

Schedule tight to meet December drill deadline



Lebanon remains on track to have its first exploration well drilled in maritime Bloc 4 by December this year, though the schedule is tight, according to an expert closely involved in the field.

Abboud Zahr, Managing Director at DEP Oil and Gas, which is involved in providing services to the companies involved in the planned exploratory drilling, told LOGI that Total – the lead company in the qualified consortium – was set to complete by August three studies required for drilling to commence. These include the Environmental Impact Assessment, environmental baseline assessment and social baseline assessment.

At that point, they must be approved by Lebanese authorities.

In the meanwhile, Total is set to award “at least 20 contracts” for logistics on shore – in Beirut’s port – and for other services and equipment, including for the rig or drill ship that will go about drilling Lebanon’s first ever exploratory well, Zahr said.

“These activities, as they need a long time for preparation, should be awarded very soon, otherwise the December deadline will not be met,” Zahr said.

Once the exploratory drilling commences, it will take about 6 weeks to reach the target point – some 4400 meters below sea level. If gas is found, a second well, known as an appraisal well, will be drilled to determine the quantity and quality of the gas, which would answer the billion-dollar question of whether Lebanon has a commercially viable find.

“To be realistic, the probability to find something in this first well is maximum 25 percent,” Zahr said.

The qualified consortium has committed to drilling at least two exploratory wells in each of the two blocs they have qualified for.

In the case the find is commercially viable, a third well, known as a production well, will have to be drilled, and a large amount of associated infrastructure must be constructed. Before gas can begin pumping.

Zahr estimated that this entire process, in the best case scenario, would require about a decade.