



European
University
Institute

THE STATE
OF THE UNION

EUROPE: MANAGING THE **COVID-19** CRISIS

8th MAY 2020

SPECIAL ONLINE EDITION

FINAL REPORT

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**



SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

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



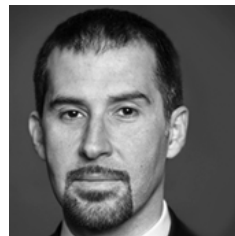
Madeleine de Cock Buning
Professor, School for Transnational Governance, EUI



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



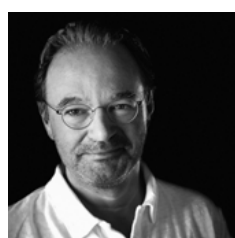
Peter Drahos
Professor, Law and Governance, EUI



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.

PROGRAMME

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.



“COVID-19: Economic Policies for the Aftermath”

The second panel debate of the day, [COVID-19: Economic Policies for the Aftermath](#), was moderated by [George Papaconstantinou](#), Professor, School of Transnational Governance, EUI, and saw [Laurence Boone](#), Chief Economist, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, [Jeroen Dijsselbloem](#), Former Eurogroup President and [Ricardo Reis](#), Professor, London School of Economics, discuss the economic impacts of COVID-19 from various angles. Comparisons were made with the 2008 financial crisis, the degree of uncertainty for markets and recovery were flagged, and issues of trust and solidarity with regards to a possible European recovery fund were raised. Questions submitted by the specialised audience present were fielded by a co-moderator and sent to George Papaconstantinou, who wove them into the questions he posed, introducing an interactive element to the debate.



“COVID-19: Global Cooperation”

The evening session began with a [high-level discussion](#) between [Roula Khalaf](#) 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 US.

[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

[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

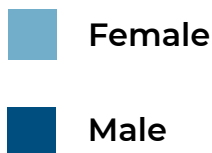
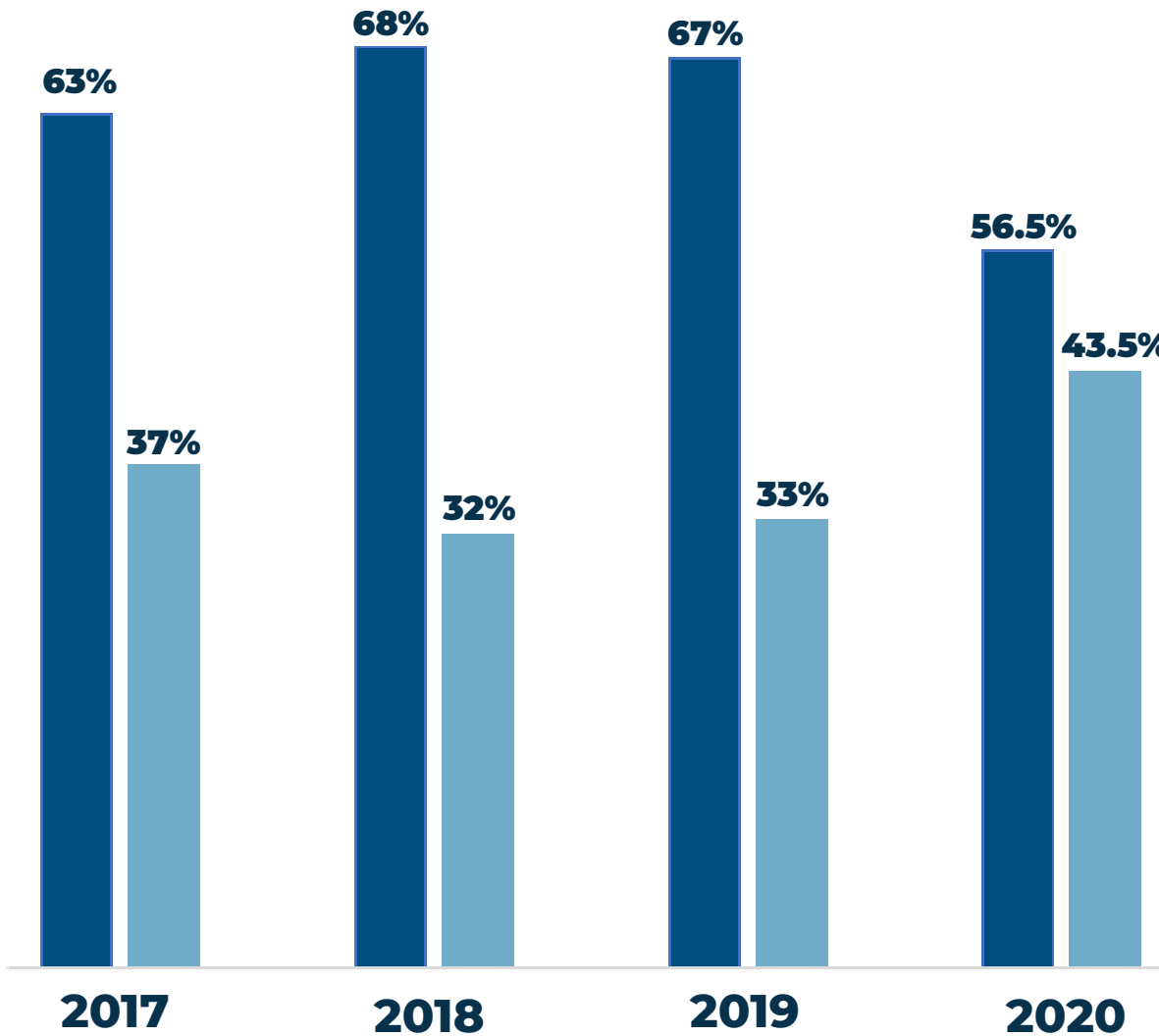
Professor and Dean, School of Health Sciences, Wuhan University



Mari E. Pangestu

Managing Director, Development Policy & Partnerships, The World Bank

YEAR-ON-YEAR COMPARISON: GENDER BALANCE OF SPEAKERS



2. ATTENDANCE

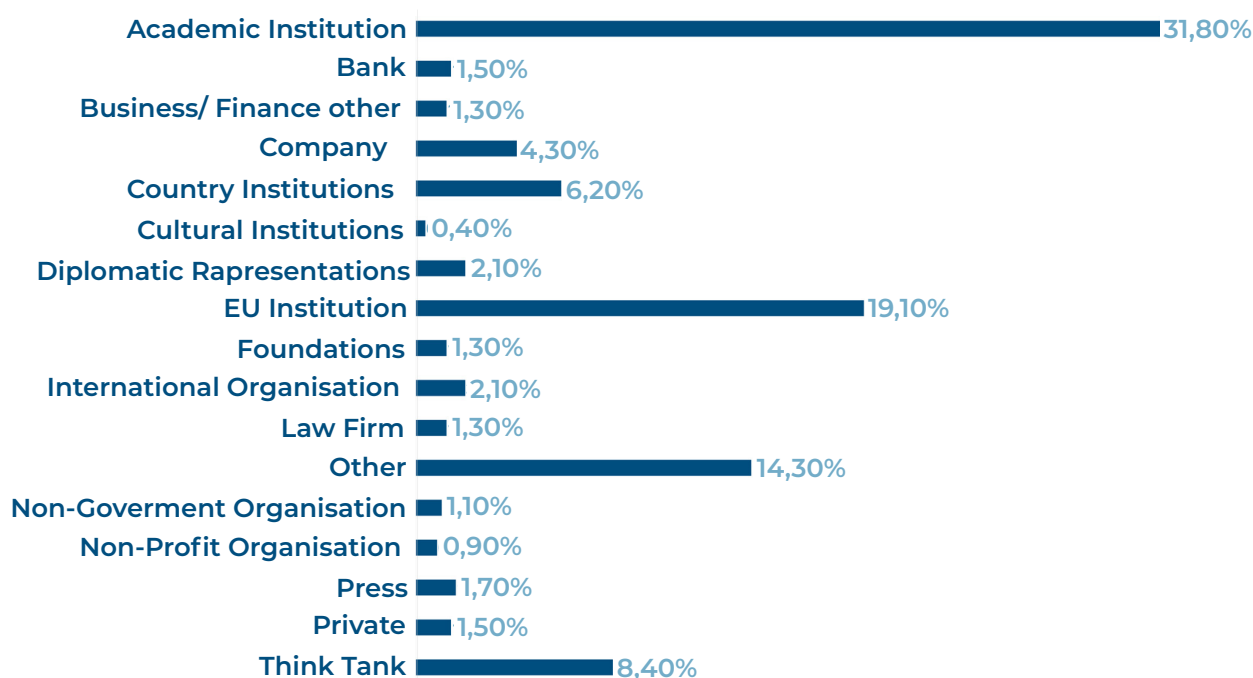
- **Specialised Audience**
- **General Audience**



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.

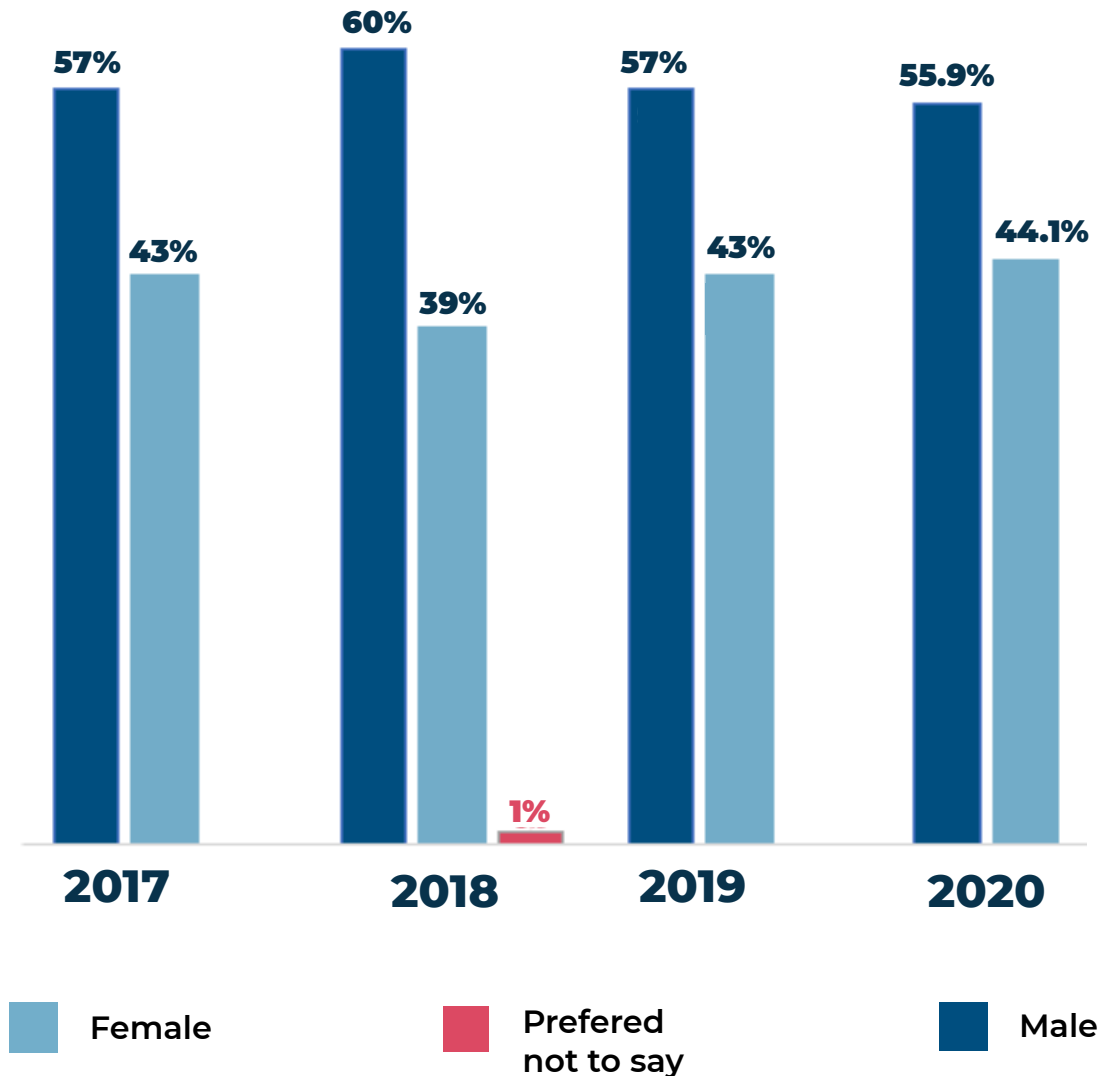
Specialised audience

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.



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

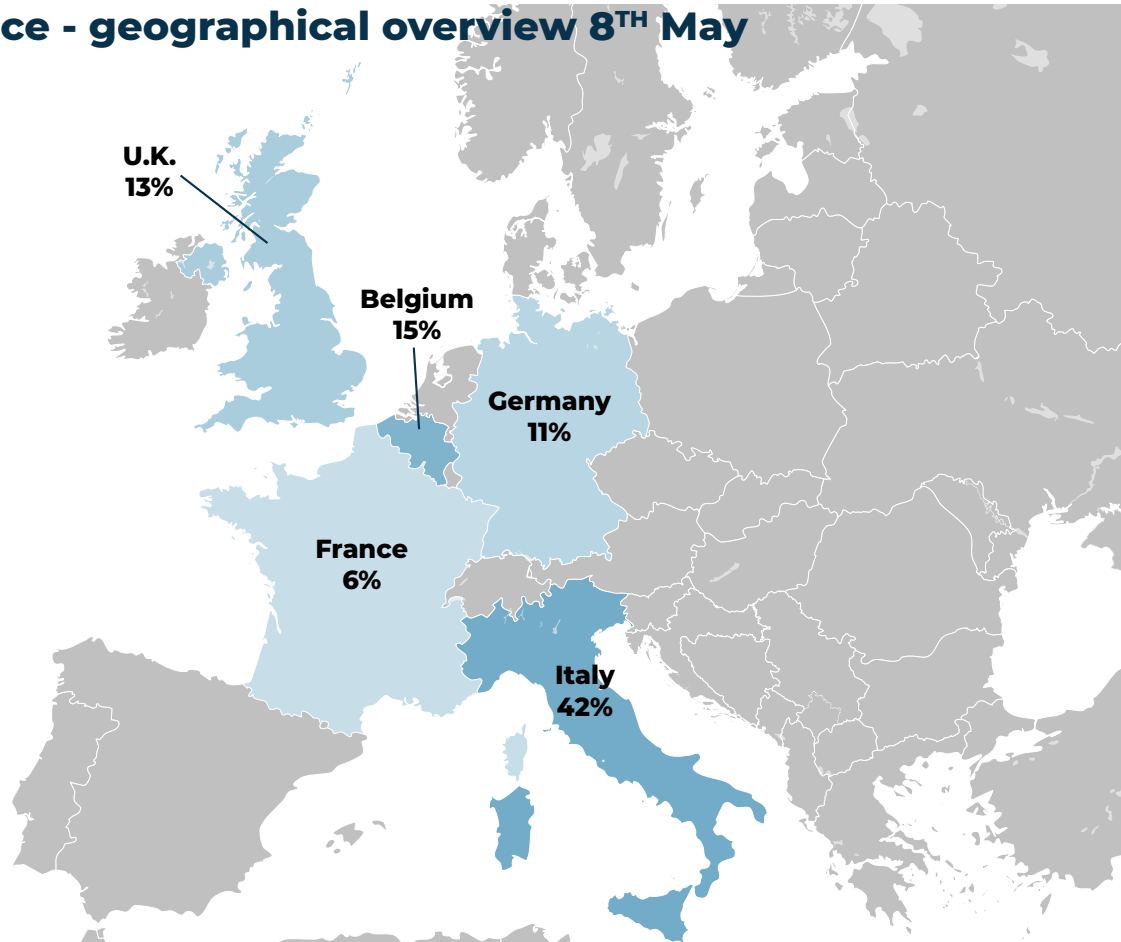
This year the website took centre stage given the entirely online format of the event.

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 8TH May

U.S.
13%



9 152
Users

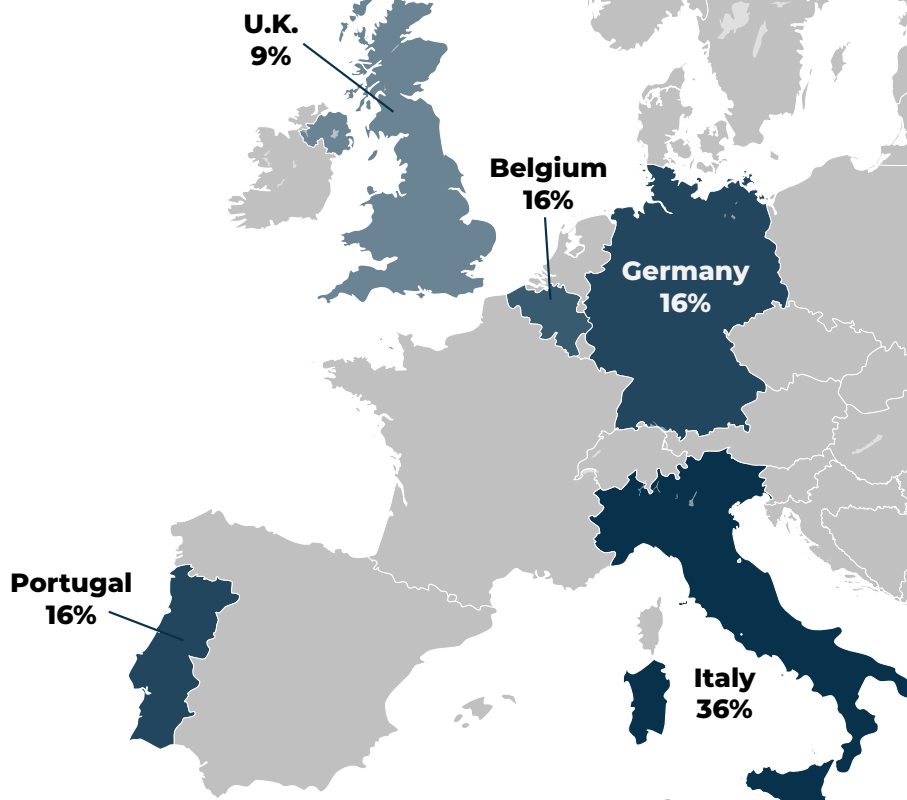
7 786
New Users

18 240
Pageviews

↑ 11 598
than 2 May 2019

General Audience - geographical overview 1 - 14TH May

U.S.
13%



26 980
Users

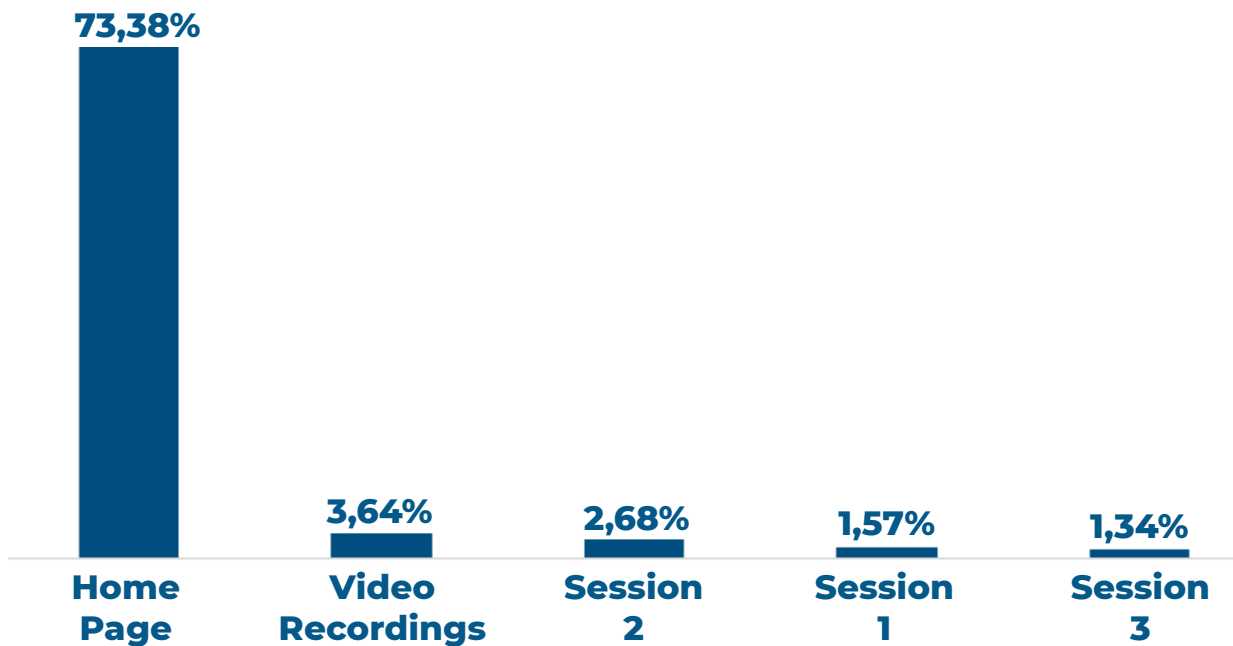
26 270
New Users

54 605
Pageviews

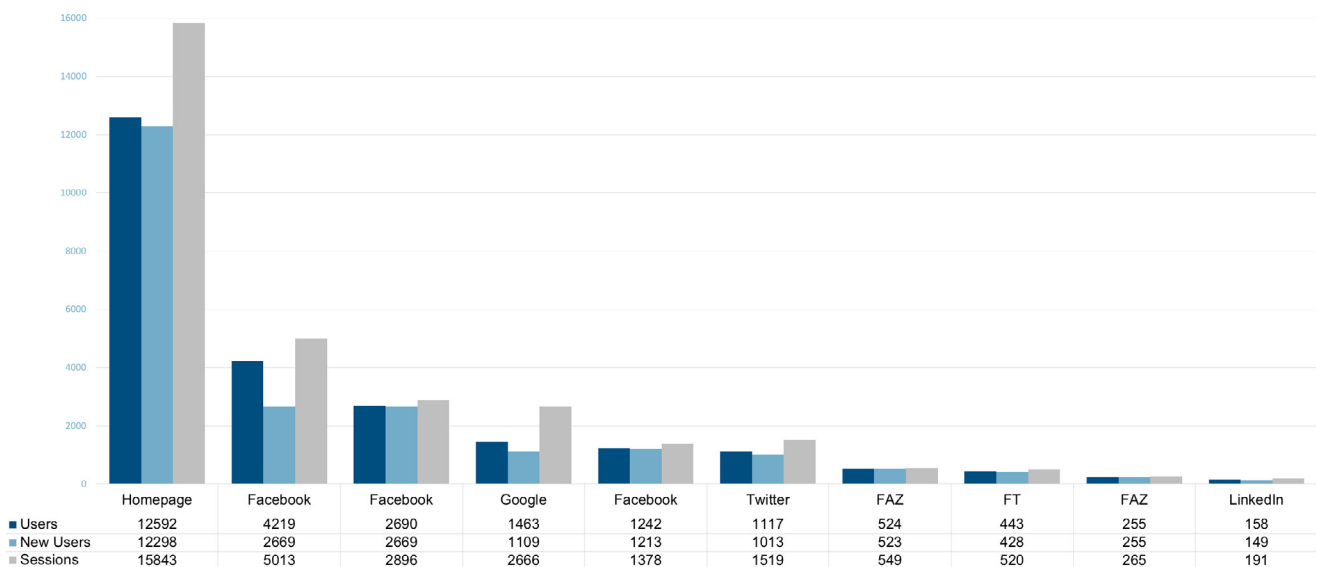
As in previous years, the conference reached international audiences with the highest number of views coming from Italy, Belgium, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and France. Whilst the traffic from the US appears non-relevant, this is a good sign as it shows the effectiveness of The State 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



ADVERTISING

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](#)

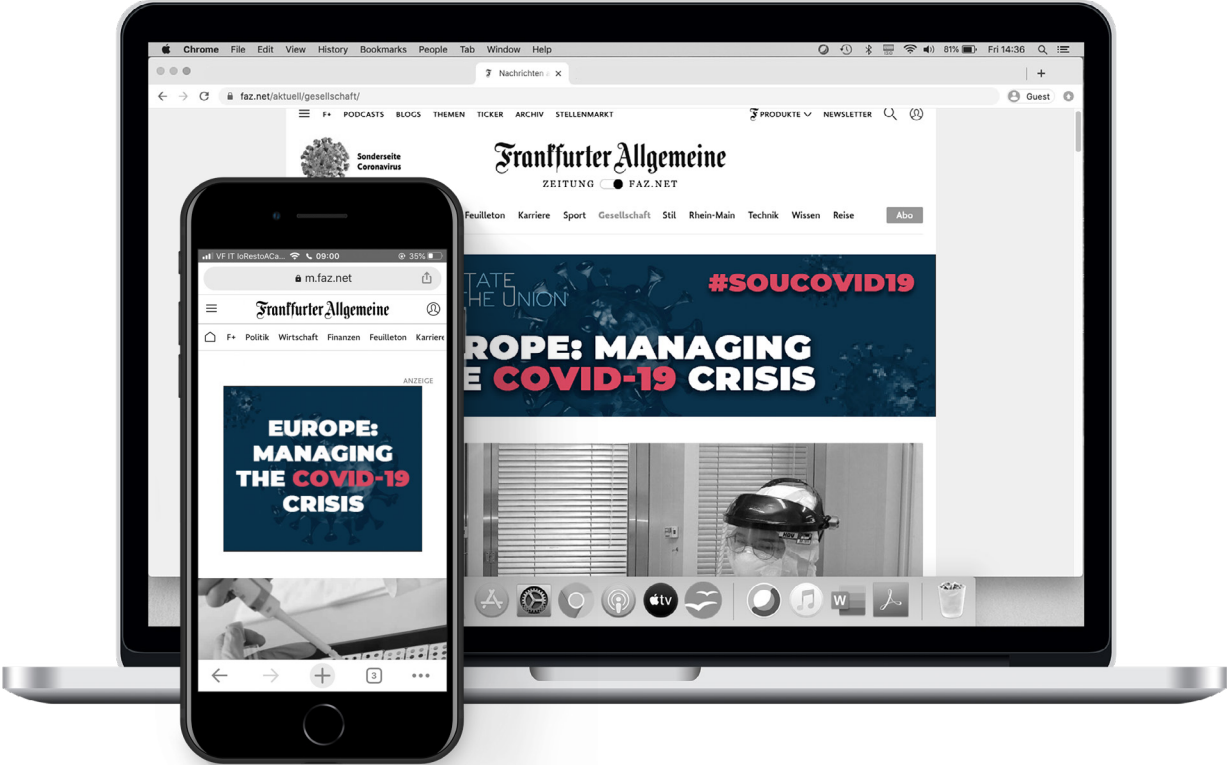
FT: [Home](#), [World](#), [US](#), [Companies](#), [Tech](#), [Markets](#), [Opinion](#), [Work & Careers](#), [Life & Arts](#)

FAZ: [Gesellschaft](#)

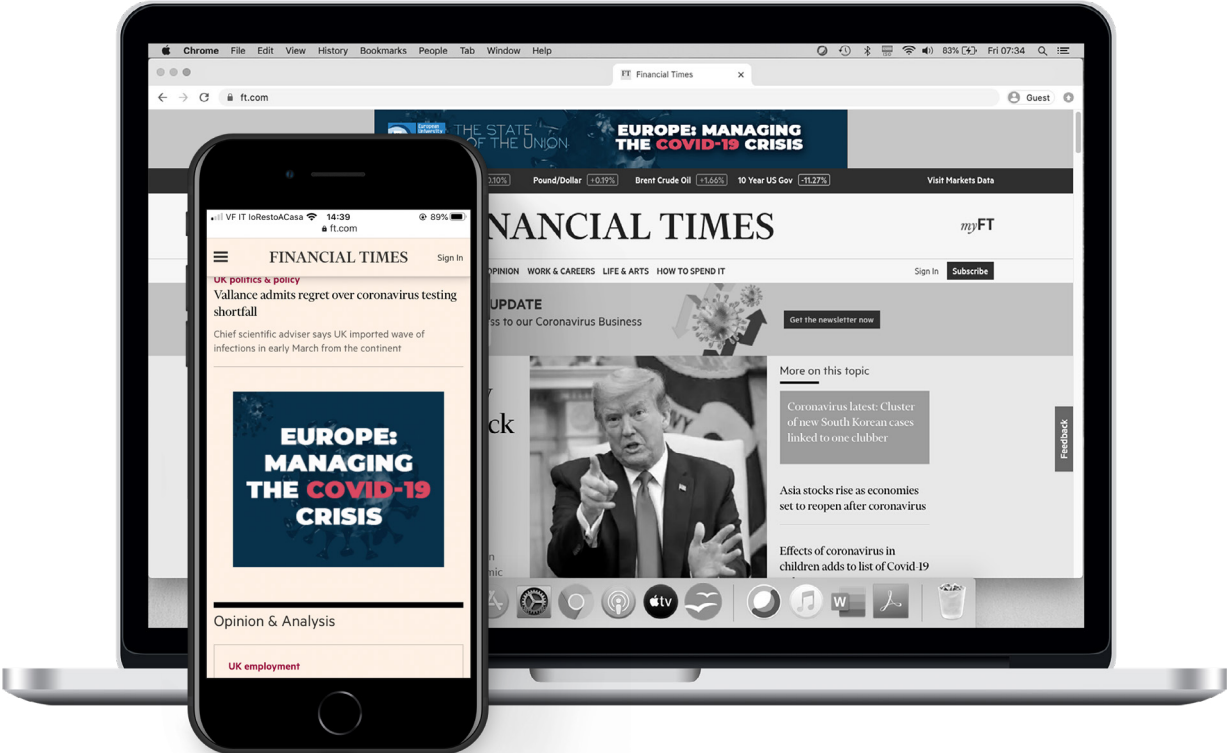
 Impressions: 5 458 000



Frankfurter Allgemeine Impressions: 940 168



Impressions: 1 977 1449



PRESS

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:



POLITICO

THE IRISH TIMES

Bloomberg



THOMSON REUTERS

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:



la Repubblica

LA NAZIONE

CORRIERE FIORENTINO

Il Sole **24 ORE**

LA STAMPA

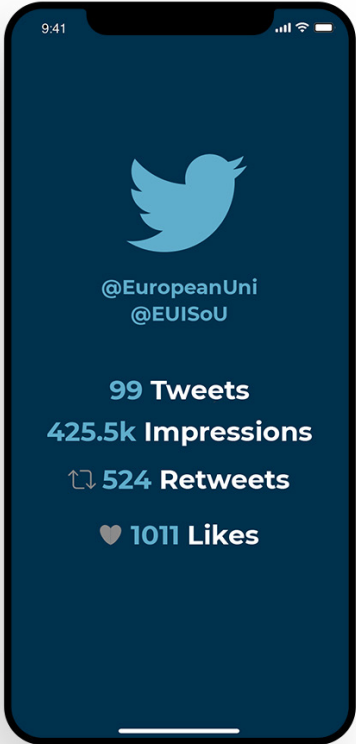
The Italian national broadcaster RAI also covered the event, on both the TG1 broadcast which emphasised the address by President of the European Council [Charles Michel](#); and TG Regione, its regional counterpart, which focused on how the European University Institute organised the high-level event 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



[@EuropeanUni](#)
[@EUISO](#)



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



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

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](https://twitter.com/EUISoU).

Activity on 8 May: [@EuropeanUni](https://twitter.com/EuropeanUni) & [@EUISoU](https://twitter.com/EUISoU)

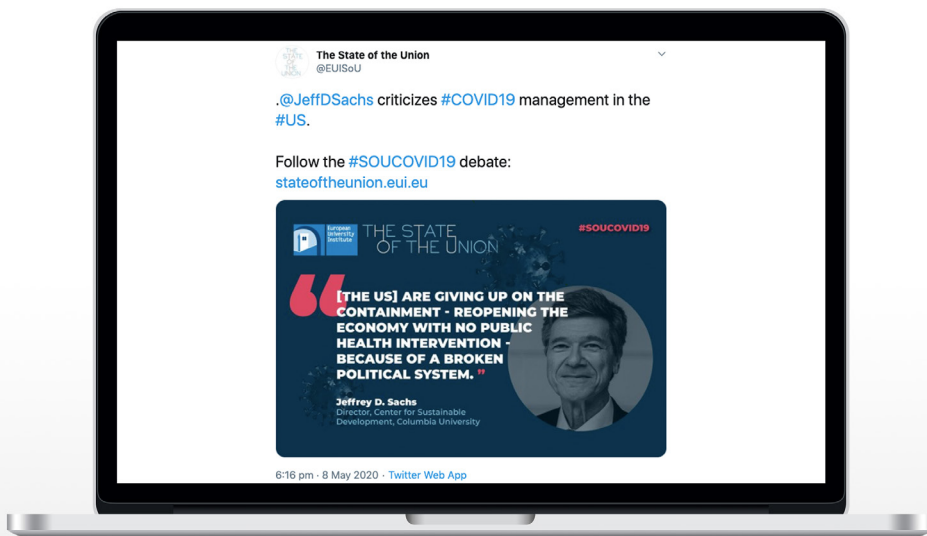
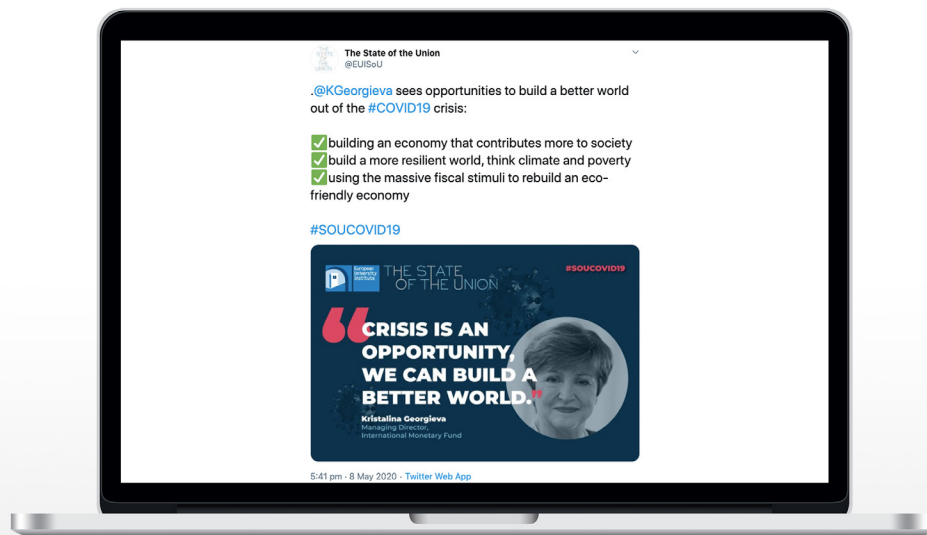
Tweets: 62

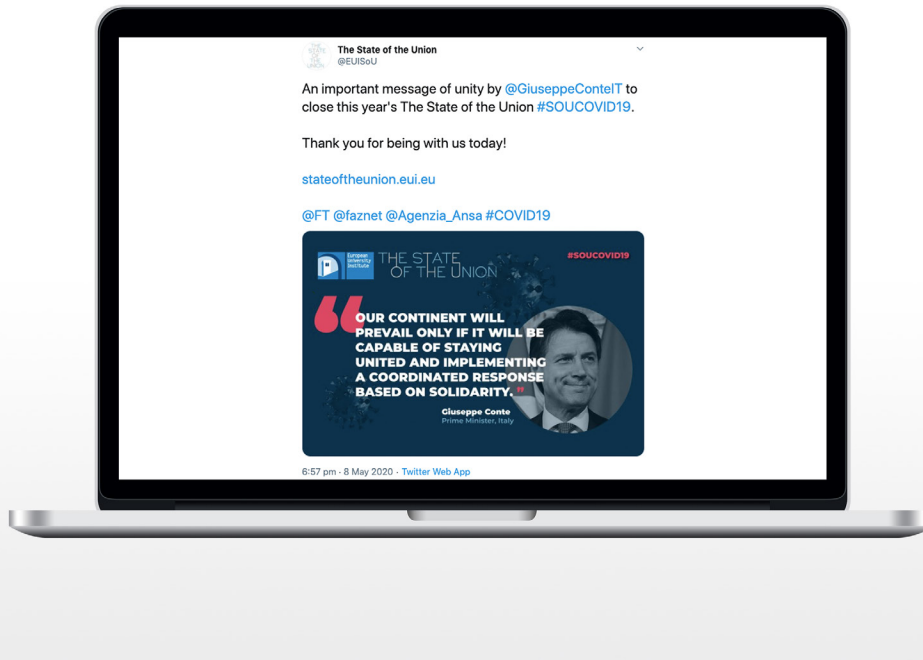
Impressions: 144,5K

Retweets: 267

Likes: 554

The entire conference was live tweeted from the [@EUISoU](https://twitter.com/EUISoU) channel, including a series of tweets with standout quotes from the panels and high-level addresses.



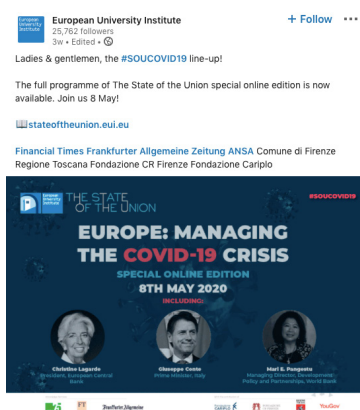


The #SOUCOVID19 Hashtag

The results of the real-time hashtag tracker on [#SOUCOVID19](#) 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.

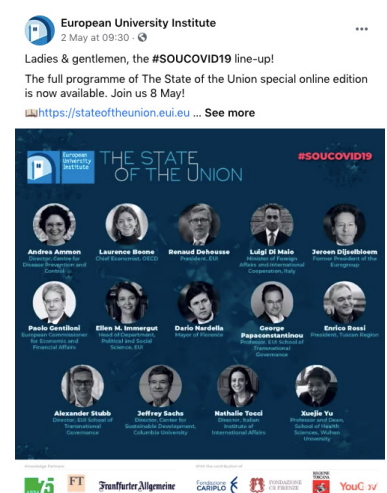
Most shared LinkedIn post



Most commented Instagram post



Most shared FB post



Top Posts



@ecb May 8

78  166 

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/BKsC9AHPu> #SOUCOVID19...



@KGeorgieva May 8

18  45 

Great conversation today with @FT chief editor @khalafroula at @EUISoU. 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

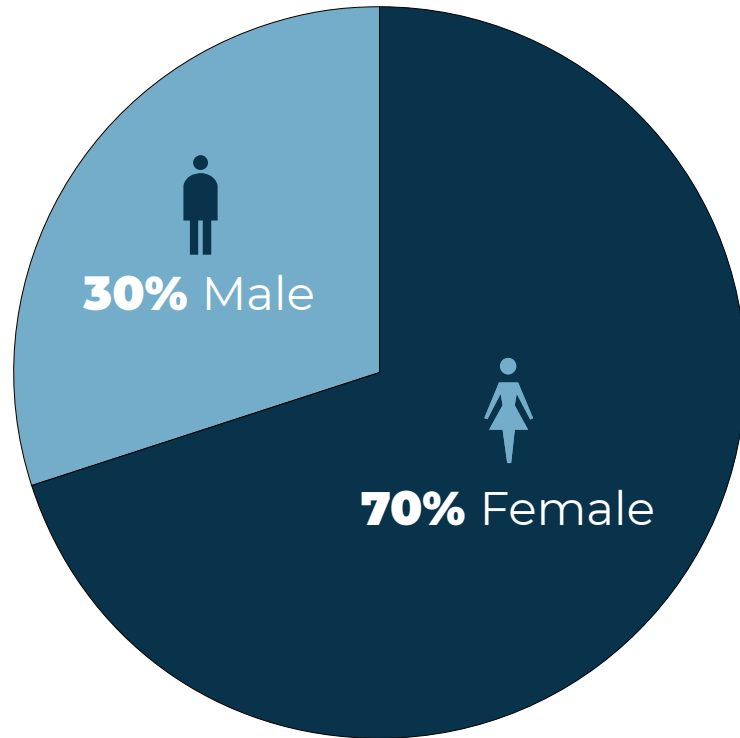
22  40 

#COVID19 calls for global solutions! @EUISoU #SOUCOVID19 session 3, tomorrow 17:30 CEST:  Opening: @KGeorgieva @KhalafRoula  Panel: @Mari_Pangestu @JeffDSachs @alexstubb @NathalieTocci...

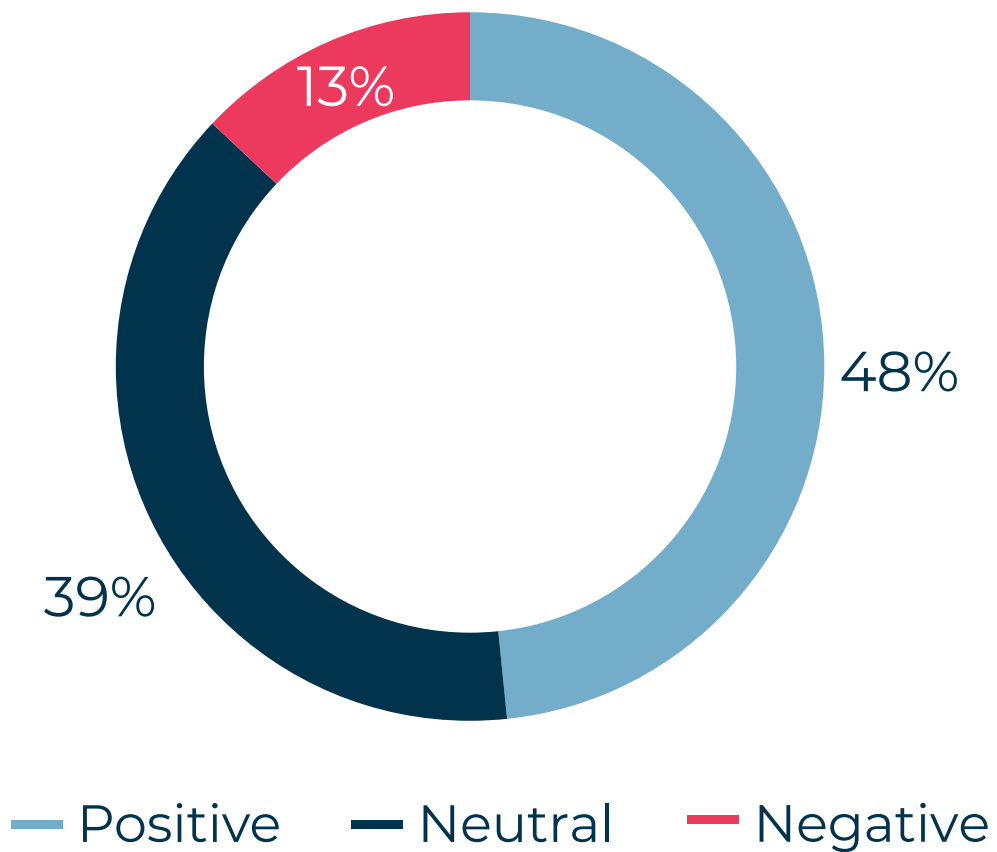
Influential Users

	<p>@ecb 561,478 Followers 244 Avg Engagements</p>		<p>@europeanuni 25,902 Followers 62 Avg Engagements</p>		<p>@kgeorgieva 200,392 Followers 57 Avg Engagements</p>
	<p>@darionardella 66,889 Followers 27 Avg Engagements</p>		<p>@euisou 2,788 Followers 18 Avg Engagements</p>		<p>@stgeui 2,736 Followers 16 Avg Engagements</p>
	<p>@jbryson 24,836 Followers 3 Avg Engagements</p>		<p>@ralfgrahn 6,561 Followers 0 Avg Engagements</p>		

User Gender



Sentiment



78.95
Sentiment Score

5. PARTNERS

- **Knowledge Partners**
- **Contributing Partners**
- **Data Partner**



KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

[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](#).



Frankfurter Allgemeine



CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS



FONDAZIONE
CR FIRENZE

Fondazione
CARIPLO



MED
MEDITERRANEAN DIALOGUES

REGIONE
TOSCANA



DATA PARTNER

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.

YouGov®

The EC supports the EUI through the EU budget



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

stateoftheunion.eui.eu

