



MARKET TEASER

Call for Expression of Interest
Future Competitive Award of Rail Public Service

Link to official prior information notice: <https://ted.europa.eu/en/notice-detail/372787-2026>

Introduction

The Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MIE) of Albania, in coordination with Albanian Railways (Hekurudha Shqiptare – HSH) has made public their intentions to award a public service contract for public passenger transport services by rail and published a prior information notice in the Official Journal of the European Union.

That information notice refers to this document, that contains a detailed description of the services that are the subject of the contract to be awarded, as well as the type and the duration of the contract.

Operators may express their interest within 60 days following the publication of the information notice.

The call to expression of interest aims to refine the procurement approach and ensure a transparent, competitive, and efficient tender process.

Background Information

Policy reforms overview

Albania is aligning its transport policies and legislation with EU standards as part of its EU accession process. This includes adopting the EU's *acquis communautaire* related to transport, particularly rail transport.

The rail sector is regulated by the Albanian government, with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy overseeing policy and strategic direction. The Albanian Railways (Hekurudha Shqiptare) is the state-owned enterprise responsible for rail operations and infrastructure maintenance. New restructuring of the HSH foresees the establishment of two unbundled companies, infrastructure manager (IM) and a railways services operator.

Railway infrastructure network modernization

Albania's rail network spans approximately 420 kilometers, primarily consisting of single-track lines and it is shown in Figure 1. The network is under modernization by:

1. Tirana - Durrës (including the link to Tirana International Airport): Scheduled to be completed by Q3 2027, this line will be modernized with financing secured through an EBRD loan and a WBIF grant.

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This part of the network forms part of the Mediterranean Core TEN-T and will be the first to see operational rail passenger services under the Public Service Contract to be awarded following this procedure.

2. Vorë to Hani Hotit (Bajze, Montenegro border):

This line, part of the Mediterranean Core Corridor and Western Balkans Core Network (Rail Route 2), is scheduled for modernization by the end of 2031, with funding through IFI loans and a WBIF grant.

The Passenger service – Public Service Contract to be awarded following this procedure is expected to extend to this line once completed.

3. Durrës-Rrogozhinë:

Modernization of this line, which is part of Corridor VIII and the Mediterranean Core Corridor (since 2023), is scheduled for modernization by the end of 2029. Rest of the railway line towards North Macedonia (Rrogozhinë – Pogradec) will be phased over the period 2028-2032. The Passenger service contract - Public Service Contract to be awarded following this procedure may be expected to extend to this line once completed.



Figure 1. Railway network and TEN-T corridors

Key routes include the Durrës - Tiranë line, the Durrës - Vlorë line, and the Durrës - Shkodër line.

Territorial coverage of the services to be procured

The base rail services contract package will start with the operation in the Durrës – Tirana – Tirana International Airport (TIA) corridor, with potential future extensions to Hani Hotit (Montenegro border) and Pogradec (North Macedonia border). This region covers key urban and economic hubs in Albania, including:

- Albania's largest cities, Tirana (the capital) and Durrës (a major port city), with a combined population of over 1 million;
- Economic Characteristics: The corridor is a vital economic axis, connecting Albania's main port (Durrës) with its capital and the international airport, with high rates of growth in

traffic in parallel with the booming tourist industry;

- The development of TEN-T corridors, particularly Corridor VIII (linking the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea) and the Mediterranean Corridor, will enhance regional connectivity, reduce transit times, and boost trade flows. For TOCs, this represents a unique opportunity to enter a growing market with strong government and EU support, offering potential for long-term profitability through Public Service Contracts (PSCs) and future expansion into cross-border services. Albania's strategic location, coupled with its commitment to rail modernization, makes it an attractive investment for operators seeking to establish a foothold in the Western Balkans.

Detailed description of services to be procured

The envisaged services amount to 1.1 million train kilometers (with empty runs) at start of operations. With future extensions to other routes, it is expected to rise to around 4 million train kilometers for 2036.

The expected services are summarized in the table below, including an immediate base services package and its potential subsequent extensions.

Service	Distance Km	Travel time	Opening year	Services per workday	Number of train sets (EMUs) ex- pected*	Train-km / year
PSC Basic Services Package				118	4 (6)	1 019 458.14
Tirana-Durres	37.9	36:22	2027	44	2	606 907.40
Tirana-Airport	15.4	19:47	2027	74	2	412 550.74
Potential PSC Extension Packages				48	8 (12)	4 000 000
Tirana-Hani Hotit	120	01:30:00	2030	Two pair every two hours ¹	4	2 500 000
Durres-Pogradec	151	03:15:00	2035	Pair every two hours	4	1 500 000

Note: the above values are preliminary non-binding estimates. * - Reserves not included, for basic PSC two additional EMUs for reserve is needed, estimation given in the brackets.

The proposed service area is illustrated in the map below, highlighting key routes and locations, including Durrës, Tirana, and Tirana International Airport (TIA), with future extensions to Hani Hotit and Pogradec. The characteristics of the modernized lines will be operational for 120 km/h speeds, with reconstructed stations along the line. The traffic management system will be ERTMS Level 1, with possible future upgrade to ERTMS Level 2.

Passenger stations are also being modernized and the modernization of a maintenance base is soon to be tendered for construction in Shkózet station. Maintenance arrangements will be subject of discussions with interested operators.

Just as maintenance base, HSH will soon tender the electrification works of the newly reconstructed line.

¹One pair every two hours from Tirana other pair from Durres

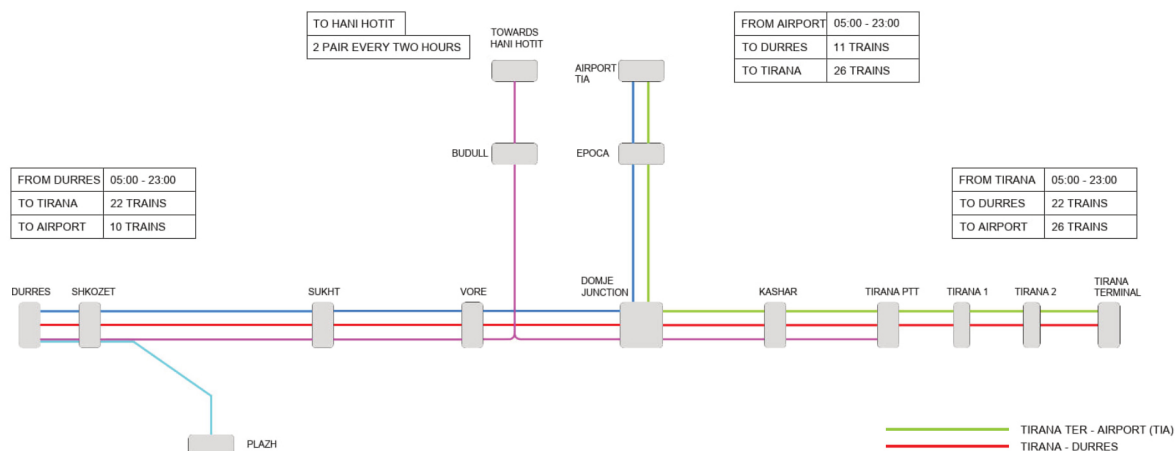


Figure 2. Map of the proposed service area

Rolling stock

The rolling stock shall be provided by the operator. Ideally, passenger services will be operated using Electric Multiple Units (EMUs), although other rolling stock may be considered. Both new and secondhand rolling stock will be accepted, provided they meet the required technical and operational standards. Electrically powered rolling stock should be compatible with 25 kV 50 Hz AC electrification. Trainsets should have a maximum length of 100 meters and offer a passenger capacity of 200-250 seated and 200 standing passengers, with a platform height of 550 mm. The rolling stock must be able to operate without the need to turn around at the Airport and Tirana Terminal stations. This means the trainsets should be designed for bidirectional operation, allowing them to move forward and backward efficiently.

Personnel

No obligations regarding the transfer of some of the existing staff in HSH are expected at this stage. The awarded Train operating company is expected to provide the personnel (drivers, on-board staff and potentially also maintenance staff). Other arrangements may be identified in consultation with interested contractors.

Maintenance depot

The Shkzoet rolling stock maintenance depot is intended to service primarily the passenger services under this PSC but it may be available to other operators in case capacity allows it. HSH will build, equip the maintenance workshop and make it available to the potential operator. It is expected that the final arrangements will be defined in consultation with the contractor.

In February 2026, HSH completed the conceptual design of the Shkzoet rolling stock maintenance depot. The tender for detailed design and construction is launched in May 2026. Candidates may indicate their preferred depot model (HSH-operated, operator-operated, third-party ECM, or joint venture) in their presentations.

Main features of the envisaged Contract

Obligations

The awarded TOC/consortium will:

- Operate rail passenger services on Durres – Tirana Ter-

nal, Tirana Terminal – Tirana International Airport (TIA) and Durres – Tirana International Airport and potential extensions to Vore – Hani Hotit and Durres – Pogradec lines;

- Make available rolling stock (new, second-hand or leasing) in good condition for the duration of the contract;
- It is preliminarily envisaged that the awarded TOC/consortium contract will encompass the full maintenance of rolling stock, with specific arrangements yet to be defined.

The contract duration will be determined based on the outcome of the market consultation, taking into account factors such as rolling stock lifecycle, mobilization costs, depot arrangements, and operational sustainability. A range of 10 to 15 years is expected.

Remuneration:

- Gross contract (demand risk will be assumed by the Competent Authority);
- Remuneration calculated based on train x km delivered (availability based);
- Bonus/malus related to punctuality, service quality, possibly bonus for additional demand/percentage of fare collection;
- Possibility of enlarging the delivered services with additional contract packages as the rest of the network is modernized.

Who May Participate in the market consultation?

The tender is expected to allow the participation of consortia, with each consortium likely required to include at least one railway undertaking with experience in performing rail passenger services.

Why should TOCs Participate?

- First-mover advantage in a modernizing, EU-supported rail market;
- Gross cost model – no demand risk (state assumes revenue risk);
- Long-term contract (10–15 years) with extension options;

- Flexible depot models – opportunity to propose own maintenance solutions;
- Potential for network expansion as TEN-T corridors are completed (2030–2035);
- EU-compliant framework – fair, transparent, and competitive.

How to Participate

Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MIE) invites experienced railway undertakings to express interest in performing the services described.

Interested bidders shall send a company/consortium presentation to the addresses below:

- ◇ Zana Josa, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MIE)
info@hekurudha.al
- ◇ Nena Tomovic, Project manager;
nena.tomovic@connecta-ta.eu

The company/consortium presentation should at least contain:

1. Number of passenger train-km performed in each of the five precedent years
2. Country (or countries) of performance of the services (five precedent years).
3. Type of rolling stock operated (five precedent years).
4. Arrangements for the rolling stock (owned, leased, provided by the competent authority or other situations).
5. Arrangements for the maintenance function (in-house, sub-contracted to manufacturer, subcontracted to another third party)

The deadline for submission is 60 days after the publication in the OJEU of the "call for expression of interest".

Interested parties will be invited to a consultation workshop, soon after the "expression of interest" deadline.

Indicative Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Call for expression of interest	27.05.2026
Deadline for submission of expression of interest	31.08.2026
Consultation Workshop Event	Q3 2026 (exact date to be published on MIE website)
Publication of Contract Notice (Tender Launch)	Q4 2026
Expected Start of Passenger Operations	Q4 2027

Contact Information

For further details and to express interest, please contact:

 Zana Josa, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy (MIE)

 info@hekurudha.al

 Nena Tomovic, Project Manager

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We look forward to engaging with the market and shaping the future of rail public service together!



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