



PRESS RELEASE 4 May 2023 – for immediate release

“It is necessary to continue building Europe, with courage.”

Day one of The State of the Union 2023

The first day of the 13th edition of [The State of The Union](https://stateoftheunion.eui.eu) conference gathered policymakers, top scholars, and world-renowned experts at the European University Institute in Florence to discuss ‘Building Europe in times of uncertainty’.

The annual flagship event on global affairs opened with a speech from **Professor Renaud Dehousse**, President of the European University Institute (EUI). Addressing more than 400 in-person participants, Dehousse invited the audience to “add building blocks to the construction and strengthening of our European home” through the exchange of views on pressing issues such as the war in Ukraine, climate change, and artificial intelligence.

Over the course of the first day of the conference, indeed, prestigious speakers addressed the most urgent matters on the European agenda. **Antonio Tajani**, Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke in the morning stressing the need for “more ideas, more proposals, more participation.” He continued, “Together we have to look at how we can face the great challenges of the future.”

EUI Secretary General Marco Del Punta read an address from Italian President **Sergio Mattarella**, which held the message, “Today, more than ever, it is necessary to continue building Europe, with courage.”

In nearly 20 sessions, debates unfolded throughout the day with panellists digging deep into specific areas of interest on the European agenda.

In a panel discussing the future of European agriculture **Janusz Czesław Wojciechowski**, European Commissioner for Agriculture, said “The state of our Union rests on the state of our food system, and the future of European agriculture is the future of Europe itself.”

During a session on global health and the lessons learnt after the COVID-19 pandemic, **Anders Nordström**, Ambassador for Global Health, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs said, “We still have work to do together at the global level. We need to re-define what that global health agenda is.”

Dita Charanzová, Vice-President, European Parliament, in a session about creating superstar tech firms, said, “For me it is really about creating the right business environment in Europe, so the European companies then stay in Europe.”

On artificial intelligence, Spain’s Minister of Economic Affairs & Digital Transformation, **Nadia Calviño**, said, “Because the AI challenges are not unique to Europe, but their impact is felt around the world, it is essential to engage in a dialogue with other parts of the globe, jurisdictions, and the private sector.”

Borut Pahor, Former President of the Republic of Slovenia, speaking in a session about security, said, “We should see the Western Balkans as a geopolitical priority for the EU. Because of enlargement we have a lot of problems, but without it, we will have even more.”

On day one, approximately 400 people participated in the conference in person and more than 4,000 participated online.

The **State of the Union continues on Friday, 5 May** at 9:00 CEST from Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Speakers will include **Josep Borrell Fontelles**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy; **Norbert Röttgen**, Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag; **Tobias Billström**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden; **Rastislav Káčer**, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Slovakia, and **Alexander Schallenberg**, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, Republic of Austria.

[Rewatch the sessions from day one](#)

PROGRAMME

[State of The Union 2023 programme](#)

FOLLOW ONLINE

While most speakers and a selected audience will participate in-person, the entire conference will also be **livestreamed** at stateoftheunion.eu.eu.

[@EUISoU](#) [#SOU2023](#)

MEDIA REQUESTS

Elena Torta +39 349 5202304

Jessica Carter +39 377 3905933

Roeland Scholtalbers +39 351 6441013

Marco Incerti +39 327 1598705