session 3, tomorrow 17:30 CEST: ✔ Opening: @KGeorgieva @KhalfRoula ✔ Panel: @Mari_Pangestu @JeffDSachs @alexstubb @NathalieTocci...

Influential Users

@ecb
561,478 Followers
244 Avg Engagements

@europeanuni
25,902 Followers
62 Avg Engagements

@kgeorgieva
200,392 Followers
57 Avg Engagements

@darionardella
66,889 Followers
27 Avg Engagements

@euisou
2,788 Followers
18 Avg Engagements

@j2bryson
24,836 Followers
3 Avg Engagements

@ralfgrahn
6,561 Followers
0 Avg Engagements

@stgeui
2,736 Followers
16 Avg Engagements
**User Gender**

- 30% Male
- 70% Female

**Sentiment**

- 13% Positive
- 48% Neutral
- 39% Negative

**Sentiment Score**

78.95
5. PARTNERS

• Knowledge Partners
• Contributing Partners
• Data Partner
ANSA, FT, and FAZ served as Knowledge Partners, running online advertising campaigns, reporting on the event and in the case of ANSA, embedding the live stream of the conference on their website. FT endorsed the conference internally to its staff members on Slack and externally to the wider B2B Marketing and Customer Success teams, who then shared the event with their bank of business and accounts. FT also engaged with the event on social media, promoting it on Twitter via the @ FTPressOffice account (10K followers), and its Editor, Roula Khalaf’s account (42,3K followers). Roula Khalaf also represented FT in a participatory role as she led two high-level discussions with Paolo Gentiloni and Kristalina Georgieva.

The State of the Union was proud to partner with YouGov for a third year in a row and to offer the audience an exclusive first look at global public opinion surveys carried out by YouGov relating to COVID-19. Selected data was shown and discussed in the panel debate COVID-19: Health Policy and Society whilst a greater array of data relating to the conference topics was shown at the beginning and end of each session on a promotional video loop.

The EC supports the EUI through the EU budget