IJGlobal Awards 2022 – Europe Deal Winners

Angus Leslie Melville

09/03/2023

The great and the good of the regional infrastructure finance community gathered last night in the Sheraton Grand London in Park Lane to celebrate IJGlobal Awards 2022 for Europe and Africa.

This story focuses on the European winners in the Deals Category for transactions that reached financial close in the 2022 calendar year.

To read the deal winners from Africa that were also announced last night, click here...

Meanwhile, to read about the company winners from both Europe and Africa, click here...

A total of 13 European winners were announced for greenfield financings over the judging period. They are:

- Ankara Izmir HSR, Turkey
- A69 Toulouse-Castres Motorway, France
- EdgeConneX European Data Centre Financing
- Project Obelix, France
- Rv555 Sotrasambandet, Norway
- Minas de Aguas Tenidas, Spain
- Aquila Clean Energy's €1 billion financing
- Project Eolmed, France
- NeuConnect Interconnector, Germany and the UK
- Riverside 2 Waste-to-Energy, UK
- CEGeLog PPP, France
- Telenet – Pillar, Germany

There were also announcements for 4 refinance transactions:

- Niguarda Hospital Refi, Italy
- Gemini Offshore Wind Farm Refi, Netherlands
- Alpha Trains Refi, Luxembourg
- Dunkerque LNG Refi, France

Unlike the company awards – which are selected based on submissions by the regional independent panel of judges – the deals are chosen by the IJGlobal editorial team… but again, based on submissions.

Transport Deal of the Year – Heavy Rail

Ankara Izmir High Speed Rail

The IJGlobal database marks this impressive Turkish HSR deal as having reached financial close late in December 2021, but the submitter insists it happened on 4 March 2022… and who are we to argue when it's quite such a lovely transaction.

ERG Group and SSB Group in Q1 2022 concluded financing to fund the EPC of a 503km high-speed, electric railway linking 2 key Turkish cities.

The €2.486 billion financing package includes a UKEF-guaranteed €2.162 billion green loan and a €324 million syndicated commercial bank facility. The financial structure of the project is ECA backed EPC-F.

The ECA structure marks UK government's biggest sustainable, civil infrastructure deal in history and brought to the table – in addition to UKEF – SERV from Switzerland, SACE from Italy and OeKB from Austria. Meanwhile, Standard Chartered and Credit Suisse jointly acted as bookrunners, MLAs and coordinating and structuring banks.

As for the project itself, the introduction of an electric HSR link will transform the Turkey's transport infrastructure and decarbonise travel between 2 of its largest cities – Ankara and Izmir. It will provide a carbon-free alternative to road and air travel, helping Turkey meet its COP26 commitments.

This electric railway has been designated a clean transportation project, for green loan financing and meets the Green Loan Principles. It also meets internationally recognised sustainability standards, including Equator Principles and the International Finance Corporation Performance Standards.

However, the procurement itself has a complex history dating back to 2008 when it was tendered and awarded in sections several times over the course of the years, but never fully completed.

As the EPC-F contractor, ERG and SSB have undertaken to take over all the partially-completed sections and build the entire railway to completion.

As part of the requirements of the project finance structure, ERG and SSB will even bring previously built sections in line with international environmental and social standards, working closely with lenders' independent E&S consultants (Arup), and using the expertise of local and international consultants like SLR and Golder.

This transaction warrants recognition for bringing 4 European ECAs and 25 international lenders together to achieve the highest standards possible in a complex, brownfield project, with a long and disjointed history.

In doing so, it will connect 2 cities with a combined population of more than 10 million in a carbon efficient way, with financing in compliance with green loan principles.

The project finance package was also arranged against the backdrop of an increasingly challenging economic environment in Turkey and took the combined expertise of the ECAs, the coordinating arrangers and ERG & SSB Groups to complete the largest infrastructure financing in Turkey to date.

Having developed and put in place this complex financing structure, the Ankara Izmir HSR has become a pathfinder, leading the way for other large infrastructure projects in the region to be financed with a similar approach.

Transport Deal of the Year – Roads

A69 Toulouse-Castres Motorway, France

Following a competitive bidding procedure, ATOSCA – an SPV led by NGE along with free-flow toll service provider ASCENDI and infrastructure funds Quaero Capital and TIIC – was appointed by the French government as concessionaire of the A69 motorway.

ATOSCA is responsible for the DBFOM of the 53km motorway linking Castres in the department of Tarn to Verfeil in Haute-Garonne.

The concession contract was signed on 20 April 2022 with the financing put in place shortly after, and work was scheduled to start this year (2023).

The €410 million debt package was arranged by a group of 5 lenders, bringing to the table a very French group… joined by NordLB. The French lenders were La Banque Postale, Arkéa, Crédit Agricole and Natixis.

The financing was arranged as a soft mini perm with a 7-year tenor and the cost of debt was more favourable (at the time) than the industry standard of 180bp over reference rate.

The transaction reached financial close between the 2 rounds of French presidential elections and the sponsors were keen to push it over the line before out of fear it would be cancelled in the event of government change.

The A69 PPP has a deal value of €512 million and had been in procurement since 2019. The preferred bidder – the ATOSCA consortium – was announced in early 2022 following a brief delay in procurement.

Despite minor speedbumps, the project is thought to have progressed broadly in line with the timeline for similar developments.

Digital Infrastructure Deal of the Year – Data Centres

EdgeConneX's European Data Centre Financings

EdgeConneX – the EQT-owned data centre developer – wins the digital infrastructure award in the data centre category for its involvement in 2 scalable deals.

In October 2022, EdgeConneX reached financial close on its €2.4 billion sustainability-linked syndicated (re)financing of its pan-EMEA data centre portfolio encompassing 12 operational sites across 7 jurisdictions, as well as providing capex facilities to support future developments.

The first transaction recognised was underwritten by ABN Amro, ING Bank, Natixis, SMBC, and Societe Generale and supported by Bishopsfield Capital Partners as financial adviser.

Beyond consolidating EdgeConneX's pan-EMEA portfolio, this deal allows it to transition from stand-alone project financing to a structured corporate debt package – thereby unlocking more flexibility and funding capacity to support anticipated growth across the region.

In addition, this deal represents Europe's first data centre platform financing project and is rated as a pathfinder sustainability-linked portfolio financing project.

Separately, in June 2022, Ares Management Corporation – through its infrastructure debt strategy – committed to a delayed draw sustainability-linked global growth debt facility to EdgeConneX.

The debt facility provides for a commitment of up to $1 billion and can be used to fund development and construction of EdgeConneX's growing global development pipeline.

The innovative funding regime in Euros and USD via a structured corporate debt package unlocked more flexibility and funding capacity to support EdgeConneX's anticipated global growth.

Further, both financings include a sustainability-linked margin adjustment, whereby the interest rate payable is directly correlated to EdgeConneX achieving specific pre-determined sustainability targets.

These targets will be aligned to EdgeConneX's holistic ESG sustainability strategy which includes a stated goal of becoming a carbon-, waste- and water-neutral data centre provider by 2030 and developing and operating a data centre platform powered by 100% renewable energy.

The greenfield element of these transactions wins EdgeConneX an award in this category in conjunction with the refinancings which played a significant part in both deals and its reason for winning an award.

EdgeConneX owns and operates more than 60 data centres across 50 unique markets throughout 30 countries. The company's portfolio includes 200+ far edge and EdgePop deployments and 500+MW of capacity deployed and/or in development worldwide.

Providing excellence and expertise across all deployment phases, EdgeConneX also specialises in build-to-suit data centre facilities for Hyperscalers serving as the backbone of their cloud computing products for consumers globally.

Digital Infrastructure Deal of the Year – Fibre

Vauban's SDFAST – Project Obelix, France

Known to one and all as Project Obelix – and following on from Project Asterix – Vauban Infrastructure Partners' development of the Société de Développement de la Fibre Au Service des Territoires (SDFAST) FTTH network in France is an impressive deal.

Having closed in April 2022, it involves a long-term agreement with Bouygues Telecom (BYTEL) to finance the roll-out of fibre broadband networks in all medium-to-low-dense areas in France through the dedicated joint company (SDFAST).

This project – negotiated on a bilateral basis with BYTEL – is a follow-up of the SDAIF (Project Asterix) which closed in 2020. It was led by CIF III and Vauban funds through its dedicated fibre platform alongside Predica, co-shareholder of the platform, to strengthen the partnership between Vauban and ByTel.

Obelix enables fibre access to around 20 million FTTH premises by 2027, including 4 million in medium-density areas and 16 million in low-density areas. SDFAST will provide FTTH line access services to Bouygues Telecom and third-party operators.

According to the submission: "We believe this transaction is a great achievement since it represents a strong addition to VIF's portfolio in digital infrastructure in the context of extending SDAIF scheme and making the platform bigger while – at the same tame – having a significant social impact on communities.

"Obelix consolidates VIFs position in the PIN and AMII access wholesale market while securing revenue baseline thanks to a top-tier anchor client (BYTEL) that has major ambitions in the FttH industry.

"On the FttH market, in addition to the SDAIF offer, SDFAST's one-stop solution provides for Bouygues Telecom and third-party operators long-term access to all medium and low dense areas with the same partner, a complete service offer and optimal operational efficiency."

Beyond that, Project Obelix brought to the table a slew of international banks as well as institutional lenders to arrange €1.5 billion of debt for a project that makes a lot of sense.

Export Finance Deal of the Year

Rv555 Sotrasambandet, Norway

The Rv555 Sotrasambandet PPP in Norway is an impressive deal in its own right – and in many other years would have won the Transport Deal of the Year award as well.

But in this case, it is being singled out for recognition for the role played by the ECAs to drive to conclusion a transaction that had to overcome its fair share of hurdles.

With a deal value of more than NOK 12 billion, it is the largest PPP procured in Norway and one of the largest PPPs in Europe to reach financial close in the 2022 calendar year.

Its scale and complexity are showcased by a long procurement process, with the overall timeframe from pre-qualification to financial close taking just over 2 years.

Notwithstanding the challenges, the consortium worked with the authority throughout the bid and closing process to ensure a competitive and deliverable proposal.

The consortium put together a competitive financing solution that had to overcome its technical complexity and long construction period, and the requirement for NOK financing (given the project's revenues and costs are fully denominated in NOK).

Both aspects significantly limited the available financing pool, with numerous debt providers not being able to competitively finance a complex project in a relatively illiquid local currency.

Unlike other deals in the country, the consortium composition – in terms of equity sponsors and CJV members – is entirely international and the contribution of new ideas and approaches tested elsewhere were adapted to the specifics of the Norwegian market to ensure delivery of the country's largest PPP to date.

The equity ownership breakdown sees Macquarie Capital holding the lion's share with 70%; joined by Korean infrastructure developer SK ecoplant (20%); and Webuild – the Italian developer that used to operate under the brand of Salini Impregilo – holding the remaining 10%.

A total of NOK 8.2 billion ($910m) of debt was raised to partially fund construction costs with the sponsors arranging facilities across 4 tranches:

- milestone bridging loan (MBL) – NOK 2.33 billion ($259m)
- Ksure-wrapped term loan – NOK 4.18 billion ($464m)
- unwrapped term loan – NOK 1.03 billion ($114m)
- equity bridge loan (EBL) – NOK 655 million ($73m)

The milestone bridging loan was set up as a short-term instrument to pay the contractors while waiting for the public sector to provide capital grants – essentially working capital loans.

This debt facility will be used to fund construction costs between the receipt of NOK 1 billion ($111m) milestone payments from the government, which are due annually.

However, it was for the involvement of Ksure – providing a wrap for the term loan – and the involvement of the Export-Import Bank of Korea and Korea Development Bank (which, granted, works more as a commercial lender) on this Norwegian transaction.

Mining Deal of the Year

Minas de Aguas Tenidas, Spain

It is not often that IJGlobal has the opportunity to give an award for mining in Europe, so a submission for the Minas de Aguas Tenidas (Matsa) deal in Spain raised an eyebrow, but resulted in us choosing it as a winner.

This transaction involves the acquisition (closed 1 February 2022) of Matsa by Australia-based Sandfire Resources from Trafigura and Mubadala for $1.855 billion.

Matsa – located in Andalucia – is one of Europe's largest copper mines and a substantial polymetallic mining complex comprising 3 underground mines and a 4.7 million tpy central processing facility, with cutting-edge technology and infrastructure, and an extensive resource base with significant growth potential.

The mine started commercial production in 2009 and has received a total of $1.7 billion in capital investment since 2005. The complex includes the Aguas Teñidas, Magdalena and Sotiel underground mines.

It wins this award for the large underwrite of $650 million – an unusually large fully underwritten mining acquisition facility arranged by Natixis, Citibank, Macquarie and Societe Generale as MLAs and underwriters, with Natixis acting as facility agent and technical agent. Syndication was implemented successfully and attracted a large number of lenders.

Despite being a wholly-owned subsidiary, the Matsa acquisition facility was non-recourse to the sponsor, ring-fenced to the assets and cashflows of the target so as not to impact existing and proposed corporate and project development financings within the corporate group.

The debt facility was designed alongside a commodity hedging programme – structured by Natixis, Citibank and Macquarie – that was implemented prior to closing to allow Sandfire to competitively bid for the transaction with an attractive overall financing package.

Sandfire managed to raise on the ASX an amount exceeding its then market capitalisation and win the bid competing with larger bidders, transforming Sandfire from a single producing asset mining company to an established intermediate copper producer with several producing mines.

Renewable Energy Deal of the Year – Solar

Aquila Clean Energy's €1 billion financing

This landmark build-to-sell €1 billion financing of a 2.6GW portfolio of renewable energy projects across Spain and Portugal is the first of its kind.

The Spanish assets are in Castilla y León, Comunidad Valenciana, Andalucía, Cantabria, Castilla-La Mancha and Murcia; while the Portuguese assets are in Coimbra, Evora and Leiria.

The debt was arranged across 4 sub-portfolios (HoldCos) and the short-term construction development financing also breaks new ground for the EIB as one of its biggest loans granted under a project finance structure.

All told, this financing sets a new benchmark for construction development financing of renewable energy projects to support Europe's energy transition.

The financing consists of a €400 million credit from the EIB and €600 million from the commercial lenders. For the total project cost of more than €2 billion, the remaining amount comes from funds managed by Aquila Capital and from its capital.

For the construction facility, Santander acted as the facility and security agent. NatWest was documentation agent and KfW IPEX-Bank was hedging documentation agent. BNP Paribas, ING, Intesa SanPaolo (Luxembourg) and Banco Sabadell further supported the facility. Glas SAS in Frankfurt acted as administration agent.

The pipeline consists of more than 50 projects of predominately solar PV and onshore wind assets with a total electricity generation capacity of 2.6GW, a volume equivalent to the annual consumption of around 1.4 million households and will have an estimated yield of 5.3 terawatt hours per year.

Renewable Energy Deal of the Year

Project Eolmed Floating Offshore Wind, France

A long way from being the largest renewable energy transaction to make it to financial close in the 2022 calendar year, at 30MW EolMed Floating Offshore Wind Farm is humble in stature, standing out more for the direction of travel in France.

the pilot floating offshore wind farm was launched in December 2016 following a call for projects launched by ADEME (Agence de L'Environnement et de La Maitrise de L'Energie) – the French environment and energy management agency.

The French government selected the proposal submitted by Eolmed to develop a pilot project off the coast of Gruissan in the Mediterranean Sea.

As it progressed through the system, the European Commission in February 2019 decided it could support the project – both with investment aid and operating aid – in line with EU State aid rules.

The pilot wind farm – being developed by Qair, TotalEnergies and BW Ideol – will have a total capacity of 30MW, with 3 Vestas wind turbines of 10MW each in 50-90 metre of water. Construction started in autumn 2022.

The team worked over 2021 and 2022 on the financing of the project through long-term credit facilities – direct EIB loans and commercial banking facilities – with financial support from ADEME for the construction phase.

The financing was signed at the end of April 2022.

Power Deal of the Year – Transmission

NeuConnect Interconnector, Germany UK

An impressive deal on many levels, not just as the first direct link between UK and Germany's electricity grids – the NeuConnect Interconnector – reached financial close in July 2022, and it is given credit as a deal supporting post-Brexit cooperation on energy policies.

The project, which is slated to start operations in 2028, will ensure better utilisation of the 2 countries' offshore wind capacities by creating a route for electricity export and import to both markets.

It will feature 725km of underground and subsea cables, allowing 1.4GW of electricity to travel in either direction.

It also includes converter stations in the UK and Germany. On the UK end, it will have a grid interface on the Isle of Grain (Kent), connecting to the National Grid ESO network; while in Germany it will interface with Tennet's electricity network near Fedderwarden (Wilhelmshaven).

Cable laying started in Q4 2022, while work on the substations gets underway this year.

NeuConnect will reduce Europe-wide emissions (including GB) by a total of 16 MtCO2 over its first 25 years of operation. This is equivalent to removing around 400,000 cars from the road.

With 1.4GW capacity and £2.4 billion of private investment, NeuConnect is the single largest Anglo-German infrastructure project, and it will carry enough electricity to power up to 1.5 million homes over the life of the project.

Power Deal of the Year

Riverside 2 Waste-to-Energy Plant, UK

One of the largest and most efficient energy from waste (EfW) plants in the UK and an impressive follow-on to the primary facility, Riverside 2 is a worthy winner of the Power award.

It is a critical asset for London and south east England given both the undersupply of EfW capacity and the base load power export that it will offer.

Riverside 2 is notable as the largest greenfield EfW development and financing for at least 5 years. However, there are a number of aspects that sets the transaction apart.

Owing to the strength of Cory as an operator and the unique strategic location on the Thames, lenders recognised the waste market available to the project. The financing was secured with a materially reduced balance of contracted cashflows (well below 50%) compared to EfW precedents.

Despite this, the financing achieved key terms (leverage and pricing) at more attractive levels than those precedents. This was achieved while navigating significant financial market and supply chain disruption during Q2/Q3 2022 which necessitated enhanced due diligence on the EPC contract by lenders.

Additionally, the project has been structured to benefit from co-location with the existing Riverside 1 facility. These benefits include sharing of critical infrastructure as well as pooled river assets and operational personnel.

However, they are structured as independent non-recourse project financings which do not cross-collateralise. This arrangement allowed the company and lenders to benefit from the operational synergies of the 2 projects without requiring the existing financing of Riverside 1 to be reconfigured.

With a 30% net energy conversion efficiency, Riverside 2 will rank among the most efficient EfW facilities in the UK. This, combined with the lowest Nitrogen Oxides emissions in the UK EfW fleet, will make Riverside 2 a market leader in the sector in terms of sustainability. The project will reinforce Cory’s relevance as a key enabler of moving from landfill to a lower carbon way of processing waste in London.

DC Advisory ran a competitive financing process, competing different structures and pools of liquidity across bank lenders and European / US private placement. The final bank group is a mix of experienced EfW lenders and new entrants to the sector – like Lloyds.

PPP Deal of the Year

CEGeLog PPP, France

CEGeLog Military PPP – Contrat d'Externalisation pour la Gestion des Logements Domaniaux du Ministère des Armée – reached financial close on Valentine's Day 2022 achieving a market first in France for a multi-billion-Euro project that managed to avoid market volatility from Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

The CEGeLog project involves the award of an external contract for the management of state-owned housing for the Armed Forces. The project has a price tag of around €7 billion ($7.9bn) over the lifetime of the concession, and a primary deal value of €1.5 billion ($1.7bn).

Slightly more than €1.3 billion of debt was raised against the project with the French procuring authority dusting off the seldom-used (in a PPP context) Dailly guarantee to wrap a portion of the financing. Equity injected in to CEGeLog amounted to €171 million.

Under the CEGeLog concession, Nové – a subsidiary of Eiffage and Arcade VYV – is responsible for the servicing and maintenance of the entire French Ministry of Defence's housings portfolio as well as for the improvement of its energy performance, with the renovation of nearly 8,000 housing units and the construction of around 3,000 new.

Nearly 4,000 additional homes currently managed by other service providers will gradually be integrated during the contract for renovation. Nové will also be in charge of rental management and relations with residents.

The project relates to classic renovation and construction works and the usual management of a real estate portfolio, but it is unusual due to the scale of the concession – covering as it does the whole French metropolitan territory.

This was a challenging deal to close as it was difficult to gather accurate information on the assets – let alone the complexity of the financing structure.

Further, it involved the adoption of laws – in particular those relating to social housing – which have a critical impact on the revenues of the project.

Telecoms Deal of the Year

Telenet – Pillar, Germany

This transaction provided the sponsors with ownership of 100% of Telenet's passive infrastructure and tower assets – a nationwide footprint of 3,322 sites in Belgium with an overall tenancy ratio of 1.2x and 1.6x considering towers only. And it's just a little bit unusual...

Sponsors entered into and will derive most revenues from a long-term master lease agreement (MLA) with Telenet, which includes a well-defined build-to-suit strategy, with a minimum of 475 sites to be committed over the next 8 years.

The long-term operating model is based on a light touch O&M approach with strategic control over the estate management.

The financing includes a €310 million, 7-year senior debt package split into a €215 million Facility A (7x leverage); a €80 million capex facility; a €15 million revolving credit facility (RCF); and a 7-year €90 million junior facility (3x leverage).

The transaction closed in June 2022 with 2 banks underwriting, and syndication closing in August. The syndication process was such a success it was significantly oversubscribed and it let the lenders place 100% of the junior facility before financial close, while BNP Paribas scaled back to its desired final take.

Refinance Deal of the Year – PPP

Niguarda Hospital Refinancing, Italy

The refi by Vauban Infrastructure Partners in October 2022 on the debt associated with Progeni – the concession for the construction and management of Niguarda Hospital of Milan – wins the PPP award.

The primary financing of this Milan hospital closed in the summer of 2007 with the SPV acquired by Vauban late in 2020.

The refinancing is comprised of 2 tranches provided by Societe Generale, Crédit Agricole, and BPER Banca through a club deal.

Tranche A refinances the outstanding debt, and Tranche B makes available a top-up financing. Both tranches represent a large refinancing amount, on top of which BPER also provides for a new performance bond line. The lending pool also makes available a DSRF, replacing the existing DSRA.

The senior debt facility has an extended door-to-door maturity with a reduced tail vis-à-vis end of concession.

In addition, the financing has been structured as a social loan – a sustainability-linked loan that requires proceeds to be applied to a specific social purpose and seek to achieve positive social outcomes with defined target populations – confirming the commitment of CIF III, Progeni and the lenders to social responsibility and sustainable value creation.

This operation – which is part of Vauban's value creation programme – is improving the initially back-ended yield profile of the asset and will provide the limited partners of CIF III with an exceptional distribution expected as soon as Q4 2022.

With the closing of this transaction, Vauban creates significant value for CIF III investors, with an exceptional distribution expected in Q4 2022, yield optimisation with a post-refinancing business plan.

Refinance Deal of the Year – Offshore Wind

Gemini Offshore Wind Farm, Netherlands

In October 2022, Gemini reached another key milestone by amending its senior and subordinated debt, competitively repricing the hedge and fully replacing all reserve accounts to debt service reserve facilities.

The 600MW offshore wind farm located 85km off the Dutch coast in the North Sea has cropped up in IJGlobal's news service for years on end having originally reached financial close mid-May 2014. It has been operational since May 2017.

Over the course of the years, it has undergone a number of refinancings and restructures and the latest one – the 2022 refinance – is being celebrated with this award.

This transaction involved the amendment to a senior, multi-tranche staple financing package provided by 20 banks, which included a covered tranche guaranteed by EKF – Denmark's export credit agency and tranches provided by EIB.

The amendment to the financing package consisted of – among others – a repricing and resizing of the debt, repricing of the hedges, replacement of part of the commercial lenders and fully replacing all reserve accounts by debt service reserve facilities (including a DSRF provided by EIB).

It evidences the continuous development and maturity of the offshore wind market.

Refinance Deal of the Year – Transport

Alpha Trains Refinance, Luxembourg

The €548 million Alpha Trains refi closed late November 2022 and involved the raise of a combination of senior and HoldCo level secured bank debt within its existing common terms financing platform.

The financing enables Alpha Trains to refi existing debt, finance new build rolling stock and restructure the group by bringing its subsidiary Alpha Trains OSK into the financing platform.

The entirety of the debt comprises "green" finance, in line with Alpha Trains' sustainability framework.

Shaun Mills, chief executive of the Alpha Trains Group, said at the time of financial close: "Despite the current market volatility, we were able to successfully raise new HoldCo debt and refinance senior debt, both at very attractive terms and conditions with the quality of our underlying business being recognised by new and existing lenders.

"This evidences our strong and resilient business model, our professionalism, and our strong commitment to sustainability."

This deal brought an interesting group of lenders to the table across 3 tranches – a senior green term loan valued at €90 million; a green capex facility weighing in at €258 million; and a green HoldCo term loan of €200 million.

Refinance Deal of the Year – Rolling Stock

Railpool Refinance 2022, Germany

Railpool – one of Europe's largest rolling stock leasing companies – in May 2022 secured a €1.07 billion loan to refinance existing debt and fund expansion plans.

Slightly more than €500 million of the new facility is being used to refinance existing debt and the remainder has been set aside to facilitate further growth.

The debt was underwritten by a group of 10 lenders and was structured across a bank debt facility and a couple of bond solutions. Crédit Agricole acted as sole debt adviser, sole green adviser and sole placement agent.

In addition to being one of Europe's largest rolling stock lessors, Railpool operates more than 400 electric locomotives and 148 passenger vehicles across 17 European countries.

This deal reaffirms the 2014 established relationship between Crédit Agricole, Railpool and its shareholders – GIC and Palladio.

Karl Ulrich-Clausen, managing director for structured finance for rail in Germany, said at the time of financial close: "As a partner of Railpool since years, we look forward to continuing being part of the company's strategic and green development.

"In a challenging market environment due to the geopolitical situation, we – together with all partners and investors involved – have successfully implemented a solid basis for the further growth of the company."

Refinance Deal of the Year – Oil & Gas

Dunkerque LNG Refinance, France

The refi of the Dunkirk LNG regasification terminal wins in the O&G category as a complex transaction that includes ESG features and several tranches financed by a pool of international financing institutions.

The Dunkerque facility – the second largest LNG terminal in continental Europe – reached financial close in early April 2022 on the €800 million refi that is designed with a view to consolidation and expansion.

Dunkerque LNG involves a highly sophisticated financing structure with a short-term bullet loan of €400 million, and a mix of long-term debt with an amortizing loan and a bond issuance for €400 million.

More than 15 financing institutions – including US bondholders and international lenders – were involved in the transaction.

The facility occupies a 56 hectare site alongside Dunkirk's western harbour and it has a jetty ready to accommodate vessels from 5.000 cubic metres up to the world's largest Qmax LNG carriers. It is also capable of unloading at a maximum flow rate of 14,000 cubic metres per hour and 8,800 cubic metres per hour for reloading.

It boasts 3 storage tanks – each capable of storing 200,000 cubic metres of LNG at -162°C – as well as 10 regasifiers to raise the temperature of the LNG and enable it to return to its natural gas state ready to be sent out into the supply network.

The facility also includes a 5km tunnel between the discharge canal of the Gravelines nuclear power plant and the terminal – to carry some of the heated cooling water discharged by the power plant for use in reheating the LNG in the ORVs.

Dunkerque LNG terminal will have an annual regasification capacity of 13 billion cubic metres of gas, sufficient to meet around 20% of annual consumption in France and Belgium.

While being the second largest LNG terminal in Europe, it is also the only one to be connected directly to 2 markets – France and Belgium – using 2 separate pipelines.