

Albanian FA launches domestic club rights tender after ripping up Oversport deal

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The Albanian Football Association (FSHF) has launched an invitation to tender for domestic media rights to club competitions for the 2023-24 to 2025-26 seasons after being forced to go back into the market.

The tender, which covers the territories of Albania and Kosovo, comes a month after the FSHF terminated its contract with Oversport just one year into a three-season deal, claiming the streaming platform had failed to meet payment deadlines or provide broadcasts of sufficient quality.

The new tender covers Albania's top-tier Kategoria Superiore, second-tier Kategoria e Parë, the Albanian Cup (Kupa e Shqipërisë) and Albanian Supercup (Superkupa e Shqipërisë).

For Media Sports Management, the rights consultancy headed by Emanuele Villari, is once again advising the FSHF on the domestic rights sales process, as it did last time around. For Media was also brought in to advise on the international rights sales.

Given the recent termination of the Oversport contract and the fact the 2023-24 season starts on August 19, interested parties have been given only until 3pm (CET) on July 28 to submit their bids to the FSHF's headquarters in Tirana.

The production of matches will be handled by the federation, with the delivery of the HD signal to be provided to the winning bidder ready for broadcast.

Oversight originally acquired rights to the aforementioned competitions for the 2022-23 to 2024-25 seasons in August 2022, six weeks after the tender was issued.

Oversport, which began broadcasting in 2021, had replaced pay-television broadcaster DigitAlb as the broadcaster of domestic football in Albania.

However, the FSHF took decisive action last month, claiming Oversport had not met contractual deadlines for rights payments since January.

In addition, the federation also criticised the quality of the production, which was "below any technical standard and has especially directly affected the operation of the VAR system", while the "editorial stance and journalistic contributions have been outside the requirements of the contract and in many cases even in violation of public morals or the sensibilities of different social groups".

The FSHF is understood to have initiated legal proceedings against the broadcaster.

In response, Oversport accused the FSHF of a "lack of transparency in its activities with pressures that are not in line with the ethical principles that an institution of this level should follow".

It described its rights contract as “in the negotiation phase”.

Upon launch, Oversport promoted itself as a “disruptive media brand” targeted at a next generation audience. It is priced at €7.99 (\$8.86) per month and holds a distribution deal with Tibo, the IPTV platform.

Other football rights in its portfolio in Albania and Kosovo include Italy’s Serie A and the Scottish Premiership, with both deals having been brokered by the Infront agency.