

Financials

Antin raises €3.6bn infrastructure assets fund

JAVIER ESPINOZA — LONDON

Antin Infrastructure Partners, which owns significant UK gas supply pipelines, has amassed one of the largest funds targeting European infrastructure assets since the financial crisis as yield-hungry investors look for alternative assets in a low interest rate environment.

Antin's €3.6bn fund was raised in less than five months and has exceeded the original target of €3bn. The total is nearly double the figure the private equity group raised in 2007.

The group, which also owns RoadChef — a UK motorway services operator —

has already acquired 15 different companies, deploying €3.2bn across two previous funds in four infrastructure sectors, including energy and transport.

Antin's fund is one of the largest pools raised for European infrastructure deals since 2007, according to data provider Prequin. Macquarie, the Australian bank, raised €4bn for infrastructure in September last year, while Ardian raised €2.65bn in January.

Large investors, typically life insurers and pension funds, have been struggling to invest their money as they trade in a low interest rate economy. But certain asset classes, including infrastructure projects, typically yield them higher

returns. Infrastructure funds attracted \$44bn last year compared with \$51bn this year so far, surpassing the 2007 peak of \$44bn, according to Prequin.

Investors are turning to Europe as they hope to cash in on renewed political interest in infrastructure. Europe-focused pools have drawn in \$13.7bn so far, compared with \$4.8bn in 2006.

Following the UK's vote to leave the EU, the UK has approved the expansion of Heathrow airport and the building of a second high-speed rail line. The appetite for infrastructure is also growing in the US, where president-elect Donald Trump wants to rebuild the country's motorways, bridges and tunnels.