

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Denmark

Introduction

Historically, there has been a strong tradition of providing free legal services in Scandinavia, including in Denmark. Such services have primarily focused on providing advice to citizens with limited financial means and have traditionally been provided by licensed lawyers on a voluntary basis. Since 1827, Danish citizens have been able to obtain state-funded, free legal aid for lawsuits, as long as the citizen has a good reason for taking the case to court and the citizen does not have the financial means to cover court costs (see below for details on income criteria). In addition to this form of free legal aid, in which lawyers are provided with stipends from the state to assist low-income individuals in legal matters, there also exists a private pro bono system in which lawyers can volunteer to provide pro bono legal assistance at legal aid clinics¹ throughout the country. Legal aid has also been available in Denmark for legal issues outside of the court system since 1885, when the first private legal aid office was opened in Copenhagen. This legal aid office, the Copenhagen Legal Aid Office (*Københavns retshjælp*), remains active and is now the largest legal aid office in Denmark.²

Although the provision of free legal services is, to some extent, perceived as a public responsibility, legal clinics are staffed by practicing lawyers and/or law students on a voluntary basis, so the primary barrier is the availability of sufficient volunteers. A study by the Danish Bar and Law Society indicated that, in 2011, only 18% of lawyers regularly engaged in pro bono work.³ No new official data has been identified but the formulation of a new Pro Bono Charter by the Danish Bar and Law Society may lead to an increase in pro bono hours in the coming years. Danish lawyers are not required to complete pro bono work either as a condition of their original licence or as part of their continuing education requirements. In addition, lawyers seeking to offer pro bono legal services can choose to donate their time to NGOs or other private organisations rather than to public legal aid clinics. As a result, though pro bono legal work has historically been strongly supported by the Danish government and Danish society in general, the provision of pro bono legal services is not as established or as widespread as in other jurisdictions, such as the United States.

At a glance

Minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers?	Specific pro bono licence required?	May foreign lawyers practice pro bono?	Insurance required for law firm pro bono?	Insurance required for in-house pro bono?	Rules to limit advertising pro bono work?	Does pro bono work count to CLE credit?	Limitations for in-house lawyers to do pro bono?
No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No

The landscape

¹ References herein to legal aid clinics and/or offices are references to clinics and/or offices (as applicable) that provide pro bono legal assistance.

² Copenhagen Legal Aid (*Københavns retshjælp*), <https://www.retshjaelpen.dk/front-page> (last visited on 17 January, 2025).

³ Danish Bar and Law Society, "Report on Legal Aid in Denmark" (2011).

Professional regulation

1. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services, including any licensing required to provide legal services. Please highlight any differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.

Legal services in Denmark must be provided in accordance with the Rules of the Danish Bar and Law Society (the Rules).⁴ The Rules are promulgated by the Danish Bar and Law Society (*Advokatsamfundet*) and are approved by the Minister for Justice. The supervisory board of the Danish Bar and Law Society, called the General Council, is responsible for the supervision of lawyers and authorised assistant attorneys (i.e., those who are in the process of carrying out practical legal work in furtherance of the provision of basic, verbal legal advice free of charge under Section 323 of the Administration of Justice Act (*Retsplejeloven*)).⁵

According to the Danish Administration of Justice Act, Title VI, Part 12, Section 119, those wishing to practice law in Denmark must:

- be legally competent and not under guardianship pursuant to section 5 or section 7 of the Danish Legal Incapacity and Guardianship Act;
- have not filed for suspension of payments and not be in bankruptcy;
- hold a Danish Bachelor's and Master's degree in Law;
- have carried out practical legal work for at least three years; and
- have completed theoretical basic education and passed an examination "in matters of special importance to the profession of lawyer" as well as passed a practical exam in litigation.⁶

Legal advice may be provided by non-lawyers, but they cannot call themselves *advokat*, which is a protected title. The title requires three years of full-time work in a law firm after obtaining a legal degree from university and passing additional exams.

There is no significant difference in relation to in-house lawyers.

⁴ See <https://www.advokatsamfundet.dk/english/> (last visited on 17 January 2025).

⁵ <https://www.advokatsamfundet.dk/english/> (last visited on 17 January 2025).

⁶ Consolidated Act No. 1261 of 23 October 2007 (hereinafter the "Administration of Justice Act"), Title VI, Part 12, Section 119, as excerpted in the Rules.

<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>Section 323 of the Administration of Justice Act (<i>Retsplejeloven</i>) states that every person has the right to basic, verbal legal advice free of charge. See ll.d.(1) below for more information.</p> <p>In addition, if a person meets certain income eligibility criteria set forth in the Administration of Justice Act section 325, additional free legal assistance is available. See (e)(1) below for more information. This type of free legal advice is distinct from the state financial legal aid system through which solicitors are paid by the state to represent low-income clients and relies on lawyers providing pro bono legal services on a voluntary basis through legal aid clinics.</p> <p>The Administration of Justice Act section 327 limits the provision of Step 2 and Step 3 legal assistance (i.e., regarding actual filed claims) to those cases that have a fair chance of success. However, this criterion is waived for certain types of cases, such as those involving housing or employment. In addition, approximately 90% of Danish citizens hold private insurance that covers legal fees.⁷ If a person holds such insurance, Step 2 and Step 3 assistance is only available if the insurance does not cover the case or to the extent that the costs exceed the insurance coverage.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>No specific licence is required to provide pro bono services, and pro bono is unregulated. In the context of legal clinics where legal fees would be paid by the state (as described above), pro bono legal advice must be given by licensed lawyers or by law students or social work students who are closely supervised by a licensed lawyer.</p>
<p>4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>No, if a person holds a Master's degree in Law from one of the EU Member States or from another country with which the European Community has entered into an agreement that corresponds with a Danish Bachelor's or Master's degree in Law, the person can practice law in Denmark following a trial period during which the person demonstrates sufficient understanding of</p>

⁷ Id.

	<p>Danish procedural law and mastery of the Danish language. This requirement may be waived by the Minister for Justice in order to fulfil Denmark's EU obligations.⁸</p> <p>Only those who have been admitted to practise law may use the title “advokat”.</p>
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	Lawyers in Denmark are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours — any pro bono work is done on a completely voluntary basis.
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	Aspiring lawyers in Denmark are not required to complete a minimum number of pro bono hours. However, hours spent engaging in pro bono legal work can count toward an aspiring lawyer's requirement to engage in practical legal work for three years.
7. Aside from mandatory targets (if any), are there aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association, regulatory body or other body?	There are no mandatory targets for pro bono work. In 2025, the Danish Bar and Law Society formulated a charter that will form the framework for adherence to the Danish pro bono model. It is voluntary for lawyers and law firms that carry out pro bono work whether they want to sign the Charter. The purpose of the Charter is to support the continued dissemination of pro bono work in the legal profession. One of its goals is for signatory firms to try to ensure on average 20 hours of pro bono work per lawyer per year. ⁹
8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Lawyers do not receive any CLE or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked. However, pro bono will count as other legal work during the three-year qualifying period.
<p>9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?</p> <p>If insurance is required, can lawyers meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider, e.g. in partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?</p>	<p>In Denmark, lawyers are required to have professional indemnity legal insurance.</p> <p>Most legal aid offices in Denmark have their own liability insurance that covers the volunteer lawyers.</p> <p>Lawyers generally cannot meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider — this is only permissible if acting as legal candidates (not as an <i>advokat</i>).</p> <p>In addition, a lawyer is covered by their own liability insurance as long as they are acting as a</p>

⁸ The Administration of Justice Act, Title VI, Part 12, Section 135a, as excerpted in the Rules.

⁹ See: <https://www.advokatsamfundet.dk/probono/pro-bono-charter/> (Last viewed on 15 October 2025).

	<p>lawyer. That means that the lawyer’s individual liability insurance will cover any liability in connection with legal aid clinics, as long as the lawyer is acting under his or her title as an <i>advokat</i> (noting that individual specific insurance terms will have restrictions or thresholds).</p>
<p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>	<p>There are no special rules in Denmark that prohibit the advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients. Danish law firms that participate in pro bono work regularly advertise their pro bono work on their websites and/or their social media platforms, often referring to such work as “corporate social responsibility”.</p>
<p>11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?</p>	<p>The primary areas of law that require or present opportunities for pro bono legal services are within the consumer and charity sectors.</p> <p>The primary unmet legal need in Denmark is the availability of lawyers who are willing to volunteer on a pro bono basis in legal aid clinics. Due to reforms in the Danish court system that have resulted in courts being concentrated in the larger cities, law firms have now also concentrated in larger cities, leaving fewer lawyers available to participate in pro bono outside of urban areas in Denmark. In addition, lawyers have become more specialised, and fewer lawyers are comfortable advising on the broad range of legal issues encountered in legal aid offices.¹⁰</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>The main providers of pro bono legal services in Denmark are certain non-profit organisations under the legal schools (such as Københavns Retshjælp, Aarhus Retshjælp, and Studenterrådets Retshjælp) and the bar association, as well as private law firms.¹¹</p> <p>The new Pro Bono Charter¹², launched in 2025 by the Danish Bar Association, creates a common framework for what “pro bono” means in the Danish context, aims to increase awareness, shares best practice, encourages more law</p>

¹⁰ Bettina Lemann Kristiansen, *Legal Aid in Denmark*, in Outsourcing “Legal Aid in the Nordic Welfare States” 99-124 (O. Halvorsen Rønning and O. Hammerslev eds., 2018). Available online at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-46684-2_5#citeas (last visited on 17 January 2025) (hereinafter “Lemann Kristiansen”).

¹¹ For example, see <https://www.advodan.dk/da/om-advodan/arsberetning/> (Last viewed on 16 October 2025).

¹² See <https://www.advokatsamfundet.dk/probono/pro-bono-charter/> (last viewed on 16 October 2025).

	<p>firms/solo practitioners to do pro bono work and measures the number of pro bono hours performed by firms. If a firm / lawyer signs the Charter, they commit to cultivating a firm culture where all lawyers and associate attorneys have the opportunity to do pro bono work. The Charter may lead to increased visibility of pro bono, more lawyers and firms signing up to do pro bono, and more firm-structured pro bono programs (e.g. dedicated pro bono managers or coordinators).</p>
<p>13. Are there any noteworthy examples of how innovative technology or artificial intelligence is being used to enable access to pro bono or otherwise as part of pro bono cases or matters?</p>	<p>None specifically relating to pro bono matters. However, AI and technology tools have the potential to greatly enhance legal pro bono work across Europe by utilizing the framework set by the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689). This regulation requires transparency, risk assessments, and human oversight for high-risk AI systems, while prohibiting certain "unacceptable risk" uses. AI and innovative legal technologies can make pro bono work more efficient by automating routine tasks like document drafting, intake, and legal research, allowing lawyers to concentrate on more complex client needs. Furthermore, these technologies could increase access to justice by providing scalable, low-cost tools such as multilingual chatbots and rights checkers, which could help empower vulnerable groups to understand and assert their legal rights.</p>
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>The primary source of non-governmental pro bono legal advice in Denmark is private entities and non-profit organisations (such as Københavns Retshjælp, Aarhus Retshjælp, and Studenterrådets Retshjælp). These actors often give advice in specific fields of law, for example, refugee rights, trade unions, or tenant associations.</p> <p>There are also global pro bono clearinghouses and legal services providers such as TrustLaw or PILnet.¹³</p> <p>Section 323 of the Administration of Justice Act (<i>Retsplejeloven</i>) states that every person in</p>

¹³ See <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/> and <https://www.pilnet.org/> (Last viewed on 14 October 2025).

Denmark has the right to basic, verbal legal advice free of charge. This is sometimes referred to as “Step 1 assistance” and is akin to a “legal A&E department”.¹⁴

Step 1 legal assistance is limited to verbal advice and is focused on determining whether a person has a viable legal claim and, if so, what are the possibilities for pursuing the claim and what chances there are of receiving further free assistance if a claim is pursued.¹⁵ This basic form of free assistance is available to all citizens regardless of income and is available for all types of legal questions. Step 1 legal assistance is provided by lawyers acting in a voluntary capacity through legal aid clinics (*advokatvagt*).

Public subsidies, generally funded by the VAT charged on legal services, cover some of the office expenses of these legal aid clinics, although many clinics operate without permanent premises, either within the offices of the private law firms that support them or in public buildings like local libraries.

Step 2 and Step 3 legal services are provided by private legal aid offices (*retshjælpskontorer*) to individuals meeting certain income criteria (a total personal income of no more than DKK 385,000 for single persons, DKK 490,000 for married couples, and an increase of DKK 67,000 for each child under the age of 18).¹⁶

Lawyers are paid DKK 1,260 for Step 2 legal assistance and DKK 2,870 for Step 3 legal assistance. Clients are responsible for 25% of the bill, and a public subsidy covers the remaining 75%.¹⁷

Step 2 legal assistance covers extended verbal advice, drawing up documents such as letters, summonses or subpoenas, the settlement of estates in divorces, and simple wills and prenuptial agreements.

Step 3 legal assistance covers disputes where a settlement or compromise is thought to be a possible outcome (i.e., mainly aimed at

¹⁴ Lemann Kristiansen.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ The Danish Ministry of Justice (*Justitsministeriet*), Free Process (Fri Process), <https://www.civilstyrelsen.dk/sagsomraader/fri-proces/ofte-stillede-spoergsmaal> (last visited on 17 January 2025).

¹⁷ <https://www.advokatsamfundet.dk/english/find-a-lawyer/legal-aid/> (last visited 17 January 2025).

	<p>preventing lawsuits).</p> <p>Complaints involving administrative authorities are not eligible for legal aid, as such complaints are expected to be handled by the administrative authorities themselves.¹⁸</p> <p>The three-step legal system in Denmark is separate from any legal assistance provided in the context of a court case, which is subsidised by the state and is available according to the same income criteria as Step 2 and Step 3 legal assistance. In this case, eligible citizens are provided with a lawyer free of charge by the government.</p> <p>These alternative sources of pro bono services seldom have public funding and are therefore not subject to regulations related to the provision of legal aid services, including income criteria. Some require subscription, membership, or payment of fees, while others are free of charge.</p>
15. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign lawyer can register to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?	A couple of options are <i>Advokatrådet</i> (the Danish Bar Association) and <i>Studenterrådets Retshjælp</i> (the student council's legal assistance).
16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?	TrustLaw hosts an annual pro bono awards initiative where all lawyers and firms who work on TrustLaw matters are eligible for various awards.

Acknowledgements

Name of Law Firm: Accura

Name of lawyer(s): Kim Toftgaard and Mark Raboso Ebbesen

Learn more

[Navigate the full Global Pro Bono Guide](#) to explore the global landscape and pro bono practices and opportunities across 100+ jurisdictions.

¹⁸ Administrative Order on Legal Aid Offices 2014 (*Bekendtgørelse nr. 637 af 11/06/2014*).