

EUROPEAN REGIONS AND THE FUTURE OF
EUROPE'S SOFT POWER

05.03.2026

05.03.2026

Thursday

13.45h

Registration

Online participants are invited to join from 13:45 to test their connection.

14.00h

Opening Session: Regions in European External Relations

Opening Remarks

Rainer Steffens, Director Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union

Dr. Maysoun Zein Al Din, Executive Director AIA NRW

Stuart MacDonald, Fellow AIA NRW

14.15h

Panel Session: Regional Soft Power

Dr. Carolyn Rowe, Aston University, **The Distinctive Contribution of Regions**

Walter Zampieri, EACEA; **Michael Hörig**, DAAD, **Higher Education and Science Diplomacy**

Dr. Julia Sattler, Goethe-Institut, Brussels, **National Institutes of Culture and Arm's Length Bodies**

Professor Corneliu Bjola, University of Oxford, **The Dark Side of Soft Power: Challenges and Digital Resilience"**

Chair

Aisling Conboy, Wilton Park

Online Moderator

Dr. Manuel Becker, AIA

16.00h

Coffee Break

16.30h

Panel Discussion: Shaping the Future of EU Cultural Diplomacy

The EU institutional perspective: M. Bastien Revel, European Committee of Regions

The practitioner perspective: Christine Wilson, Director Research and Insight, British Council

The research perspective: Dr. Hendrik Ohnesorge, University of Bonn

17.30h

Chair

Dr. Katja Freistein, AIA NRW

Online Moderator

Dr. Manuel Becker, AIA NRW

05.03.2026

Thursday

17.30h

Closing Session: Next Steps**Synthesis****Stuart MacDonald**, AIA NRW**Closing Remarks****Dr. Stefan van Heeck**, Head of Unit - European Committee of the Regions / Interregional Cooperation, Representation of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia to the European Union

18.00h

Reception

-

19.30h