RDA COMMUNITY MEMO

Gaining International consensus and input on EOSC

This is the third of four memos to the RDA community, which will outline the work done by the RDA4EOSC project to support the implementation of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and bring the community up to date with the activities and outcomes of the project.

In this memo, we will give an overview of the recent work done by the RDA Sustainable Development Goals Interest Group, and look at how this work has sought to align existing and future RDA Outputs and Recommendations, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and consequently bridge RDA's work with EOSC's global

UN SDGs and RDA

As referenced in another memo in this series, on RDA Communities of Practice, RDA's engagement with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals[1] is one way in which it can coordinate its activities with the EOSC Partnership in addressing global, cross-disciplinary challenges.

The SDGs themselves consist of 17 Goals, divided into 169 targets and 232 indicators. The aim in establishing these is to set targets for addressing global challenges, incorporating economic, health, and social issues, while ensuring that any actions taken tackle climate change and uphold environmental protection measures. There is clearly a hugely diverse range of actions needed to meet the SDGs, involving actors from industry, academia, citizen science, healthcare, governmental and non-governmental sectors; as such, the data that is needed to monitor the progress against the SDGs and their related targets and indicators will be heterogeneous in nature. This is shown in the work by Our World in Data, where the availability of the data needed to chart the progress toward SDGs is displayed[2]. Much data is available, but gaps remain in terms of relevant data itself and the necessary information infrastructures.

The RDA's Sustainable Development Goals Interest Group (SDG IG) focuses on ways of improving the processes around data relating to SDGs. While much of the cross-state and international cooperation necessary to meet the SDGs is dependent on diplomatic relations between states, the SDG IG (and related communities) can work toward improving the interoperability of data processes upstream, identifying areas where improvements can be made relating to the sharing and management of SDG indicator data, as well as defining the value and importance of data infrastructure within sustainable development.

One of the the main objectives of the IG is in supporting the implementation of RDA Recommendations and Outputs within the social and technical work of the UN surrounding the SDGs, as well as facilitating organisational collaboration and support with the UN and its agencies partnerships in commercial, academic, and NGO space. The SDG IG also works towards building collaborative partnerships across RDA Working and Interest Groups active within the field of capacity development in low and middle income countries.

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[1] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/
[2] https://ourworldindata.org/sdg-tracker-update

At a presentation at the RDA VP17 Business, Outputs and Adoption Session[3], the SDG IG co-chairs outlined the work they have been doing to support the alignment of the SDGs with the activities of the RDA. Their work around this involves reviewing current activities taking place within the RDA in the form of Working and Interest Groups, and looking at how each Group's work can be of benefit to stakeholders involved in the production and management of SDG-related data. The Group also looks at the mapping of RDA Recommendations and Outputs to SDGs to demonstrate the impact that these could have in addressing practical challenges relating to SDG data; the aim is to analyse existing and future points of impact that Recommendations and Outputs can have for SDGs, and identify ways to best communicate the value of the RDA in working toward SDGs.

Whereas much of the work done so far has focused on Group co-chairs mapping Recommendations and Outputs against SDGs, more recently a different approach has been taken. The SDG IG has been working on the OntoSDG model, which presents a semantic infrastructure for representation of the UNSDGoals, targets and indicators. OntoSDG enables interlinking the goals with respective projects, initiatives, labs, organizations and researchers in any related domain that contributes to the UN SDGs. Direct input from the co-chairs of other WGs and IGs, as well as authors of Recommendations and Outputs, will be sought to ensure that the more detailed understanding that authors and Group co-chairs have about their Recommendations and Outputs is included in any mapping exercises. Though still in its development stages, the Group is creating a form that will allow input from RDA Group co-chairs and Output authors to be added to the semantic analysis of data to help assess extent of implementation and the impact of SDGs.

SDGs and RDA Outputs

As identified in the RDA Strategic Plan 2020-2023, there is an opportunity for the relevance and value of the RDA to the actors, organisations and sectors involved in the achievement of the SDGs to be further articulated. RDA can advocate for the SDGs, inform multiple research performing organisations, and encourage engagement with the SDGs for all 12,000 plus members at a grassroots level. One way this can be done on a practical level is to ensure that WGs and IGs and all future outputs intersect with the SDGs by default; a proposal on this has been put forward to RDA's Technical Advisory Board (TAB) and is currently under review/discussion.

In terms of the internationalisation of EOSC, the SRIA document sets out how the EOSC Association sees alignment with the SDGs as a way of enabling its commitment to stimulating innovative and cross-disciplinary research - the idea of the SDGs as a 'crosswalk' between the RDA and EOSC, and other ways that this relationship can be of benefit to both organisations, is explored in the final memo in this series.

[3] https://youtu.be/oFT3tQuF7L0?t=2590