

AltSOU'24

Press Release:

Radical Response to State of the Union Conference 2024 at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy

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PhD researchers at the European University Institute (EUI) launched the programme for the Alternative State of the Union 2024 (AltSOU'24) on Friday the 19th of April 2024. The AltSoU, a determined critique of the elite-oriented State of the Union conference held annually at the EUI, returns this year as an “unconference for critical minds and radical futures”. The organisers of AltSOU'24 (20th - 22nd May 2024) invite scholars, journalists and activists to join them online and in-person on the EUI campus, to debate the urgent need for members of universities to actively engage with such burning issues as migration, Palestine, antifascism, de-colonialism and capitalism.

“If you want to talk about the future of Europe, talk to those who are building it: the people,” argued the small but purposeful group of EUI researchers who last year organised AltSOU 2023. The sentiment this year remains the same, but our protest against neoliberal academia is now joined by voices from Australia, Cuba, Germany, France, Brazil, Ireland, Poland, the UK and all over Italy. During AltSOU'24 (20th-22nd May 2024), we hope to break open the black box of university-centred academia, and encourage academics, activists, and all politically-involved people to take a long hard look at their own positions. We hope to join forces and concretely engage with those working for human rights, migrant rights, workers' rights and against genocide, in Europe and beyond.

As emphasised in the AltSOU 2023 final statement: “There can be no conversation on the future of Europe without non-Europeans and those marginalised by and within Europe participating.” AltSoU 2024 is a resolute attempt to reach for democracy in Europe. We want to platform those who can best perceive the flaws of Europe: the youth, the excluded, the racialised, the people affected by policy rather than the policy-makers. We do not have the answers, nor do we represent the people. What we do have is the will to drive this urgent reality home with members of a university. Our end result will be an action plan and statement: we want our internal conversation to actively interact with wider discussions on how to respect and truly guarantee democratic and human rights, irrespective of national and class identity.

The goal of the AltSoU is to wake ourselves up, we tired, disillusioned, world-weary people, and help us put our brains together for the purpose of positive change. Our programme includes: lively roundtables where questions, rather than status, are currency; a “power walk” through which we shall visualise our privileges; a teach-in on decoloniality; and many a

relaxing yet stimulating social evening spent in good company, mulling over good ideas and meaningful actions to come. The full programme, which includes events on migration, Palestine, antifascism, de-colonialism and capitalism, is available at www.altsou.com.

The AltSoU organisers hereby invite local and international scholars, activists, citizens, and non-citizens, to join our public discussions. Our events will be held both online and in-person on the EUI campus, at the Badia Fiesolana, Villa Schifanoia, and Villa Salviati between the 20th and 22nd of May 2024.