

**THE STATE OF THE UNION 2018 IS STARTING ON 10 MAY**

**THE THEME OF THIS YEAR WILL BE SOLIDARITY IN EUROPE**

For three days, Florence and Italy will once again be at the centre of the European debate, when the Tuscan plays host to the eighth edition of **The State of the Union** conference this week. The event, organised by the European University Institute (EUI), will take place **from 10 to 12 May** and will be held at the **Badia Fiesolana, Palazzo Vecchio** and **Villa Salviati**. The State of the Union has become an important meeting point for European politicians, opinion leaders, academics and representatives of the business world.

The 2018 edition of The State of the Union revolves around the theme of **Solidarity in Europe**, encompassing economic, fiscal and monetary policies, social investment, defence and security strategies, migration, climate change, and energy programmes in Europe.

The Badia Fiesolana will be the venue for the **10 May** sessions. The President of the Italian Republic, **Sergio Mattarella**, will open the proceedings alongside the EUI President, **Renaud Dehousse**. On **Friday 11 May**, the President of the European Parliament, **Antonio Tajani**, and the President of the European Commission, **Jean-Claude Juncker**, will open the day's discussions, while the Italian President of the Council of Ministers, **Paolo Gentiloni**, will hold the closing speech of the conference.

Amongst the impressive line-up of speakers, the conference will host the former Italian Prime Minister **Enrico Letta**, the President of Ireland, **Michael D. Higgins**, the President of Portugal, **Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa**, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, **Federica Mogherini**, the President of the European Central Bank, **Mario Draghi**, the President of the Hellenic Republic, **Prokopios Pavlopoulos**, and the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, **Alfonso María Dastis Quecedo**. They will be joined by a significant collection of keynote speakers that will include politicians, academics, journalists and opinion leaders.

On **Saturday 12 May** the **Historical Archives of the European Union** will open the doors of Villa Salviati to the public, inaugurating a programme full of cultural events and activities. Villa Salviati will open its doors from 10.00 to 17.30 with exhibitions, concerts and guided tours.

Over 5,000 visitors are expected during the three days with around 150 accredited journalists from all over the world.

Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence, declared: "We are very proud of The State of the Union because it is window for the world to see Florence in all its greatness, quality and international relevance. Hosting these international leaders means emphasising an honest and highly public confrontation on the future of Europe. I want to thank all the organisers, starting with the European University Institute, and our Head of State, President Sergio Mattarella, who has confirmed his presence. Indeed a special thanks is due

since the President given the challenging time that he is currently living through. Once again, Florence will give a him very warm welcome and support to overcome this delicate phase in the cycle of our democracy ".

"This year's theme is brave - underlined the Florence Deputy Mayor Cristina Giachi - and puts the participating European governments and institutional figures in front of a serious issue that challenges them in their political endeavours. Palazzo Vecchio is renowned as an ideal place that holds together the factors of our identity and the destiny we want to imagine, that is the European identity ".

Renaud Dehousse, President of the European University Institute, says: "It is with great pleasure that for the eighth consecutive year the European University Institute will contribute to highlight Florence as the centre of Europe by bringing Europe to Florence. The increasing success of The State of the Union confirms the deepening roots of the Institute in Italy, as demonstrated by the many side events organised by local partners, as well as by the plans to establish the new headquarters of our School of Transnational Governance at Palazzo Buontalenti. This year's theme – Solidarity in Europe - is not only of fundamental importance, but also very timely. It was not by chance that President Juncker had suggested this during last year's conference, and made it a pivotal point for the proposals presented for the next EU budget ".

Compared to previous years, please note the need for the press to register in advance; it will no longer be possible to do it on the day. Registration must be made twice: with the Conference Secretariat (SOUregistration@eui.eu) and on the Prefettura website at the following link: <http://prefettura.fi.it/accreditistampa/>

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The Knowledge partners of the event will be Ansa, Financial Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and El País

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- **Andrew Geddes**, Director, Migration Policy Centre, EUI
- **Jean-Michel Glachant**, Director, Florence School of Regulation, and Director, Loyola de Palacio Energy Policy Programme, EUI
- **Vincenzo Grassi**, Secretary-General, EUI
- **Anton Hemerijck**, Professor, Political and Social Sciences Department, EUI
- **Marco Incerti**, Director, Communications Service, EUI
- **Miguel Maduro**, Director, School of Transnational Governance, EUI
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