



Conceptual Framework

July 2024

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Conceptual Framework

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This deliverable is part of a project that has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101082268.

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Suggested citation: **Portela, R., Lok, M., Duke, G., Planas, J., Brown. M and Porter J. 2024.**
A-Track Conceptual Framework.
A-Track Deliverable 1.1

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Introduction

Scope of this report

This report provides an explanatory note on the Conceptual Framework for A-Track (Accelerating Transformation through Capitals Knowledge), an EU-Horizon four-year project starting in December 2023¹.

A-Track goal and objectives

The overall goal of A-Track is to consolidate and mainstream activities to accelerate transformation in organisations, such that, by end of project, a critical mass of businesses, financial institutions, and governments, integrate the value of natural capital in their decision-making, helping to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.

In doing so, A-Track will contribute to delivery of the European Green Deal. A-Track builds on existing initiatives and best practice to develop, pilot, test, demonstrate and scale innovations in this space.

¹ <https://a-track.info>

The specific objectives of A-Track are to:

- 1 develop and demonstrate the use of robust information pathways that facilitate flows of biodiversity information for use in business and financial decisions, and the compilation of public and private sector natural capital accounts;
- 2 strengthen the life cycle assessment of biodiversity and ecosystem services footprints for products and organisations, integrating and further mainstreaming these with natural capital approaches and materiality assessment practices;
- 3 mainstream and advance natural capital assessment and accounting in businesses and their integration in decision-making across key sectors and business functions;
- 4 facilitate and incentivize the adoption and scaling of nature-positive business models; and
- 5 nurture financial innovations to scale nature-positive finance based on reliable natural capital data and practice.

Emphasis is placed on integration, synthesis and wide engagement across this work. This will deliver wider impacts, in Europe and beyond (through global value chains), in terms of enhanced natural capital and biodiversity, enhanced competitiveness of European businesses in the new nature economy, and improved wellbeing derived from enhanced ecosystem services.

A-Track brings together an intersectoral and interdisciplinary consortium of leading players who are involved in many of the key related front-runner initiatives across this space, ensuring appropriate synergies. For details on A-Track specific objectives, and Work Packages please refer to *Appendix 1*.

Creating the A-Track Conceptual Framework

The A-Track Conceptual Framework is presented as a graphic which brings together and displays, in a coherent manner, relevant frameworks, concepts, models, initiatives, and approaches which support acceleration of nature-positive action across the private and public sectors. Nature-positive refers to a global societal goal defined as **‘Halt and Reverse Nature Loss by 2030 on a 2020 baseline, and achieve full recovery by 2050’²**. The A-Track Conceptual Framework is structured around the four key areas of action – assess, commit, transform, and disclose – required to deliver nature-positive action at scale.

2 Nature Positive Initiative. 2023. [The Definition of Nature Positive](#).

Key Elements of the Conceptual Framework

The A-Track Conceptual Framework focuses on the role of organisations (and that of functions/personas within organisations) and the transformation needed within organisations to deliver nature-positive outcomes. It incorporates the necessary flows of information (on nature, and on organisations’ impacts and dependencies on nature), in support of decision-making processes that better consider the related risks and opportunities. The Framework recognises that organisations are on a ‘maturity’ journey (from ‘just starting’ to ‘comprehensive’) towards optimising nature-positive outcomes.

Key frameworks, concepts and models incorporated in the A-Track Conceptual Framework, include: (i) the ACT-D framework; (ii) the transition curve; (iii) the infinity loop; and (iv) the regeneration model and maturity pathways. These elements are described in the following sections of this report.

ACT-D Framework:

The role of organizations towards transformation

The ACT-D framework represents a set of four high-level actions: Assess, Commit, Transform and Disclose for business to help reverse nature loss and contribute to an equitable, nature-positive world. It has been developed in collaboration between the Capitals Coalition, Business for Nature, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN), the World Economic Forum, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and with the support of many other organizations. This framework is now a central part of Business for Nature's campaign 'It's Now for Nature' and informs actions that are needed to embed nature in business strategy³. The ACT-D framework provides the central structure for the A-Track Conceptual Framework.

³ BfN and PwC. 2023. Nature Strategy Handbook: Practical guide for businesses. It's now for Nature. Available at: <https://nowfornature.org/read-the-handbook>

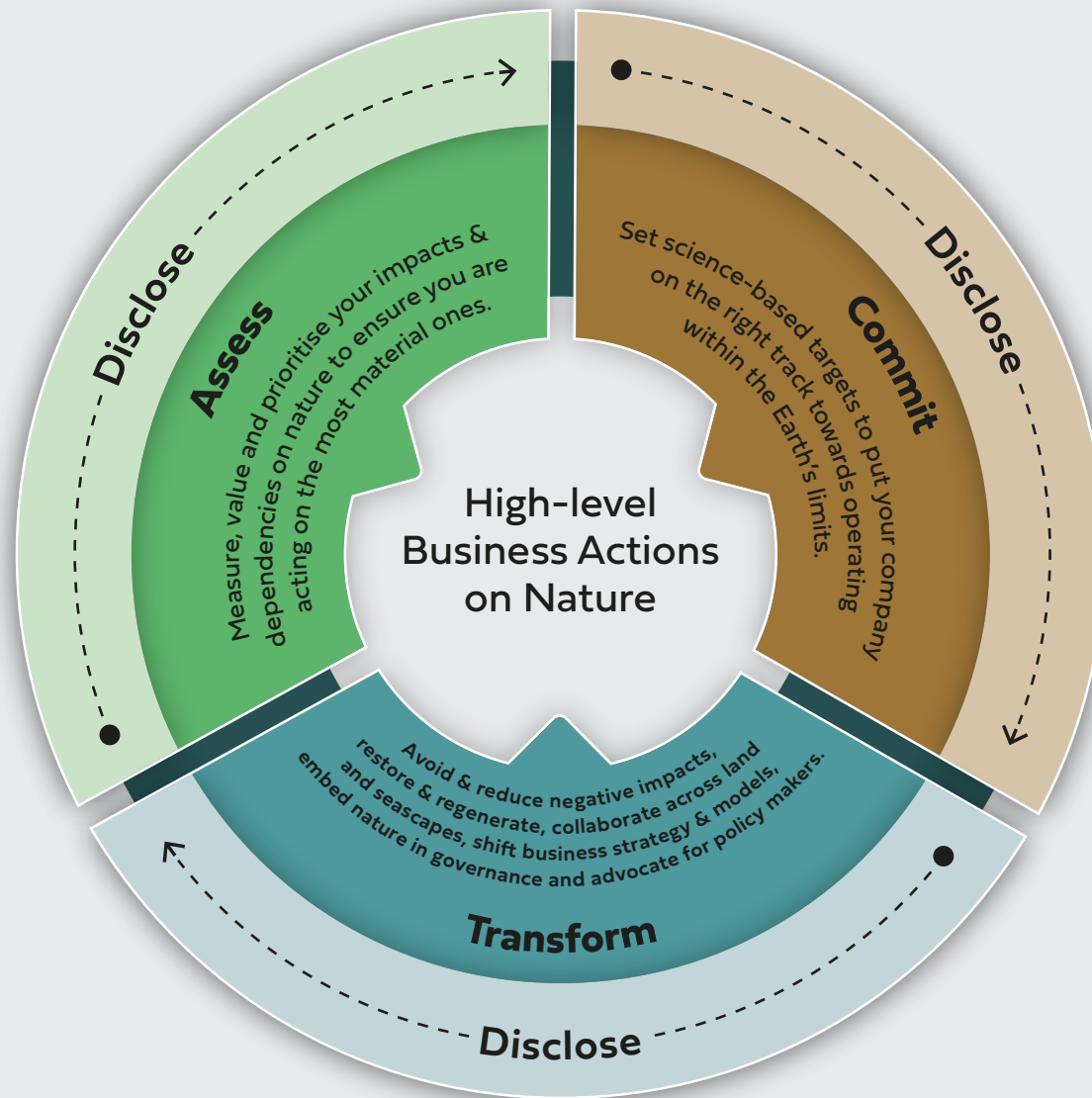


Figure 1: ACT-D Framework

Transition Curve

The transition curve is a Capitals Coalition-developed graphic model illustrating the increasing incorporation of natural capital value (and that of other capitals) into businesses, financial institutions and governments decision-making⁴. Based on the Theory of Transition⁵, this model encompasses a three-phase approach: First, it acknowledges the existing groundwork as paved by pioneering efforts over the last two decades (e.g., guidance on how to identify, measure and value direct and indirect impacts and dependencies on natural capital, as proposed by the Natural Capital Protocol) (phase 1). Second, it shows the transition phase focused on acceleration (e.g., by increasing accessibility of information and of an enabling environment that facilitates adoption) (phase 2). Third, it shows the ultimate goal of a new normal, where informed decisions are standard, usual, or expected (phase 3). The A-Track Conceptual Framework reflects the transition curve by incorporating the concept of scaling.

4 Capitals Coalition. 2023. Our value Report.
Available at: https://capitalscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Our-Value-Report_2022-23-Final-2.pdf

5 Loorbach, D. , Frantzeskaki, N. and F. Avelino. 2017. Sustainability Transitions Research: Transforming Science and Practice for Societal Change. Annual Review of Environment and Resources. 42. 10.1146/annurev-environ-102014-021340.

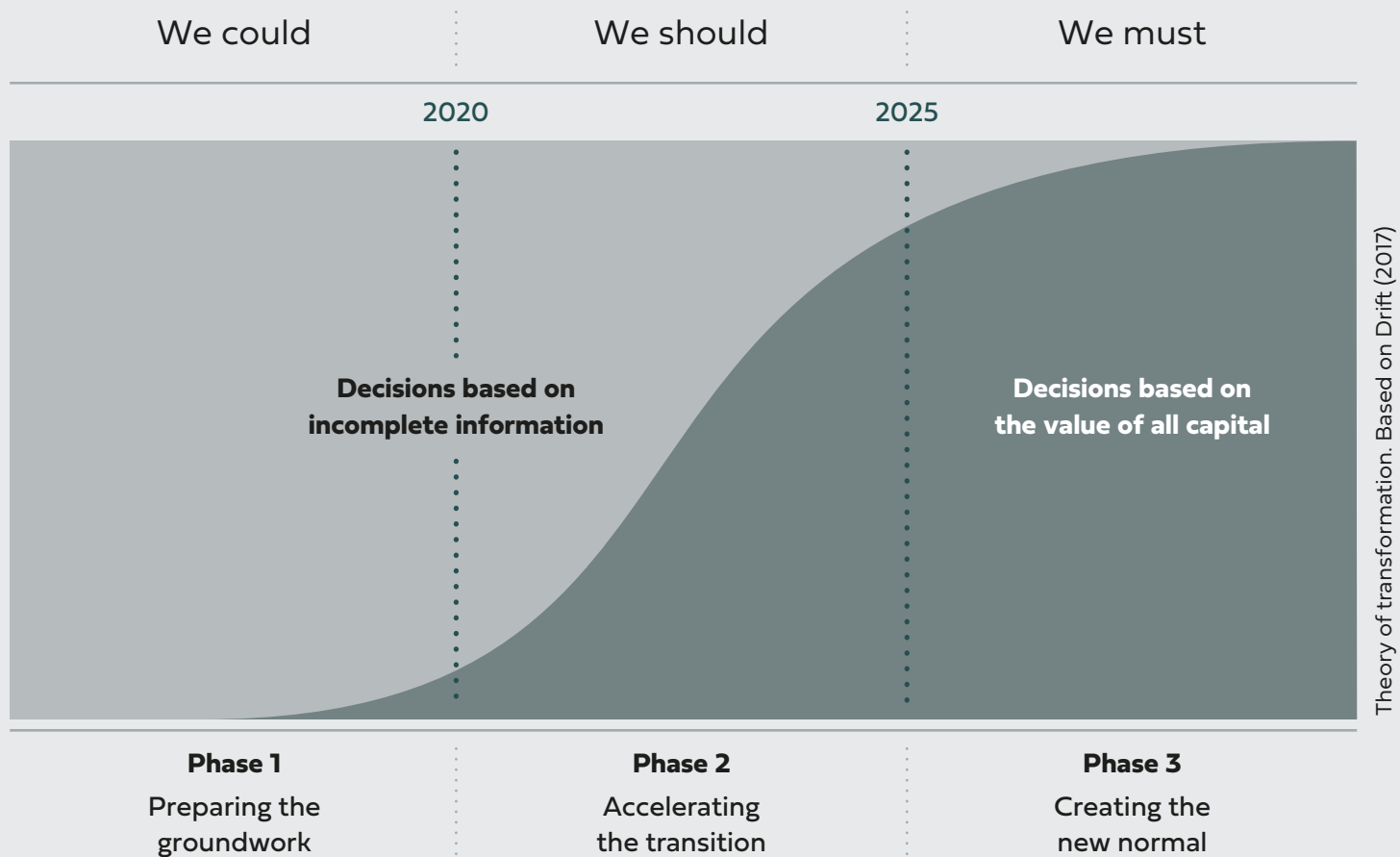


Figure 2: The transition curve

Infinity Loop

The infinity loop is a Capitals Coalition-developed graphic model representing an unbroken flow of information between a set of key actors, i.e., business, finance and government, based on their individual and collective role in catalysing a shift towards a nature-positive world⁶.

By emphasizing interrelations of a set of actions, i.e., (i) assess; (ii) commit; (iii) allocate; (iv) disclose, with a specific set of interventions for each actor, the infinity loop showcases the critical importance of the flow of information throughout the system towards nature-positive. The original infinity loop pre-dates the ACT-D framework, and its proposed actions have informed, and are aligned with, the ACT-D.

The infinity loop is referenced in the A-Track Conceptual Framework by the identification of business, finance and government actors in the 'Transform' column as well as by the information loops of the framework.

⁶ Capitals Coalition. 2024.
Action for nature & people must be taken across the system.

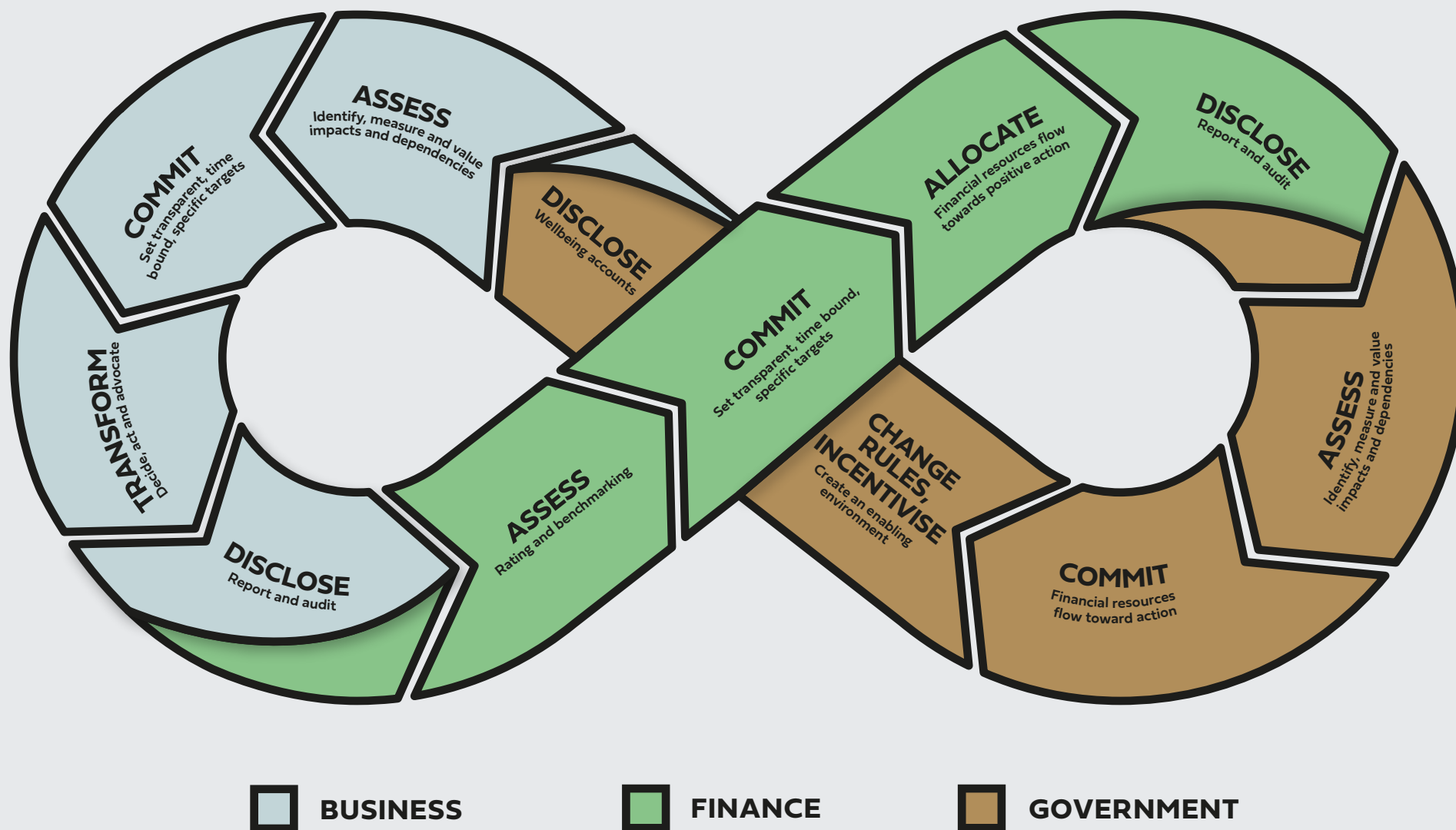


Figure 3: The infinity loop

Regeneration Model and Maturity Pathways

These two models of organizational maturity showcase increasing improvement in incorporating natural capital into decision-making to unlock transformation. They are based on a set of maturity stages or levels.

The WBCSD regenerative model (*Figure 4, right*) focuses on actions that are reflective of evolution in maturity with respect to how business interact with nature, from risks mitigation (which focuses on efficiency gains and narrow goals of 'doing no harm'), to regenerative (which encompasses contribution to social, in addition to environmental systems)⁷.

The We Value Nature maturity pathway (*Figure 4, right*) reflects increasing maturity in uptake of natural capital in accordance with a stepwise approach – from early stages of adoption (i.e. just starting) towards a full integration that adds value to society and nature (i.e. comprehensive)⁸. Each level is characterised by typical kinds of behavioural change, barriers to change, and a range of actions.

The A-Track Conceptual Framework reflects these pathways to increased maturity in its trajectory towards business models and finance that contribute to nature-positive outcomes, informed by natural capital data and practice.

⁷ WBCSD. 2020. 2050 Vision. [Time to Transform: How business can lead the transformation the world needs](#).

⁸ We Value Nature. 2020. D3.3 Stock-take of state-of-play, barriers to and opportunities for accelerated business uptake across the EU of natural capital assessment. Version 1.0 [21 June 2020].

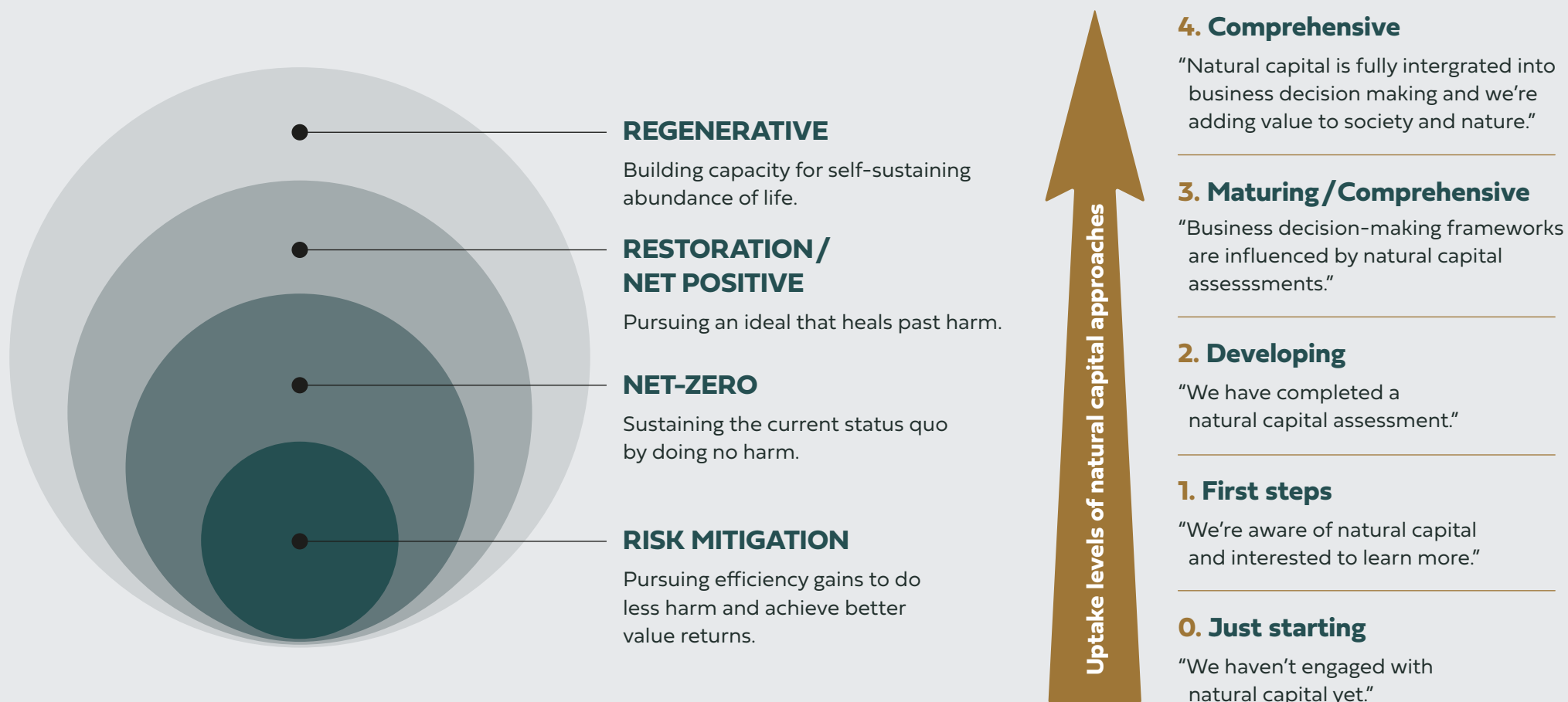


Figure 4: Regeneration model and maturity pathways

A-Track *Conceptual Framework*

The A-Track's Conceptual Framework (*Figure 5*) is anchored in the ACT-D framework, and the actions towards a nature-positive world, as outlined by Assess, Commit, Transform and Disclose steps. A-Track expands upon existing initiatives and guidance for these actions by furthering development, piloting, testing, demonstration and scaling up of innovations for improved organisational decision-making. This includes, among other things, harmonization and alignment of natural capital assessment and accounting, and biodiversity and ecosystem services footprinting across the private and public sectors. ACT-D steps are prominently highlighted in the A-Track Conceptual Framework as a set of vertical columns (Assess, Commit, Transform) and a horizontal bar (Disclose) in line with the ACT-D design.

This Conceptual Framework emphasizes the non-linearity of the ACT-D set of actions, acknowledging that neither a fixed starting point, nor a linear, continuous change are to be expected as those actions are implemented. Inputs and feedback loops between these four actions are added in the A-Track Conceptual Framework to convey this notion with arrows emphasizing the non-linear interlinkages.

The A-Track Conceptual Framework provides a quick overview of various aspects of the project and their interlinkages, thus enhancing comprehension of the trajectory towards its transformational aspiration. The following description highlights specific linkages between A-Track Work Packages and the ACT-D framework (see *Appendix 1* for an overview of all Work Packages).

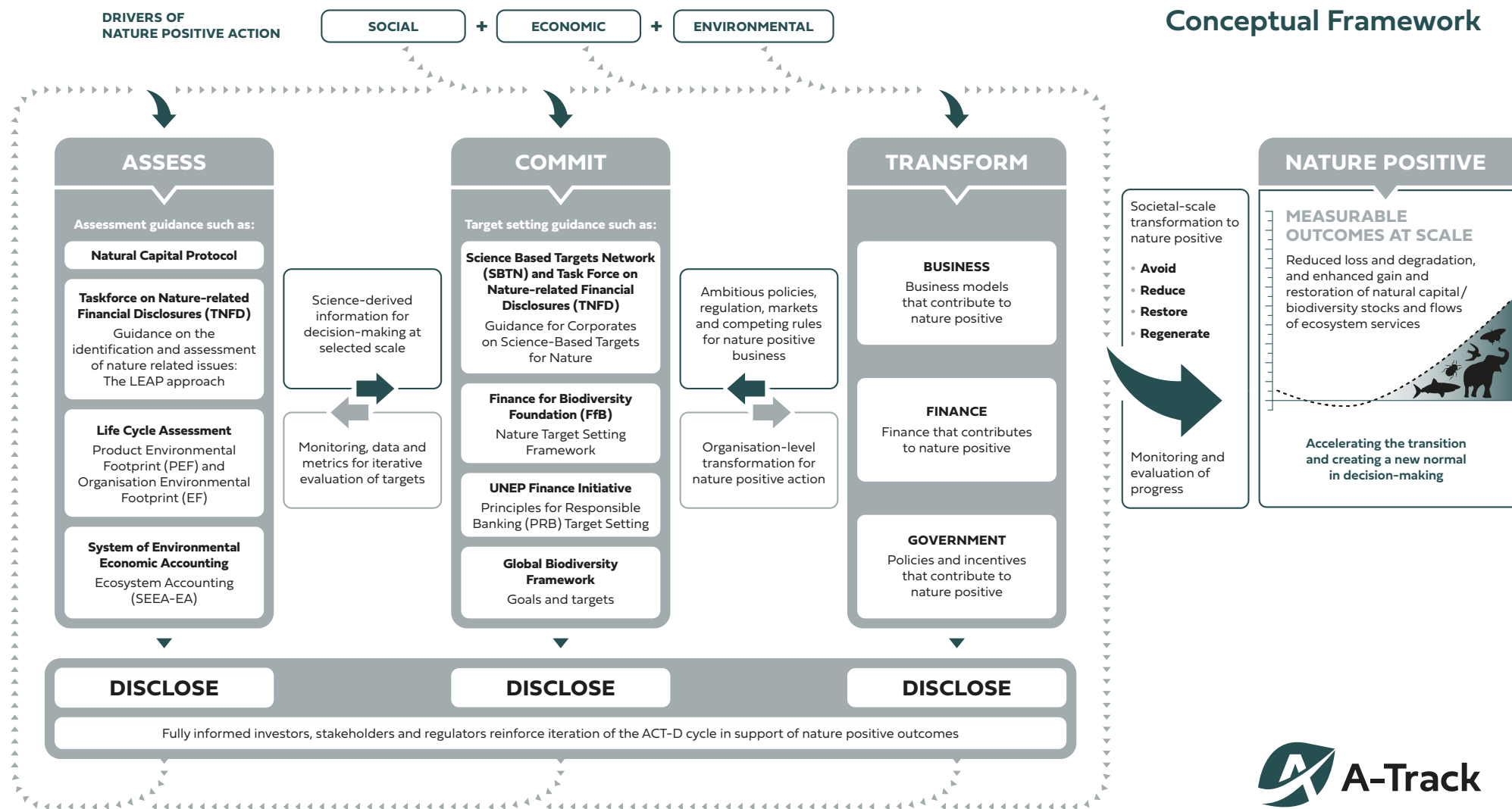


Figure 5: A-Track Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework: Drivers

The A-Track Conceptual Framework recognises that social, economic, environmental factors act as important drivers of action.

These drivers stem from forces of change associated with the social, economic, environmental dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. the pursuit of an enabling environment that leads to social development, sustainable and inclusive growth, environmental protection and eradication of poverty and hunger⁹. In the Conceptual Framework, these drivers inform nature-based solutions to effectively and adaptively address sustainability challenges, including biodiversity loss, pollution, climate change, desertification and land degradation and their interlinkages with social and economic development¹⁰.

The A-Track Conceptual Framework shows how drivers can create action to either assess, commit or transform, which is indicated by the dotted line circling the graphic.

9 United Nations. 2015. [Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). UN A/RES/70/1.

10 United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme. 2022 [Nature-based solutions for supporting sustainable development](#). UNEP/EA.5/Res.5

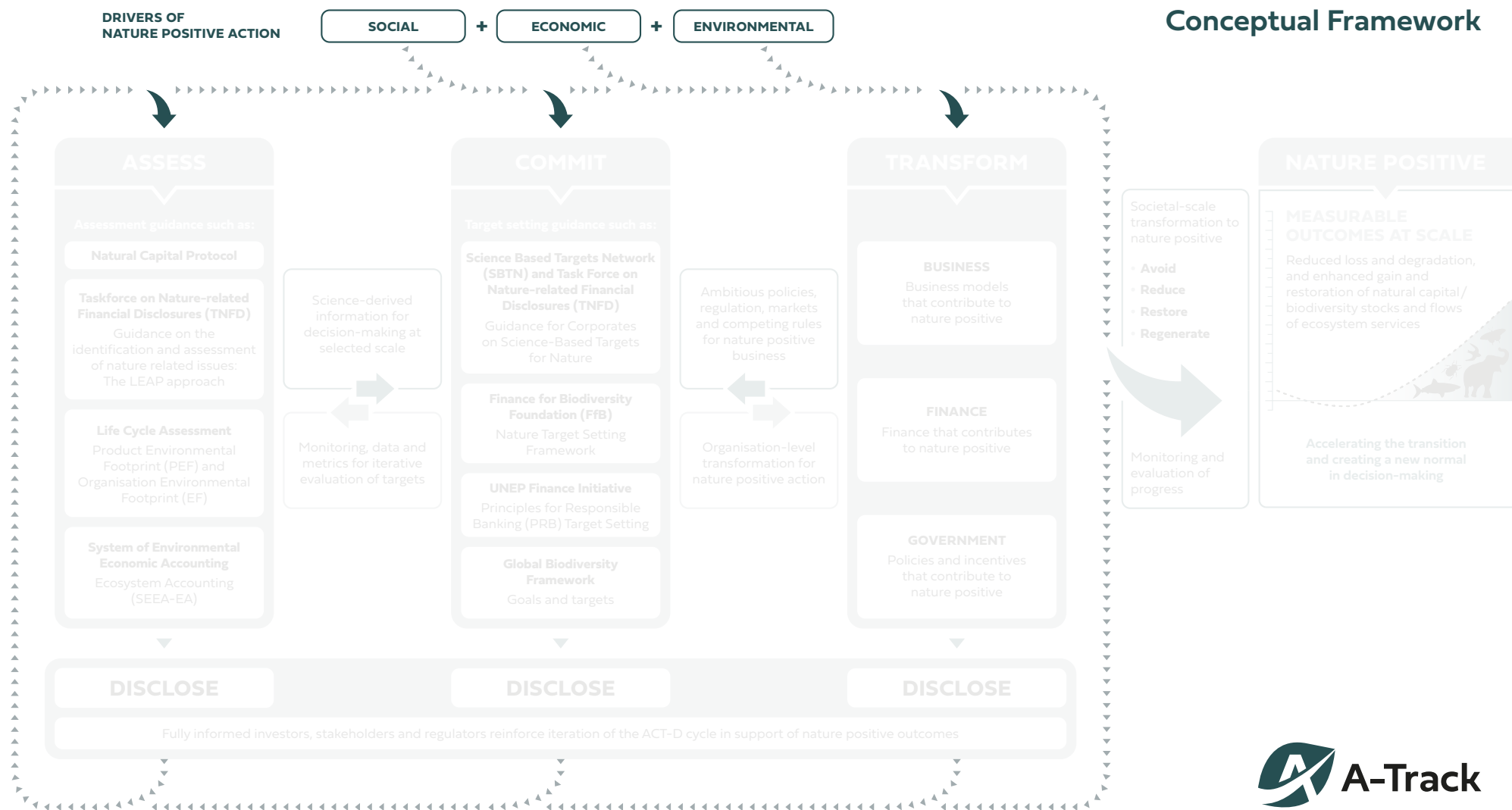


Figure 6: A-Track Conceptual Framework: Drivers of nature positive action

Conceptual Framework:

Assess

Assess refers to the information base, as derived by measurement and valuation of impacts and dependencies on nature to support identification of material risks and opportunities. In A-Track such efforts fall within the scope of Biodiversity Information Pathways (Work Package 2), and Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Footprinting (Work Package 3).

The goal is to develop a harmonised and consistent approach to generate information needed by the private, finance and public sectors. This will include, among other things, the integration of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) into natural capital accounting and assessment efforts (A-Track objectives 1 and 2).

The Assess column showcases an illustrative set of existing guidelines or statistical standards, including, e.g. The Natural Capital Protocol¹¹, the Taskforce on Nature and Finance Disclosure (TNFD) Locate, Evaluate, Assess, Prepare (LEAP) approach¹², Product Environmental Footprinting (PEF)¹³ and Organizational Environmental Footprinting (EF)¹⁴, and the System of Environmental Economic Accounting - Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EA)¹⁵, which are vital for the generation of information.

In the A-Track Conceptual Framework, Assess generates the science-derived information metrics to inform decision-making at scale (in the box between Assess and Commit), providing momentum to the next step, Commit.

11 Natural Capital Protocol. 2016. "Natural Capital Protocol".

12 Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures. 2023. Guidance on the identification and assessment of nature-related Issues: The TNFD LEAP approach Version 1.0 September 2023.

13 Zampori, L. and Pant, R., Suggestions for updating the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) method, EUR 29682 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, ISBN 978-92-76- 00654-1, doi:10.2760/424613, JRC115959.

14 Zampori, L. and Pant, R., Suggestions for updating the Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF) method, EUR 29681 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2019, ISBN 978-92- 76-00651-0, doi:10.2760/577225, JRC115960.

15 United Nations et al. (2021). System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA). White cover publication, pre-edited text subject to official editing.

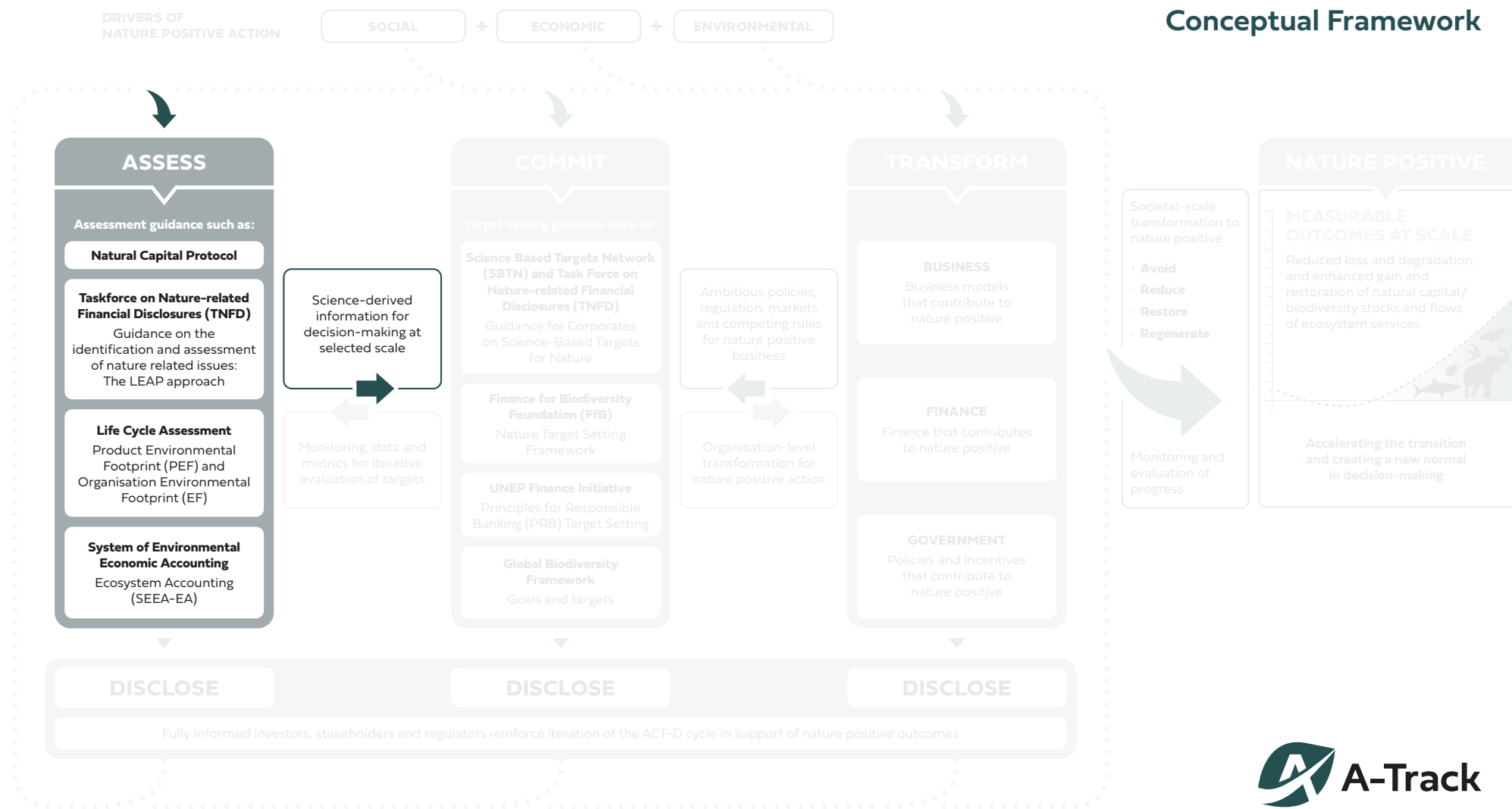


Figure 7: A-Track Conceptual Framework: Assess column

Conceptual Framework:

Commit

Commit refers to setting science-based ambitions or pledges towards a nature-positive world, particularly with respect to a set of goals and targets, such as those proposed by the SBTN and TNFD Guidance for Corporates on Science-Based Targets for Nature, the Finance for Biodiversity Foundation (FfN) Nature Target-Setting Framework, the UNEP Finance Initiative Principles for Responsible Banking (PRB) Target Setting, and by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), among others. In A-Track such efforts fall largely within the scope of Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting (Work Package 4), which will include interventions to advance and mainstream natural capital assessment and accounting, including with practical guidance, training and support for decision-makers (A-Track objective 3).

The Conceptual Framework reflects the monitoring, data and metrics for iterative evaluation of targets (in the box between Assess and Commit and linking back to Assess). These would include e.g. metrics to inform robust assessments/accounting to inform monitoring of the CBD GBF goals and targets.

The A-Track Conceptual Framework reflects the requirement for organizational change at (i) individual; (ii) project; (iii) company; and (iv) sector levels (in the box between Commit and Transform), that generate momentum for the next step, Transform¹⁶.

¹⁶ We Value Nature. 2024. The natural capital journey
<https://wevaluenature.eu/article/natural-capital-journey>

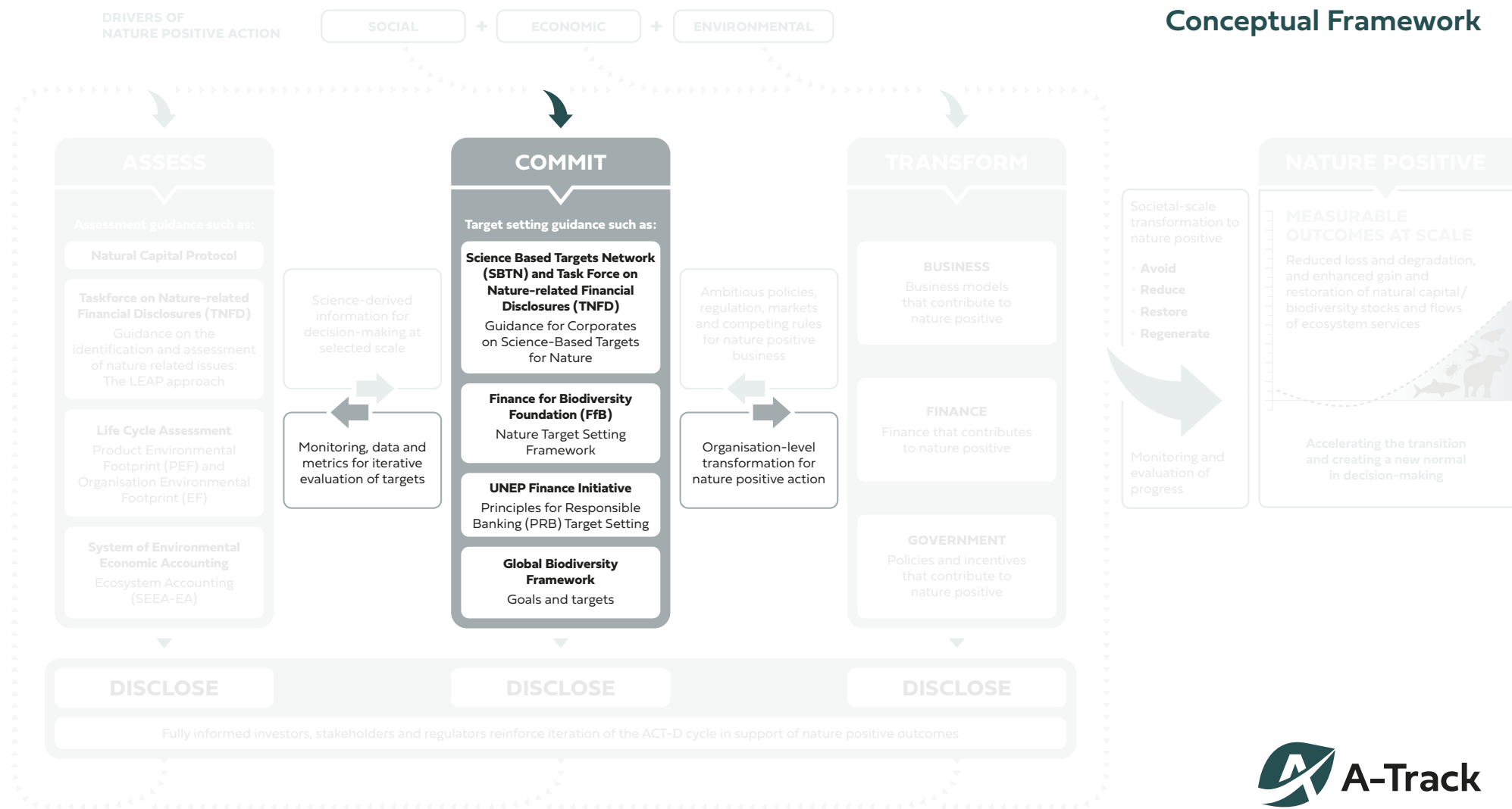


Figure 8: A-Track Conceptual Framework: Commit column

Conceptual Framework:

Transform

Transform refers to actions towards transformation to deliver on the targets and commitments.

The underlying premise of A-Track is that business, finance and governments must take action and collaborate together on barriers, opportunities and innovation needed for transformation to occur.

In A-Track, such efforts fall within the scope of Business Models and Finance that Contribute to Nature-Positive Outcomes (Work Package 5 and Work Package 6, respectively), including through scaling up and adoption of innovative business models and of private investment into natural capital (A-Track objectives 5 and 6, respectively).

Transform makes evident the interconnection and interdependency of key actors working toward nature-positive, as proposed by the infinity loop (*Figure 3*).

The graph illustrates the transition towards nature-positive as loss of biodiversity is halted and then full recovery is achieved by 2050. The diagram builds on the diagram in the original paper describing nature-positive¹⁷. A Y-axis with a graticule has been added to show how A-Track will help the measurement of change towards nature-positive outcomes.

Transform actions generate an enabling environment with ambitious policies alongside regulation, markets and competition rules, supporting business action toward nature-positive outcomes, and furthering Commit efforts (in the box between Transform and Commit and linking back to Commit).

¹⁷ Locke, H., Rockström, J., Bakker, P., Bapna, M., Gough, M., Hilty, J., Lambertini, M., Morris, J., Rodriguez, C. M., Samper, C., Sanjayan, M., Zabey, E., & Zurita, P. (2021). A Nature-Positive World: The Global Goal for Nature

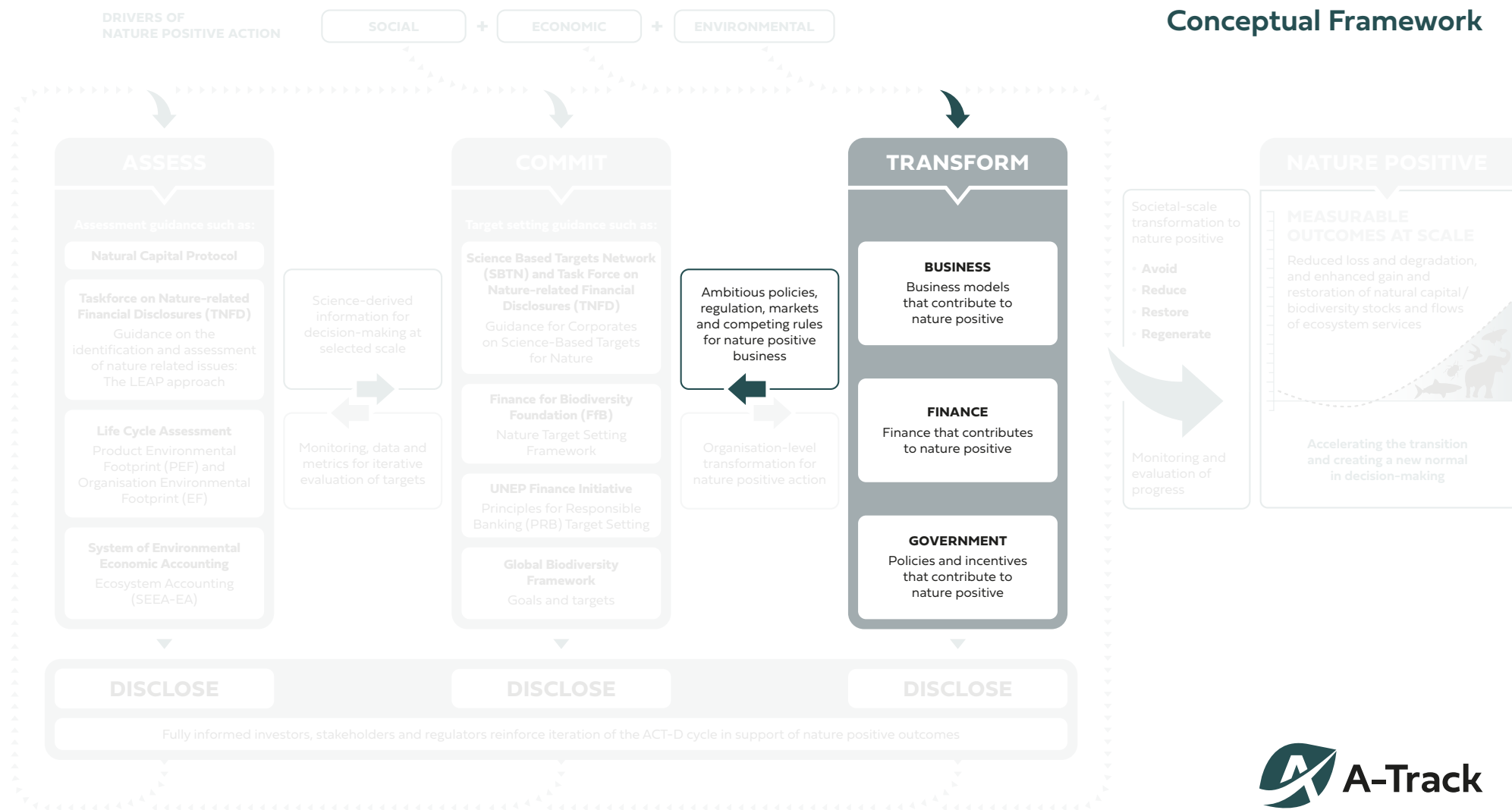


Figure 9: A-Track Conceptual Framework: Transform column

Conceptual Framework:

Disclose

Disclose refers to alignment of information towards nature-positive outcomes with major standards, reporting and disclosure guidelines¹⁸. Disclosure can relate to Assess, Commit and/or Transform. In A-Track, Disclosure plays a particularly important role in informing Finance that Contributes to Nature-Positive Outcomes (Work Package 6), including through understanding on how natural capital data flows (Work Packages 2 and 3) can support investments needed for scaling up of nature-positive economic activity.

Disclosure of risks, dependencies and impacts on biodiversity is critically important to inform actions by investors, stakeholders, and regulators, and to reinforce iteration of the ACT-D cycle in support of nature-positive outcomes, including through finance innovations.

The A-Track Conceptual Framework recognizes (middle right) that evolution will follow maturity of uptake of natural capital by businesses, finance and governments, and related behavioural change, barriers, and actions in that pathway¹⁹.

18 These include but are not limited to Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) Standards, European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Monitoring Framework, SBTN and TNFD Recommended Disclosures, BS 8632:2021 Natural Capital Accounting for Organizations (proprietary), among others.

19 We Value Nature, 2020. D3.3 Stock-take of state-of-play, barriers to and opportunities for accelerated business uptake across the EU of natural capital assessment. Version 1.0 [21 June 2020]

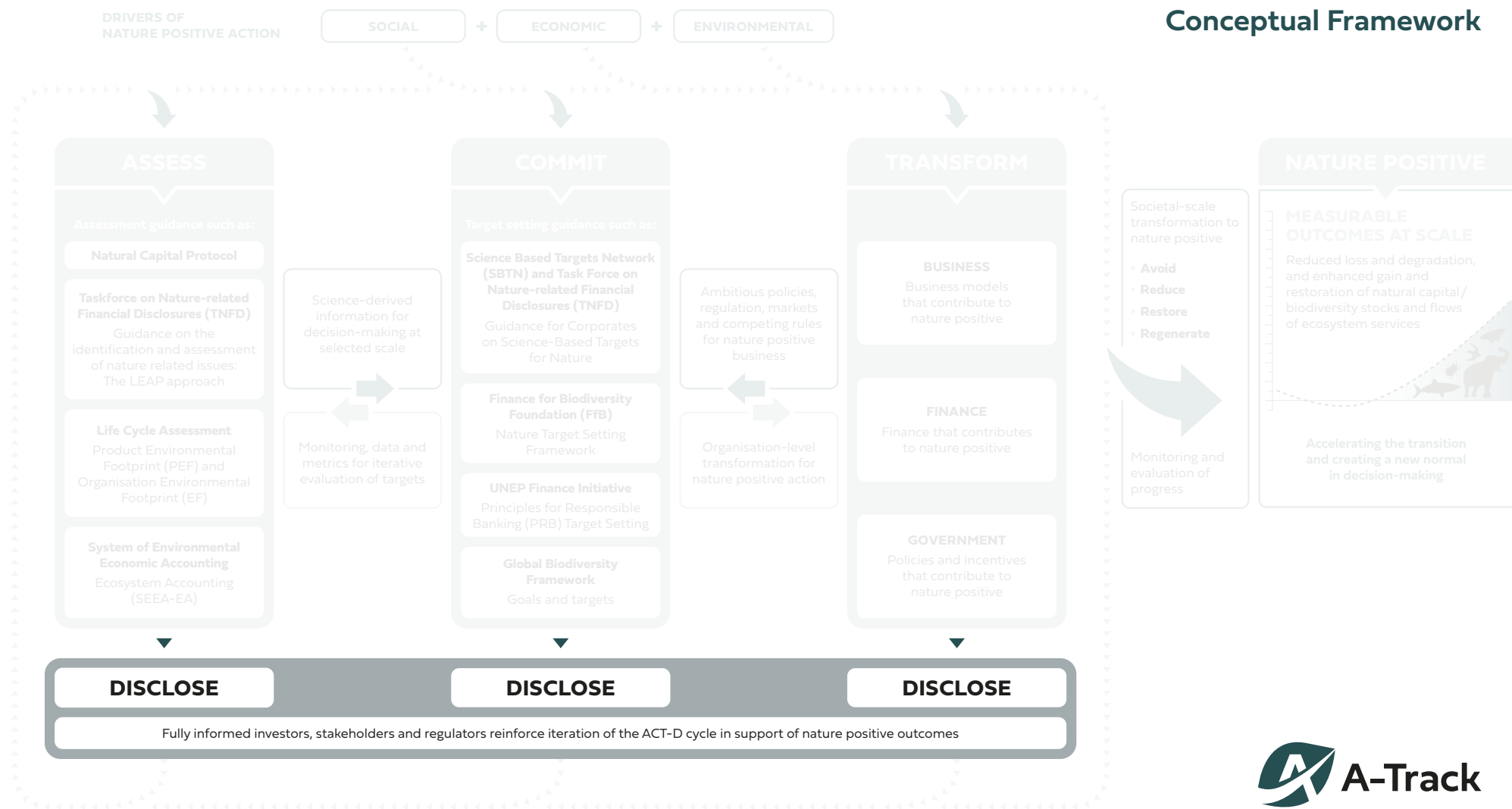


Figure 10: A-Track Conceptual Framework: Disclose columns

Conceptual Framework:

Impact

Collectively all those elements pave the way for the transformational aspiration of A-Track and for the societal-scale transformation to nature-positive, based on increasing maturity, as proposed by the regenerative model (*Figure 4*), and a new normal in decision-making, as proposed by the transition curve (*Figure 2*). Iterative monitoring and evaluation of progress against targets and actions for such transformation is an important step towards achievement of outcomes at scale.

In the A-Track Conceptual Framework this leads to Nature Positive: Outcomes at Scale, and its goal of halting and reversing nature loss by 2030 on a 2020 baseline, and achieving full recovery by 2050, as proposed by Nature Positive. This is acknowledged as the long-term goal to which A-Track contributes.

A-Track communication, dissemination and exploitation activities, together with wide engagement towards understanding of concepts and approaches synthesized in this A-Track Conceptual Framework will be critically important to translate project innovation and to contribute to wider impacts of the project.

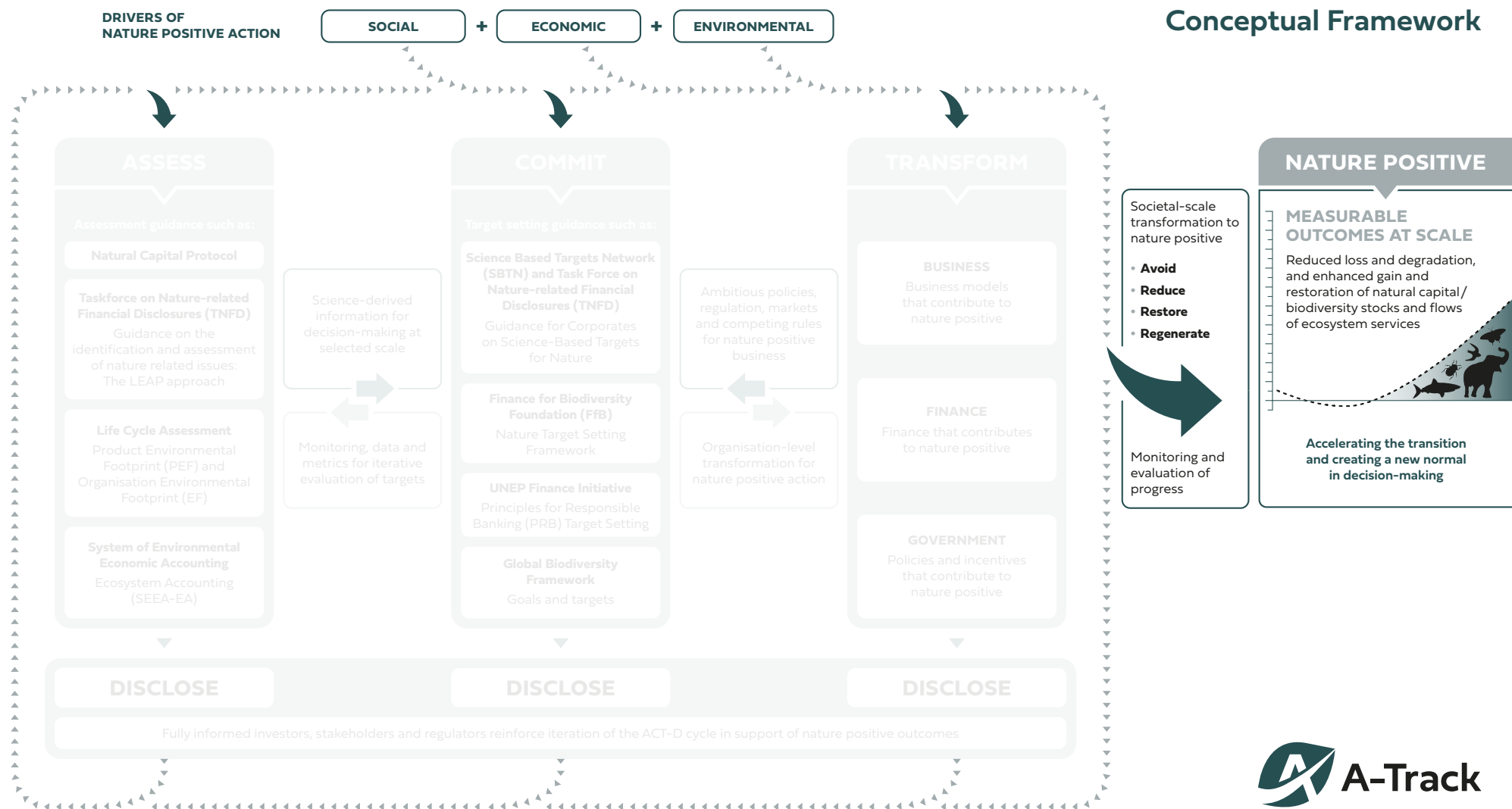


Figure 11: A-Track Conceptual Framework: Impact column

Acknowledgments

A-Track Conceptual Framework was developed as part of A-Track Conceptual framing, integration, synthesis, and engagement (Work Package 1), led by the Capitals Coalition. We are grateful to A-Track Work Package leads and teams contributing to the discussions and development of the Conceptual Framework, including Mary Dawson, Mark Gough (Capitals Coalition); Bruno Smets, Karolien Peeters (Vito); James Atkinson (Oppla); Fernando Cirez (Tecnalia); Rafael Horn (FHG); Andreas Geb, Sun Hea Hong (USTUTT), Carl Obst, Mark Eigenraam, Dan Whitaker (IDEEA Global), Jacob Bedford, Catarina Braga, Sharon Brook (WCMC); Edmund Dickens, Harry Greenfield, Sara Taaffe, Elizabeth Clark (CISL); Toby Roxburgh, Richard Spencer (ICAEW); Nadine McCormick, Maria Campos, Amanda Griniece, Karina Mereuta (WBCSD).

A-Track is funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe programme with co-funding from UK Research and Innovation and the Swiss National Science Foundation. The eleven A-Track partners are: Capitals Coalition, VITO, UNEP-WCMC, Tecnalia, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, Oppla, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, University of Stuttgart and IDEEA Global.



Acronyms

A-Track	Accelerating Transformation through Capitals Knowledge
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CSRD	Corporate, Sustainability Reporting Directive
ESRS	European Sustainability Reporting Standards
GBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
GSSB	Global Sustainability Standards Board
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards Foundation
ISSB	International Sustainability Standards Board
LEAP	Locate, Evaluate, Assess, Prepare
SBTs	Science Based Targets
SBTi	Science Based Targets Initiative
SBTN	Science Based Targets Network
SEEA	UN System of Environmental Economic Accounting
TNFD	Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Appendix 1: Work Packages

	Work Package Name	Lead	Core Team	Contributors
1	Conceptual Framing, Integration, Synthesis, And Engagement	Capitals Coalition	Capitals Coalition	All Partners
2	Biodiversity Information Pathways	UNEP-WCMC	IDEEA, VITO, UNEP-WCMC	Capitals Coalition, CISL, TECNALIA, WBCSD
3	Biodiversity And Ecosystem Services Footprinting	TECNALIA	Fraunhofer, USTUTT	Capitals Coalition, CISL UNEP-WCMC, VITO, WBCSD
4	Natural Capital Assessment and Accounting	WBCSD	UNEP-WCMC	Capitals Coalition, CISL, Fraunhofer, ICAEW, OPPLA, TECNALIA, UNEP-WCMC
5	Business Models That Contribute to Nature Positive Outcomes	CISL	CISL	Capitals Coalition, IDEEA, TECNALIA, UNEP-WCMC WBCSD
6	Finance That Contributes to Nature Positive Outcomes	CISL	CISL	CISL, Fraunhofer, IDEEA, TECNALIA, USTUTT, VITO, UNEP-WCMC, WBCSD
7	Maximising Impact	Oppla	Oppla, Capitals Coalition, WBCSD	All Partners
8	Project Management	Capitals Coalition	VITO	All Partners



Project partners:



Project funded by:



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the grant agreement number 101082268.



**UK Research
and Innovation**

This work was funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) under the UK government's Horizon Europe funding guarantee [101082268].

Project funded by



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
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