



Global HUB Dialogues



Members Dialogue: SDG16 with Schatz Roland

July 4th, 2025

Roland Schatz & Mario de Vries

Roland Schatz, an expert in implementing UN sustainability goals, discussed the historical context and global commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. He shares insights on media analysis methodologies, public awareness of global issues, and the impact of media coverage on shaping public opinion. The conversation also covers corporate reporting on SDGs, the importance of local community engagement, and the potential for sharing best practices to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

UN Goals Expert Discussion

Mario introduces Roland Schatz, an expert in the implementation of UN Sustainability Goals, particularly Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.

SDGs: From Vague to Ambitious

Roland discussed the historical context and development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the significant achievement of the 193 UN member states in agreeing to the SDGs in 2015. He emphasised the shift from the Millennium Development Goals, which were more vague and focused on wishy-washy terms, to the SDGs, which were co-defined by member states. Roland attributed the success of the SDGs to Ban Ki-moon's leadership in facilitating a discourse among member states to define their own goals, which led to a more ambitious and inclusive set of targets.

Global SDGs Media Analysis Methodology

The meeting focuses on the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets by 193 member states in 2015, marking a significant global commitment to address issues such as poverty, hunger, and gender equality by December 2030. Roland explained the methodology used by his team to analyse media content since 1993,

including TV primetime shows and opinion-leading print media in the US, UK, and Germany, to track public awareness of climate issues. The team achieves high intercoder reliability (88-93%) through rigorous analysis and validation processes, ensuring the accuracy and scientific integrity of their findings.

Climate Concern Despite Media Decline

Roland discusses the mixed trends in climate change reporting and public concern, noting that while media coverage has decreased in recent years, climate change remains a significant concern for the public, particularly in the US. He highlights that even during the Trump administration, which was sceptical of climate action, local governments like Pittsburgh continued to support the Paris Agreement, demonstrating a disconnect between national leadership and local commitments. Roland also explains that media coverage above 1.5% of total news is sufficient to raise public awareness and discussion about an issue, based on their research at Media Tenor.

American Global Awareness Gap

Roland and Mario discuss the lack of American awareness about global issues, including the impact of trade tariffs. Roland explains that most Americans are not well-informed about international affairs due to limited exposure to the outside world, with only a small percentage of Congress members having passports. He suggests that the media's one-sided reporting of news has contributed to this lack of awareness, leading to a divided public that is not attracted to either major political party. Roland concludes that the media has broken the system of informed decision-making, and they should focus on engaging where it has the highest leverage to move forward on the SDGs and solutions.

ESG and SDG Investment Trends

Roland presents data showing how ESG and SDG topics have increasingly become central to corporate reporting and investment decisions, with companies like those in the DAX 40 significantly expanding their references to SDGs in their annual reports from 2016 to 2024. He highlights that this trend, driven by companies' understanding of the value of SDGs as a compass, has led to outperformance of indices like the MSCI World, and proposed creating funds based on this data. Roland emphasises the importance of transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to SDG 16, and shares his optimism about the impact of corporate actions on people's lives, contrasting them with political aspects.

Regulatory Framework and SDG Initiatives

Roland discusses the importance of creating a regulatory framework and principles of law that clearly position companies like Shell and guide their future actions. He emphasises the need for data-based evidence of common values, which can be challenging due to their fluid nature, and suggests a combination of transparency and learning from lighthouse projects to address this. Roland shares an inspiring initiative, the SDG Cafés, which empowers young people to lead local projects focused on the Sustainable Development Goals, fostering a sense of community and collaboration. He encourages attendees to visit San Marino in October to learn from these initiatives and accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Quick recap

The meeting features an interview with Roland Schatz, an expert on UN Sustainability Goals, who presents data on the global adoption of the 17 SDGs and discusses media coverage trends related to climate change. The discussion concludes with insights on corporate reporting of ESG and SDG topics, the importance of regulatory frameworks, and an overview of initiatives like SDG Cafés that empower young people to lead local projects focused on achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Next steps

- Mathijs: Explore possibilities to connect with the **UNGSi SDG Cafe program** and investigate implementation in Amsterdam neighbourhoods
- Felix: Schedule a follow-up discussion after the San Marino event in October to discuss learnings and outcomes
- Felix: Coordinate with Roland Schatz for a potential future **Members Dialogue** after the San Marino event
- All members: Visit <http://www.ungsi.org> to learn more about **SDG Cafe** implementation and youth engagement programs