Background story in the past decades MSP challenge and public country profile information

Four countries – Red, Green, Yellow and Blue – are located around the Sea of Colours. The sea of colours is approximately 146.500 square nautical miles (nm2). To the west the sea ends up in a bigger sea connected to the ocean and with that to the rest of the world (China, Brazil, United States/Canada, other European, (Eur)Asian and African trading partners,) on the east there is a smaller sea basin which has no open connection with other seas, but a hinterland with enormous developing potential: Russia. Important sailable rivers end up in that sea basin. The countries to the East are developing rapidly and intensify the use of marine waters to ship oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG), trade goods and have a growing heavy industry.

Although the countries Red, Green, Yellow and Blue are different, their respective cultures, economies and national identities have evolved from their historic and geographical connection with the Sea of Colours. For many centuries, fishery was an important source of income for the national populations in all four countries. In the past the countries have fought wars and conflicts about the richness of the sea – the shipping routes, the access to ports and richness of the hinterland, the fish and later the minerals like oil and gas. But for more than half a century the countries have become stable, non-aggressive democracies prospering from stability and co-operation. Disputes and conflicts of interests among the countries still occur but are settled by diplomacy making best use of their power in international agreements and institutions.

Although all four countries have modern economies and rank among the top 20 economies in the world, there are also differences among the countries. Over the past decennia the countries have developed all in a different direction, their economy and interest of the seas vary.

Country Red, Blue and Green are modern, representative kingdoms with a prime-minister leading coalition cabinets of varying colours. Country Yellow is a federal republic of states headed with by a ceremonial president. Countries Red, Green and Yellow are EU member states. The countries have specific national goals, and common international goals (like restore good ecological status of the sea by 2020 – the Marine Strategy Framework Directive). The blue country is not an EU member state but is working closely together with its neighbours. The countries have similar political regimes: open, stable and relative well-functioning parliamentary democracies.

Military activities: the Red country has military activity in 5% of its' part of the sea. The Green and Yellow countries have military activities in 10%. The Blue country has no military activity at sea. International conventions on military use of the sea prevent countries to change policy with regard to this activity; it's therefore a given fact to all players in the game.

Recently, awareness has risen that maritime and marine spatial planning is a useful, cross cutting tool, to manage the sea areas in an ecologically sane manner. Also the EU is promoting the use of MSP to enhance economic growth. In MSP, stakeholder involvement is a crucial element.

Background information on the sea of colours

The marine and maritime space indicated as "the Sea of Colours" is a unique area. Different peninsula, islands and land that belong to one of the four coloured countries form it. Its unique geographical position makes it an important area for sea transport and noteworthy ecosystem zone that contains a number of rare species. Scenic rocky shores and beaches are highly valued by both inhabitants and tourists. The increasingly intensive economic development in this area however seriously threatens the ecosystem. In 1970 it was noted as one of the first marine dead zones where the seawater quality is not sufficient enough to support the aquatic life. The pressure on the sea comes from the intensified traditional maritime activities, such as shipping and fisheries. And at the same time while the new economic activities, such as aquaculture or offshore renewable energy emerged and try to establish space @ the Sea of Colours. Spatial planning (marine and/or maritime) is regarded as a helpful tool to address the challenges ahead.

The Sea of Colours area (land and water) is 400x560 nautical miles (224.000Nm2). The Sea of Colours itself is approximately 146.500 square nautical miles (Nm2). Grids come in two sizes: a larger grid of 20x20 nm and a detailed one of 2x2 nm. Planning is only possible in the Sea of Colours not on land.

Goals and targets will be translated in spatial claims, with functions which can be combined or exclude one another. There can be zones for general use, priority zones and exclusive use zones.

Red1, Green1 and Yellow 2 are the main trading ports. The Blue country has city 2 as major port. Some international priority lanes for shipping have been established because the Sea of Colours is one of the most intensively used seas in the world. Priority shipping lanes always have a safety zone.

The depth of the Sea of Colours varies from 10 to 80 meters in the centre, and in the west and northwest depths up to 200 meters are known. Large areas are most likely suitable for off shore wind farms. Exploration of the sea and its natural resources is an ongoing activity.

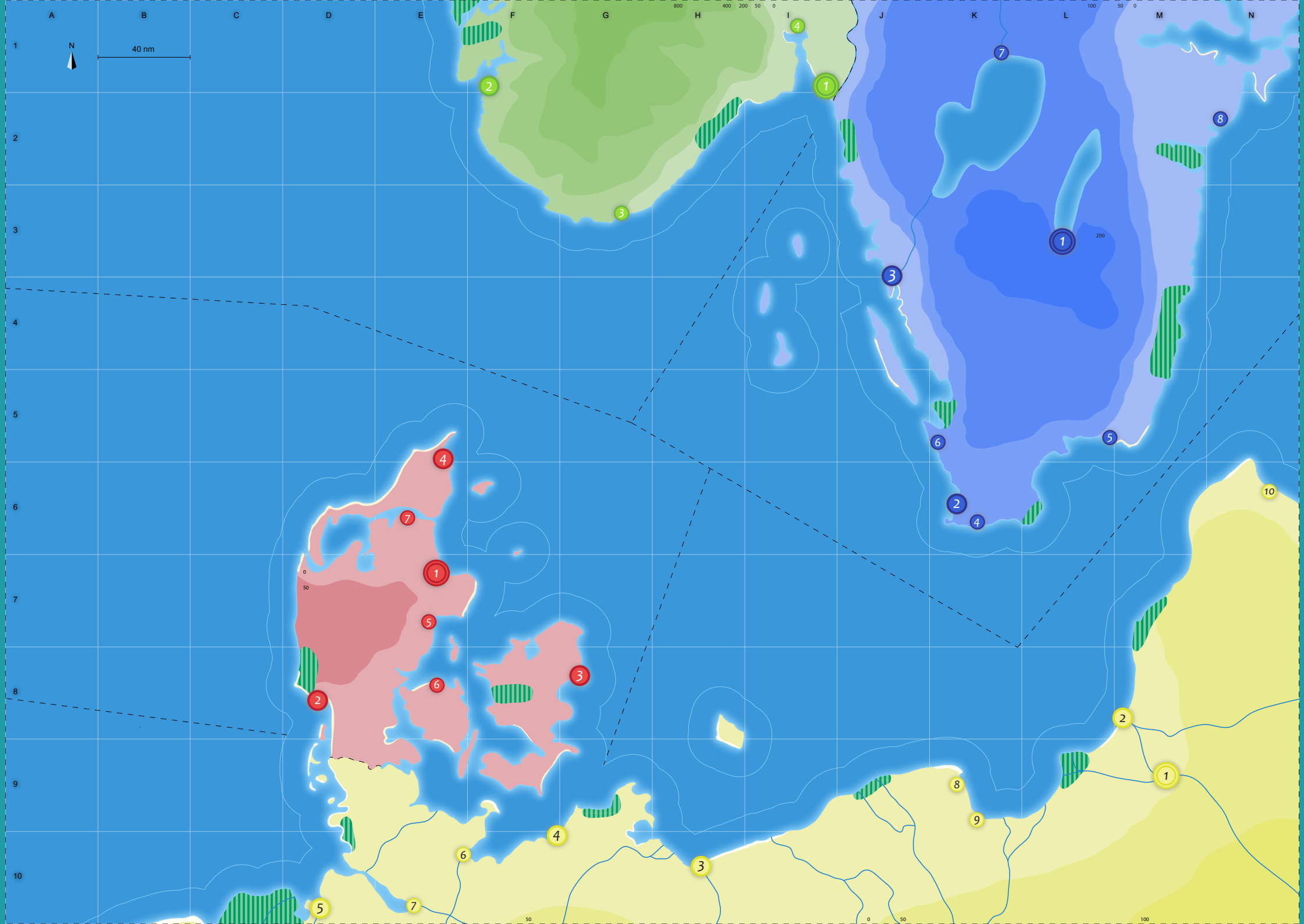
In the Sea of Colours there are a few islands. The strait has two currents: a less saline surface current flowing westward and a more saline deep current flowing southward, west from countries Green en Red. During the winter the Sea of Colours freezes over along the coastal areas on the north.

Fisheries consist of pelagic and demersal fisheries: herring, cod, flatfish, and shrimp. Fish is found throughout the Sea of Colours. There are numerous important fishing grounds, nursery and spawning areas. Mostly known to the fishermen and marine scientists. Different type of fishing activities can be distinguished:

1. inshore fisheries for inshore demersal species (flatfish and/or shrimp), which tend also to catch offshore fish in some periods of the year;
2. offshore demersal fisheries (cod)
3. offshore pelagic fisheries (herring), and
4. leisure fisheries.

Birds like the Sea of Colours a lot. There are breeding colonies throughout the study area. Some birds can be found year round, others are migrating and spent time in the Sea of Colours only parts of the year. Three important bird species can be found: fulmars, gannets and black guillemots. Sea mammals like the area too. Seals are found along the sandy beaches and isles, porpoises are almost everywhere.

The sea of colours has three levels of biodiversity: high, mediocre and low. To stop the loss of biodiversity worldwide and also in the Sea of Colours a group of international green NGO's has recently recommended protection of at least 40% of the sea. Coastal and near shore areas are seen to be the most vulnerable.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