

05 Jan 2017 | Italy

**Antonio Fabrizio**

## Italian EUR 125m project bond refi reaches financial close

A EUR 131m refinancing of Italian solar assets owned by Quercus and Swiss Life reached financial close last month, it has emerged.

The hybrid refinancing comprised a project bond issuance of EUR 125m and an additional bank loan of EUR 6m.

The project is thought to be one of the largest project bonds to be issued in Italy's renewable sector.

The issuer is Azienda Solare Italiana (ASI). It was previously known as Antin Solar Investments, but was renamed following the sale to a joint venture of Quercus Assets Selection and Swiss Life in early 2016.

Natixis acted as arranger, financial advisor, bookrunner and transaction agent for the project bond. It also provided the bank ancillary facilities, which included a liquidity facility and a tax facility.

The new maturity of the bond is 13.5 years.

Natixis said in a statement that the refinancing has enabled ASI "to decrease its overall cost of debt by more than 1% due to a favourable pricing of the fixed-rate bond and the floating rate tranche."

Investors in the new project bond were Aviva, AXA and SCOR Global Investments, it is understood.

Natixis and the three institutional investors were advised by Ashurst (legal), OST Energy (technical), Deloitte (tax) and AON (insurance). KPMG was model auditor. ASI was advised by Gianni Origoni Grippo Cappelli & Partners (legal).

The project was previously refinanced in 2014. In that deal, previous owner Antin Solar Investments issued a dual-tranche bond with a EUR 20m fixed-rate tranche and a EUR 65m floating-rate tranche, both with a 14-year maturity.

The underlying assets are a portfolio of solar plants totalling 85MW. They comprise 11 plants located in the Lazio, Molise, Apulia and Sicily regions of Italy. All plants are fully constructed, connected to the grid and have been operating since 2011.

