

One page overview of the MOOC

Driving business towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Description



















Extreme weather events, wars, famine and environmental destruction are just a few of the wicked problems faced by humanity. That's why in 2015 the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that target the big challenges such as how to eliminate poverty, how to protect the environment and how to bring about peace. Every member state committed to achieving these goals by 2030. This course has been developed by Rotterdam School of Management at Erasmus University (RSM). It focuses on the role of businesses in achieving the SDGs. You will gain insights from leaders of international companies and academics in business and management who will guide you through the issue of how businesses can contribute to the SDGs.

Skills you will gain

After completing this course you will:

- Know what the SDGs are, why they are important and how each individual can be an agent for positive change in the world
- Develop a positive, critical, aware and courageous attitude towards the SDGs
- Be able to identify interconnectedness of the SDGs and the challenges behind solving them
- Understand the role of business in the transition to sustainable development to create a prosperous future for all

Course format and weekly structure of the MOOC

Week 1	Introduction				
Week 2	The Biosphere				
Week 3	Society I				
Week 4	Society II				
Week 5	Economy				
Week 6	Partnerships				
Week 7	Systems thinking				

The course consists of seven units, each focusing on several aspects of sustainable development and taking one week to complete.

You will study by watching videos, reading literature and by engaging in other activities such as weekly challenges.

Assessment will consist of quizzes, challenges to implement in daily life and assignments.

Learning Objectives & annotated outline of course chapters

Overall learning objectives

- Know what the SDGs are, why they are important and how each individual can be an agent for positive change in the world
- Develop a positive, critical, aware and courageous attitude towards the SDGs
- Be able to identify interconnectedness of the SDGs and the challenges behind solving them
- Understand the role of business in the transition to sustainable development to create a prosperous future for all

Week 1: Introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals

In this first week, you'll become familiar with the structure of this MOOC. You will be introduced to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and you will explore the role of business in achieving them. You will hear about the 'power of one' and how each individual can be a force for positive change.

There are 17 SDGs, and they will be described in groups as you go through this course. We start with SDGs related to the biosphere, then we move on to those to do with society and the economy, and we end with the SDGs related to peace and partnerships. The closing week will focus on systems thinking, interventions and trade-offs. But what are the SDGs, and why are they relevant for business? This week you will get acquainted with the SDGs and the structure of this course.

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand why business should be interested in addressing the SDGs
- Understand why and how each individual can contribute to positive change
- Identify the impact of your lifestyle by calculating your own carbon footprint
- Define your own motivation for joining this MOOC and translate this into your own personal learning goals

Week 2: The Biosphere

It's almost impossible to watch the news without being confronted by topics such as climate change, pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss. But did you know that companies are key contributors to solving these challenges? Is it possible for companies to counter climate change and create a sustainable business culture without giving up profits? Let's dive into the SDGs related to the biosphere of our planet and see how companies can help to halt, reverse or mitigate climate change and protect life on land and below water. We look first at SDG 13, which stresses the importance of taking action for the whole biosphere, then we examine the water (SDG 14) and land (SDG 15) components, and finally we focus on the specific resource of water for drinking and sanitation (SDG 6).

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand how companies and organizations can contribute towards and mitigate their impact on SDG 6, 13, 14, and 15
- Understand the basics of climate change, businesses and sustainability
- Experiment with reducing your plastic footprint

Week 3: Society I

Of the seven billion people on the planet, at least half live in extreme poverty with no access to essential health services. Solving these challenges would not only alleviate suffering but would also allow people to become productive members of society, ready to work and make the world a better place. This week, we will look at SDGs from the perspective of society and see what companies can do to ensure that these societal challenges are addressed. We introduce societal challenges such as hunger and poverty, and we look at new business models for healthcare and the transition to sustainable energy.

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand how companies and organizations can contribute towards and mitigate their impact on SDG 1, 2, 3, and 7
- Analyze your own impact on people and planet through the fashion industry
- Evaluate the interconnectedness of the SDGs by arguing if SDG 2 Zero Hunger can be solved without tackling SDG 1 No Poverty

Week 4: Society II

We humans like to call ourselves a civilized species. We live in complex cities and spend years educating ourselves to be productive members of our societies. But does everyone have equal opportunities in this complex system? This week, we will continue with the SDGs related to society, addressing sustainable cities, education and inequality. We examine sustainable city transportation networks and how social entrepreneurship can support education that promotes employment for everyone. We also talk about the interconnectedness of the SDGs. Let's start exploring the business case for SDGs 4, 5, 10 and 11.

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand how companies and organizations can contribute towards and mitigate their impact on SDG 4, 5, 10, and 11
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different business models for sustainable transportation
- Discover your own subconscious associations for people who are different from you

Week 5: Economy

The economy can be considered the backbone of our society. But how can we innovate to organize the economy in a more sustainable way? And how can we ensure that production and consumption will not result in depletion of the planet's resources and destruction of ecosystems?

This week we will explore business' contribution to solving these challenges and look at what you, as an individual, can do. We will explore business contribution to SDGs 8, 9 and 12 and find out why decent work conditions, innovation and infrastructure, and sustainable consumption and production are so important. The key question is how businesses can be profitable in the long run while respecting planetary boundaries and human rights.

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand how companies and organizations can contribute towards and mitigate their impact on SDG 8, 9, and 12
- Apply the 6Rs (Rethink, Refuse, Reuse, Repair, Reduce and Recycle) to your own life
- Evaluate your own impact on people and planet through the food industry

Week 6: Partnerships

No single individual, organization or country is able to achieve the SDGs on its own. The SDGs concern all of us, everywhere. If we join forces and collaborate we can work towards a prosperous future for people *and* the planet. For this, we need strong collaboration between governments, organizations and people, and safe, transparent and fair societies. In this module we will explore how companies, governments, non-profit organizations and individuals can develop partnerships to achieve peace and prosperity for all.

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand how companies and organizations can contribute towards and mitigate their impact on SDG 16 and 17
- Understand why partnerships are crucial in reaching all the SDGs
- Use your knowledge of the SDGs and their link to businesses, to develop your own call for collaboration

Week 7: Systems thinking

Companies and individuals need to understand the interconnectedness of the SDGs in order to effectively contribute to them. This week we will take a systems-thinking perspective and explore synergies and trade-offs related to the SDGs. We will also think about what this means for business.

This week's learning objectives:

- Understand why a systems perspective is key to solving the SDGs
- Analyze synergies and trade-offs of the different SDGs
- Explore how you are part of a system, by creating your own system map, and try to intervene

Faculty description

Prof. Rob van Tulder is professor of international business-society Management at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University in the Netherlands (RSM). He has been teaching and researching on major issues – he calls them ‘wicked problems’- at the interface between business and society. He published a wide variety of scholarly books and articles on issues like innovation, sustainability, small countries, regional integration and skills.

Eva Rood is director of the Positive Change Initiative at RSM. With her team, she is responsible for facilitating and accelerating the implementation of RSM’s mission, to be a force for positive change in the world, for business development and for several innovation projects.

Dr Steve Kennedy is Associate Professor of Corporate Sustainability at RSM. Dr Kennedy’s research interests include how corporate sustainability strategies are translated into successful innovation and the formation of future-ready sustainable business models

Prof. Dirk Schoenmaker is Professor of Banking and Finance at RSM. Prof. Schoenmaker’s research interest includes the areas of sustainable finance, central banking and financial stability, financial system architecture and European financial integration. He recently launched the Erasmus Platform for Sustainable Value Creation.

Dr. Mallory Flowers is Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship at RSM. In 2017, Dr. Flowers completed her PhD at Georgia Tech. Her dissertation work on green technology and certification earned national recognition as Best Dissertation, and she was named Emerging Scholar for her contributions to environmental governance research.

Dr. Frank Wijen is Associate Professor at the Department of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship of RSM. His research interests include institutional processes, globalization, power and influence, organizational learning, and corporate and national environmental management.

Prof. Cees van Dam is professor of International Business and Human Rights at RSM. Prof. van Dam’s research interests includes the role of the General Counsel in enhancing the company’s policies and practices to respect and protect human rights; the dynamic and intertwinement between legal compliance, respecting human rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Heleen Tiemersma is PhD Candidate at the Erasmus School of Law and an external researcher at RSM. Her research interests are socially responsible finance as well as business and human rights.

Dr. Marta Szymanowska is Associate Professor of Finance at the Department of Finance at RSM. Dr. Szymanowska’s research interests focus on asset pricing, studying and understanding the nature of macroeconomic risks, the relation between financial markets and the real economy with a particular focus on the global commodity markets.

Prof. Erik van Raaij is Professor of Purchasing & Supply Management in Healthcare at RSM and at the Erasmus School of Health Policy and Management. His current research interests include Healthcare contracting, Healthcare supply management, Buyer-supplier relationships, and Empirical research methods. His work has been published widely in international academic journals.

Dr Yashar Ghiassi-Farrokhfal is Assistant Professor at the Department of Technology and Operation Management at RSM. Dr Ghiassi-Farrokhfal's research interest is in Electricity Markets, Stochastic modelling of renewables (solar and wind), Storage modelling, Analytical storage sizing, Optimal design of solar PV farms, Hybrid storage systems, and supply-demand matching.

Dr. Tobias Brandt is Assistant Professor of Business Information Management at the Department of Technology and Operations Management at RSM. Dr. Brandt's research interests touches upon the digital transformation of cities including smart power systems, innovative urban mobility solutions, and an improved understanding of the dynamics of urban tourism and crime.

Prof. Dianne Bevelander is Professor of Management Education at RSM. Prof. Bevelander's research interest relate to management education and diversity with a particular emphasis on the career development of professional women. Prof. Bevelander is the Executive Director of the recently established Erasmus Centre for Women and Organizations.

Prof. Michaéla Schippers is Professor of Behaviour and Performance Management at RSM. Prof. Schippers research interest covers goalsetting, team reflexivity, team performance, academic performance as well as ikigai (i.e. purpose in life), and life goals.

Prof. Steef van de Velde is dean of RSM and professor of operations management and technology. His research interests lie in the areas of operations excellence, service operations, and supply chain management.

Prof. René de Koster is professor of logistics and operations management at RSM. Prof de Koster's research interests focus on warehousing, material handling, container terminal operations, behavioral operations and sustainable logistics.

Dr. Ying Zhang holds backgrounds of economics, management, and industrial engineering, and has been actively contributing as a scholar, educator, advisor, TEDxSpeaker, business developer, and a social entrepreneur. At RSM, she is Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and an Associate Dean for China Business & Relations.

Dr Ferdinand Jaspers is adjunct Professor of Innovation Excellence and Entrepreneurship at RSM. His teaching mainly focuses on executive education courses and facilitates masterclasses and workshops on innovation excellence, corporate entrepreneurship, new business development, and entrepreneurial start-up and growth.

Dr Anne-Kathrin Klesse is Assistant Professor at the Department of Marketing Management at RSM. Her research interest revolves around consumer judgment and decision making. She is particularly interested in how we can nudge consumers to make "better" decisions, such as saving money, eating healthier or making sustainable consumption choices.

Marieke de Wal is managing director of the Partnerships Resource Centre. Currently, she is lead researcher of research projects on the effectiveness and impact of partnerships. In her work Marieke focuses on co-creating knowledge and methodological lessons from and on partnerships that can be used to improve both implementation and policy.

Prof. Gabriele Jacobs is Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Culture at RSM. She holds a PhD from the University of Münster, Germany. Her research interests include: Organizational change, justice and identity, leadership, international management, civic engagement, co-creation, methodology.

Dr. Amanda Williams is senior researcher in the Group for Sustainability and Technology (SusTec) at the Department of Management, Technology and Economics of ETH Zurich. She holds a PhD from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. Dr. Williams' research interests lie at the intersection of sustainability management and social-ecological systems.

Links to course videos and materials

We have published our MOOC on the Coursera platform: <https://www.coursera.org/learn/sdgbusiness>

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Additional websites

Our MOOC Driving Business towards the SDGs: www.rsm.nl/sdgmoooc

Our video series on Business & the SDGs: www.rsm.nl/sdgs

Our mission, *To be a force for positive change in the world*: www.rsm.nl/positivechange