

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Estonia

Introduction

According to the Estonian Bar Association's Code of Ethics¹, an attorney may provide free (pro bono) legal assistance, and all normal professional and ethical rules apply to such services. The Bar Association encourages doing pro bono work in general, but there are no mandatory targets or requirements for pro bono work. Generally, pro bono legal advice is provided in situations with high social impact, or to individuals experiencing exceptional distress or unfair negative consequences. For example, attorneys can play a crucial role in fostering a more equitable society by providing support to economically disadvantaged families, small non-profit organizations, and other vulnerable groups. Pro bono work is frequently associated with cases where recipients encounter critical life challenges, such as the risk of losing housing, the need for healthcare access, or battling discrimination.² Pro bono legal advice can be provided by any lawyer, but it is mainly provided by law firms or lawyers working in dedicated NGOs.

While pro bono work is appreciated and recognized in Estonia, it encounters several obstacles. The limited size of many law firms may restrict their capacity to provide free legal assistance. Additionally, there is a lack of public awareness regarding pro bono services, leaving many individuals in need unaware of the existence and availability of such support.³

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	Yes	Yes	No	No

The landscape

Professional regulation	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>The rules on the provision of legal services in Estonia are quite liberal. The provision of legal services by attorneys is regulated by the Bar Association Act.⁴ The Act regulates the activities of an attorney, an associate member of the Bar Association, and an attorney of a foreign country.</p>

¹ See <https://cms.advokatuur.ee/app/uploads/2023/10/eetikakoodeksi-kommenteeritud-valjaanne-1.pdf> (Last viewed on 15 October 2025).

² See <https://grandman.ee/en/pro-bono-advocates-social-responsibility-in-estonia/> (Last viewed on 17 October 2025).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Bar Association Act ([Bar Association Act - Riigi Teataja - www.riigiteataja.ee](http://www.riigiteataja.ee)).

	<p>Legal services under the professional name of an attorney may be provided solely by members of the Estonian Bar Association. To be an attorney, one needs a higher education in law, to pass the bar exam, and to become a member of the Bar Association. However, the provision of legal advice by non-attorneys is generally not regulated, and only very few limitations apply.</p> <p>In-house counsel, who are employed by a company and therefore not viewed as independent and who are not members of the Bar Association, cannot be attorneys simultaneously, so their activities as in-house counsel are generally not regulated.</p>
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>According to § 17 (3) of the Bar Association's Code of Ethics,⁵ an attorney may provide pro bono legal assistance. However, there are no special regulations governing it. Generally, the same requirements apply to pro bono advice as to any other legal services provided by attorneys.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>In addition to the usual certification requirement for attorneys, no licence is needed to provide pro bono legal services.</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>Foreign-qualified attorneys generally can practise in Estonia without a local Estonian qualification (beyond their foreign qualification to practise law) and do not need any additional licence to provide pro bono legal services.</p>
<p>5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?</p>	<p>Attorneys are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours.</p>
<p>6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?</p>	<p>Aspiring attorneys are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become attorneys.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>No, there are no targets, but the Bar Association encourages doing pro bono work in general.</p>

⁵ Bar Association's Code of Ethics ([Eetikakoodeks - Eesti Advokatuur - advokatuur.ee](https://www.eetikakoodeks.ee) (in Estonian)).

8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Attorneys do not receive any CLE or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked.
9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers? 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?	According to the Bar Association Act, an attorney must have professional liability insurance. This applies also to pro bono advice. Activities of in-house lawyers are not regulated, so they are not required to have professional liability insurance.
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	Apart from the standard requirements for attorney advertisement and general advertising requirements, no additional requirements apply. In addition to the requirements of the Advertising Act and the Consumer Protection Act, unfair competition, i.e., unfair business practices and actions contrary to good morals and customs, are prohibited. Advertising must comply with the requirements of the professional ethics of attorneys Advertising must not include the client’s name or information obtained by the lawyer in connection with the provision of legal assistance without the client’s consent.
11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?	Estonia provides state-funded legal advice to all persons who have legal needs unmet by the market. This state-funded legal advice caters for the majority of legal needs. However, it was reported that the Estonian Bar Association considers state legal aid to be underfunded and as such, lawyers are turning

	<p>down public legal aid contracts.⁶ This may lead to an unmet need amongst individuals who cannot afford to pay for legal services.</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>Since there are no limitations, the pro bono legal advice can be provided by any attorney, but is mainly provided by law firms or lawyers working in dedicated NGOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2009, the Estonian Bar Association has been cooperating with the Good Deed Foundation. The Bar Association supports the foundation in finding attorneys to advise on the initiatives of the Good Deed Foundation on legal matters on a pro bono basis. Each year, up to 10 different law firms advise the foundation and its initiatives.⁷ • The Estonian Chamber of Disabled People, together with the Legal Services Bureau (ÕTB), started offering legal counseling services to people with moderate, severe, or profound disabilities in 2017.⁸ • With the support of the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the Union of Estonian Pensioners' Associations.⁹ • The website juristaitab.ee has been managed by OÜ HUGO since 2017, with the support of the Ministry of Justice. OÜ HUGO offers free legal aid to people living in Estonia. Legal counseling is available through meeting, email, and video calls. For a co-payment of €5, the recipient is entitled to two free hours and three discounted hours per calendar year, subject to an income threshold requirement.¹⁰
<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>The website hugo.legal¹¹ also provides the option to conduct legal counseling online. Furthermore, hugo.legal offers a tool that provides solutions for simpler legal questions.</p> <p>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</p>

⁶ See <https://news.err.ee/1608785593/bar-association-estonia-buying-legal-aid-three-times-under-market-price> (Last viewed on October 2025).

⁷ [Tippadvokaadid muudavad maailma professionaalsete vabatahtlikena - Eesti Advokatuur - advokatuur.ee](https://www.juristaitab.ee/et) (in Estonian).

⁸ [Õigusnõu erivajadustega inimestele | Justiitsministeerium - www.just.ee](https://www.just.ee) (in Estonian).

⁹ [Tasuta õigusnõu eakatele | Justiitsministeerium - www.just.ee](https://www.just.ee) (in Estonian).

¹⁰ <https://www.juristaitab.ee/et> (in Estonian).

¹¹ <https://hugo.legal/> (in Estonian).

	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>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal advice for people with special needs¹² • Free legal advice for the elderly¹³ • juristaitab.ee • hugo.legal • Estonian Bar Association website¹⁴ <p>There are also global pro bono clearinghouses and legal services providers such as TrustLaw or PILnet.¹⁵</p>
<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?</p>	<p>Estonian Bar Association website. However, none of the local organisations offer a dedicated registration or structured way to inform about opportunities to provide pro bono legal advice.</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>There are not any awards, lists, or rankings related to pro bono work in Estonia specifically. There are global pro bono awards.</p>

Acknowledgements

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Name of lawyer(s): Kaupo Lepasepp and Maria Lahe

Learn more

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

¹² <https://www.just.ee/kohtud-ja-oigusteenused/oigusabi/oigusabi-erivajadustega-inimestele> (in Estonian).

¹³ <https://www.just.ee/kohtud-ja-oigusteenused/oigusabi/oigusabi-eakatele> (in Estonian).

¹⁴ Homepage - Eesti Advokatuur - advokatuur.ee.

¹⁵ See <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/> and <https://www.pilnet.org/> (Last viewed on 14 October 2025).