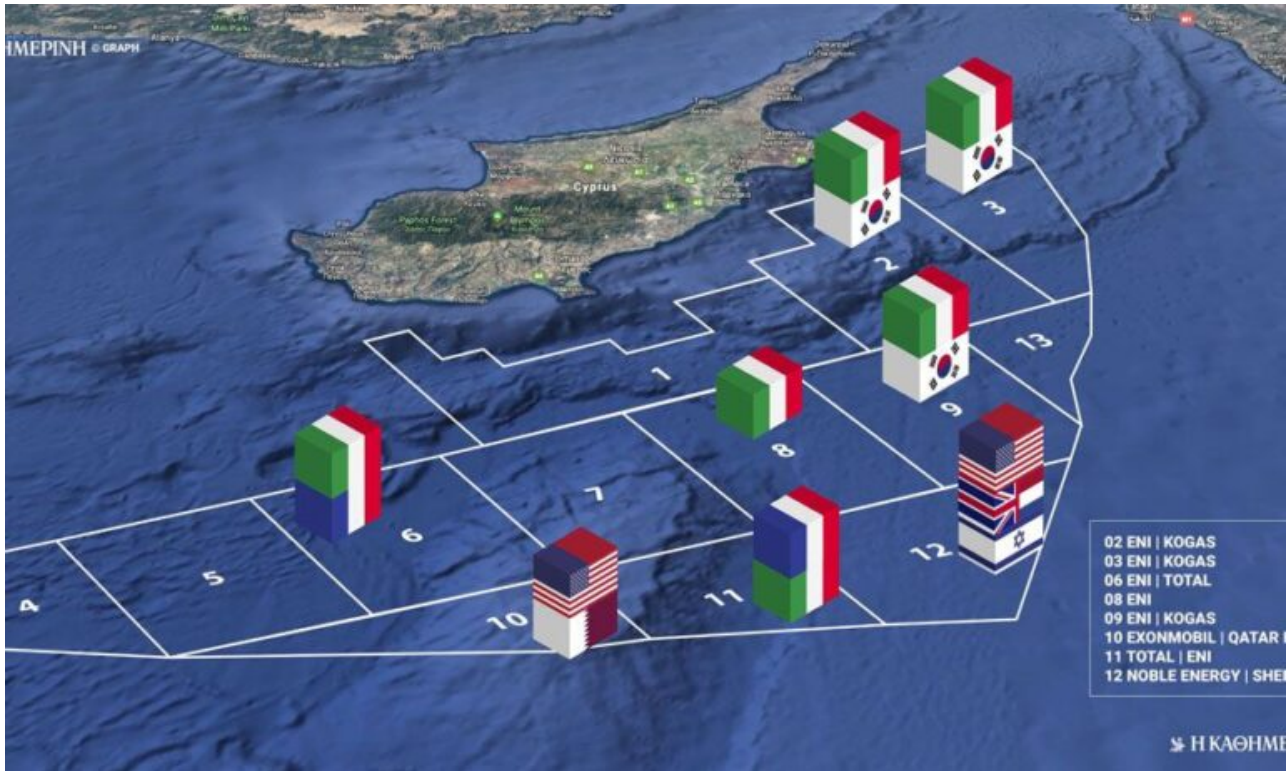


Cyprus awards Block 5 gas right to ExxonMobil, Qatar Petroleum



The Cypriot government on Thursday awarded a license for natural gas exploration rights for an offshore block to a consortium made up of ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum.

Energy Minister Natasa Pilides said ExxonMobil would be administering the Block 5 concession with a share of 60 per cent.

"I have also been authorized to sign on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus, the exploration and production sharing contract agreed with the consortium after intense negotiations," she told journalists after the approval.

The contract with the two companies will be signed at a ceremony to be held in Nicosia within the next few days, she added.

ExxonMobil and partner Qatar Petroleum plan on drilling an

appraisal well in Block 10, where natural gas was discovered, towards the end of November or early December.

[Kathimerini Cyprus]