



Ministry of Infrastructure  
and Water Management

## Summary:

# The Dutch Multi-Year Programme for Infrastructure, Spatial Planning and Transport (MIRT)

Within the MIRT programme, all parties collaborate on ambitions and projects regarding infrastructure and water, in order to maintain and build on the Netherlands to improve the quality of life, access, and mobility in a clean, safe and sustainable environment.

The Netherlands is a very densely populated country with several spatial functions (e.g. transport, residential and industrial areas, production of renewable energy, nature and recreation) situated simultaneously in a small area. These functions – national and regional – are increasingly intertwined and require integrated planning. The Multi-Year Programme provides such integrated planning from infrastructure and water investments point of view. For that reason, the national and regional governments have joined forces on MIRT projects to enhance integrated physical planning and investments in the Netherlands. The MIRT Framework is a nationally agreed way of implementing MIRT projects. Essential to our way of implementing such MIRT projects is: aligning several issues and ambitions requiring investments in a particular area and exploring sustainable solutions from a broad perspective (i.e. not zooming in directly on a particular solution from a single-issue perspective).

## About the MIRT programme

MIRT stands for Multi-Year Programme for Infrastructure, Spatial Planning, and Transport. MIRT comprises projects and programmes involving the physical domain: national and regional governments collaborate on the competitive strength, accessibility, and liveability of the Netherlands. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management is a participant in any MIRT track (project or programme). However, other ministries and regional partners may also participate or launch MIRT tracks. Such regional partners may be the provinces, municipalities, transport regions, or district water boards. NGOs and businesses may also participate by providing input to solutions.

The MIRT Consultation Committee, with the regional agendas as their strategic compass, makes agreements on MIRT tracks: the collective perspective of the national and regional governments regarding the development of an area or major body of water, and the ensuing ambitions and projects.

A collective tasking comprises the elements that contribute to the national ambitions and goals in the fields of infrastructure, flood risk management, and liveability (the responsibilities of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management). Other parties

### Problem oriented approach

Suppose the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the region concerned intend to tackle the daily tailbacks on a section of the motorway near a big city. The sectoral solution is to upgrade the motorway. However, the Ministry contacts the province, the municipalities, and the regional business community, asking about their ambitions for the area. The province has conducted a mobility analysis of the region and knows that the tailbacks are mainly caused by local commuter traffic. The municipality has just launched its Move Yourself to Health programme and aims to encourage residents to cycle. Together, the parties arrive at a joint ambition: improving mobility between the residential area and the business park, and improving residents' health. Following an exploration of several solutions, they decide to go for a package that involves an express bicycle connection to the business park, in combination with agreements with employers regarding the promotion of cycling and flexible working hours, and influencing the behaviour of motorway users in order to improve traffic circulation. The package, as a whole, offers a solution to both accessibility and health issues. In addition, it contributes to the sustainability goal of MIRT, viz. to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

contribute, e.g., those with spatial-economic ambitions relating to the development of an area, plus the associated resources and instruments. Such joint efforts produce better results. The Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management has an Infrastructure Fund and – for water projects - a Delta Fund, within the conditions that apply to such funds. This may involve, e.g., investments in the main roads network, railways, or river widening.

## The essence of the regulations

### Wider approach

Nowadays, the complex nature of major physical projects demands collaboration and an integrated approach. After all, any intervention touches upon other interests, while both space and money are scarce. For that reason, the parties involved must pool their ambitions, decision-making, expertise, and resources. In many cases, a sectoral bottleneck prompts a process that eventually leads to an MIRT track. First exploring the wide range of ambitions, together with other parties involved, generates a clear picture of the relevant issues for the area, and enables the development of smart solutions. For that reason, a broad perspective is a major feature of the MIRT Framework.

### Funnelling and transparent decision-making process

In the MIRT Framework, funnelling is understood to mean: starting with a broad approach and, with transparent choices, working towards feasible projects. At the end of an MIRT phase, the administrators involved decide which issues, strategies and solutions they wish to elaborate in the next phase, and how the various partners will contribute during the next phase. The organisation, which administers the project, provides transparent information to underpin the decision-making process. For example, a standard component of every MIRT phase involves mapping out the impact and cost of solutions based on criteria that have been set down in concert (assessment framework).

Funnelling also entails that solutions may be dropped along the way, and that an MIRT track may be curtailed. At designated moments in the MIRT procedure, it may not be a matter of course (anymore) for a project to proceed to the next phase. At any given time, administrators may conclude that continuing would not make sense. Such choices are always underpinned by transparent foundations.

### Adaptive planning (flexibility in solutions)

Major infrastructure and water projects take a lot of time, sometimes several decades. For that reason, commencing on time is essential. On the other hand, we are faced with growing uncertainties regarding future changes in mobility (automated driving), technology, the economy, and the climate, and thus also

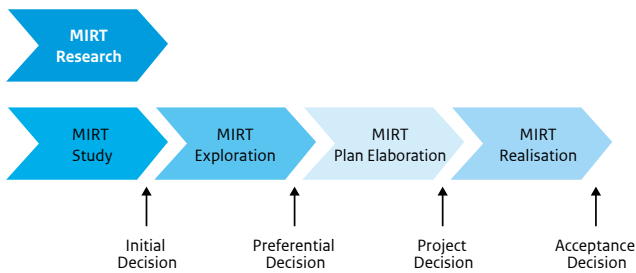
regarding the effectiveness of the measures chosen. For that reason, the MIRT Framework features “adaptive scheduling”, a method for dealing with this dilemma and allowing for more flexibility. Administrators set down a collective perspective and solution strategy, whereupon they decide on implementing projects step by step, at the time at which such projects are in order.

## Contributing together

MIRT projects and programmes offer solutions to the interests of multiple parties, at both the national and regional levels. All parties involved are responsible for ensuring the feasibility of the project or programme, by making financial resources available and enabling its implementation from a legal and policy perspective. The point of departure in the MIRT Framework is that each party provides input. The key to a successful MIRT track is an open and creative approach, and the intention to work things out together, from start to finish.

## Regulations phase by phase

In an MIRT track, the parties work phase by phase to substantiate the tasking in increasingly concrete terms. Every MIRT phase ends with a political -administrative decision on the subsequent phase:



For each phase, the MIRT Framework sets out the process, the nature of the decisions, and the requirements to be met in order to qualify for national government investments. The necessity must be clear, otherwise the parties might first conduct a (free format) MIRT Study.

The official starting point for each MIRT track is the *Initial Decision* to launch an MIRT Exploration. This document sets out the tasking(s) on which the track is focused and the scope of the solution strategies. Attention is paid to sustainability, energy neutrality, and climate adaptation. The *Initial Decision* also sets out which parties are involved, and how the tasks, roles, and responsibilities are divided among the stakeholders. A precondition for an *Initial Decision* is the prospect of funding for 75% of the costs of the most obvious solution. Specific information is required in the event of investments expected from the *Infra Fund* or the *Delta Fund*.

In an MIRT Exploration, the parties involved subsequently look for smart solutions to the collective ambitions. This may lead to a *Preferential Decision*: a well-substantiated choice for the best solution, the legal procedure, and the funding method. In the *MIRT Plan Elaboration*, the parties substantiate the design in sufficiently concrete terms to be able to tender the project. The *Project Decision* paves the way for its realisation.

## More information

To download the MIRT Framework, go to [www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl) (in Dutch). An annual overview of MIRT projects and programmes is available at [www.mirtoverzicht.nl](http://www.mirtoverzicht.nl) (in Dutch). For more inspiration regarding collaboration within the MIRT programme, go to [www.leerplatformmirt.nl](http://www.leerplatformmirt.nl) (in Dutch). This website also provides more information on advanced flexibility in the MIRT system (Cabinet response to inter-ministerial policy study) and on adaptive planning.

Published by

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and Water Management**

P.O. Box 20901 | 2500 EX The Hague  
The Netherlands  
[www.rijksoverheid.nl](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl)

February 2018 | 107287EN