

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Germany

Introduction

Germany's pro bono tradition is relatively nascent compared to Anglo-American jurisdictions. The institutionalization and growth of pro bono work in Germany have been gradual due to two main factors. First, the robust state-funded legal aid system ensures free or low-cost advice for low-income individuals, leading to the perception that pro bono services are unnecessary.¹

Second, legislative conditions related to charging fees below statutory rates or waiving them altogether have historically been viewed as prohibiting certain pro bono activities. Public opinion now views pro bono legal services positively, with increased attention and support due to the establishment of initiatives and associations like Pro Bono Deutschland e.V., university law clinics, the European Pro Bono Initiative and Germany Pro Bono Day², as well as the influence of international law firms. There is still a need for better infrastructure and strategic support for pro bono in German law firms, as well as sustainable engagement in pro bono collaborations between firms and non-profit organisations.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	Yes

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 provision of legal services is regulated by several key laws and rules, which include the (1) Federal Lawyer's Act (<i>Bundesrechtsanwaltsordnung</i>, "BRAO")⁴, which sets out the general provisions for admission to the bar and the practice of law in Germany; (2) Federal Attorneys Services Act (<i>Rechtsdienstleistungsgesetz</i>, "RDG")⁵, which specifies who is authorized to provide various</p>

¹ <https://pbi.trust.org/data/?year=2022> (last visited on 31 October 2025).

² <https://www.pilnet.org/european-pro-bono-week-2025/> (last visited on 31 October 2025).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/brao/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

⁵ <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/rdg/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

types of out-of-court legal services; (3) Ordinance for the Legal Profession (*Berufsordnung für Rechtsanwälte*, "BORA")⁶, which establishes rules for professional conduct of lawyers; and (4) Federal Attorneys Compensation Act (*Rechtsanwaltsvergütungsgesetz*, "RVG")⁷, which provides statutory fees applicable unless an alternative fee arrangement, such as hourly rates, is agreed upon with clients.

These laws and rules apply to private practice lawyers, as well as in-house counsel (*Syndikusrechtsanwälte*).

However, in-house counsel are restricted under sec. 46 para. 5 sentence 1 BRAO to advising and representing only in legal matters of their employer.

For foreign-qualified lawyers from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland practicing in Germany, the Act on the Activities of European Attorneys (*Gesetz über die Tätigkeit europäischer Rechtsanwälte in Deutschland*, "EuRAG")⁸ is applicable.

Pro bono legal services may also be provided by non-lawyers, such as law students, but they must be supervised by a qualified lawyer as per sec. 6 para. 2 RDG.⁹

The provision of legal services is regulated by a structured process¹⁰ that requires individuals to become fully licensed lawyers (*Rechtsanwälte*). This involves completing two major state examinations (*Staatsexamen*) and a two-year paid, practical legal clerkship (*Referendariat*) under supervision. After successfully passing both exams, individuals must apply for admission to the local Bar Association (*Rechtsanwaltskammer*). As part of this application, they must provide proof of their qualifications, a clean criminal record, and professional liability insurance.

⁶ https://www.brak.de/fileadmin/02_fuer_anwaelte/berufsrecht/BORA_Stand_01.10.2022.pdf (last visited on February 16, 2025).

⁷ <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/rvg/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

⁸ <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/eurag/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

⁹ https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/rdg/_6.html (last visited on February 16, 2025).

¹⁰ <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/brao/index.html> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

Regulatory landscape for pro bono

<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>There are no explicit laws or rules regulating pro bono legal services in Germany. The provision of pro bono legal services falls under the same rules and regulations as the provision of fee-based legal services.¹¹</p> <p>While sec. 49b para. 1 sentence 1 BRAO¹² generally prohibits fees lower than those prescribed by the RVG, flexibility exists for indigent clients (sec. 49b para. 1 sentence 2 BRAO) and out-of-court legal services (sec. 4 para. 1 RVG¹³).</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>Lawyers do not need a separate license to provide pro bono legal services beyond their admission to the local bar.</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 lawyers permitted to practice law in Germany do not need an additional license for 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>There are no legal requirements for a minimum number of pro bono hours for lawyers in Germany.</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 lawyers are not required to complete pro bono hours to become licensed in Germany.</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>There are no mandatory or aspirational pro bono hours targets set by the local bar, regulatory bodies, or Pro Bono Deutschland in Germany.</p>
<p>8. Do lawyers receive any "Continuing Legal Education" (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>	<p>There is no concept of "Continuing Legal Education" (CLE) or any equivalent requirement for maintaining the general license to practice law in Germany. While pro bono is not formally credited in any regulatory sense, some firms treat pro bono time as billable-equivalent hours</p>

¹¹ <https://www.pro-bono-deutschland.org/en/pro-bono-legal-advice/> (last visited on 2 November 2025).

¹² <https://dejure.org/gesetze/BRAO/49b.html> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

¹³ https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/rvg/_4.html (last visited on February 16, 2025).

	(counted toward internal performance targets) or recognise pro bono hours as professional development in internal appraisal frameworks.
Insurance and advertising	
<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>Lawyers are generally required to maintain professional liability insurance as per sec. 51 BRAO¹⁴, which typically covers pro bono legal work¹⁵, although coverage specifics depend on the individual insurance policy.</p> <p>In-house counsel are restricted under sec. 46 para. 5 sentence 1 BRAO to advising and representing only in legal matters of their employer. If an in-house lawyer wants to do pro bono work independently, they must ensure they have their own professional liability insurance that covers such activities; or they could partner with a law firm or pro bono organisation (like a legal clinic) that provides umbrella insurance for volunteers.</p>
<p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>	<p>Lawyers can advertise their pro bono services and hours but need client consent to name pro bono clients (cf. sec. 6 para. 2 BORA¹⁶). In general, advertising by lawyers must provide factual information and not solicit specific assignments as per sec. 43b BRAO.¹⁷</p>
Pro bono practice and culture	
<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>While there are legal aid schemes in Germany (<i>Beratungs- und Prozesskostenhilfe</i>)¹⁸, numerous opportunities for pro bono legal services exist, particularly in contract law, refugee and asylum law, and for non-profit organizations in areas like corporate law, labour law, insurance law, subsidy and procurement law, data protection law, trademark law, non-profit law and tax law. Unmet legal needs are prevalent among low-</p>

¹⁴ https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/brao/_51.html (last visited on February 16, 2025).

¹⁵ Dux, AnwBl 2 / 2011, 90 (96), https://anwaltsrecht.uni-koeln.de/fileadmin/sites/anwaltsrecht/Aufsaeetze/Dux_02-2011__90ff.pdf (last visited on February 16, 2025).

¹⁶ <https://dejure.org/gesetze/BORA/6.html> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

¹⁷ https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/brao/_43b.html (last visited on February 16, 2025).

¹⁸ The Federal Ministry of Justice provides a good overview in the following document: https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/DE/Broschueren/Beratungs_und_Prozesskostenhilfe.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=14 (last visited on February 16, 2025).

	income individuals and non-profit organizations which do not meet the requirements of the legal aid schemes.
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>Key providers of pro bono legal services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single Practitioner: Individual lawyers who offer their expertise and time to provide free legal assistance to those in need. • Private Law Firms: Many law firms, particularly those of Anglo-American origin, are involved in pro bono work, often focusing on advising non-profit organizations. • University Law Clinics: These clinics offer pro bono legal services in areas such as human rights, immigration, or consumer protection.¹⁹ <p>Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs provide pro bono legal services, often focusing on specific legal areas aligned with their mission, such as <i>Caritas Deutschland</i>²⁰, <i>Deutsches Rotes Kreuz</i>²¹, and <i>Arbeiterwohlfahrt</i>.²²</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>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Furthermore, these technologies could increase access to justice by providing scalable, low-cost</p>

¹⁹ For example, the [Humboldt Law Clinic on Fundamental and Human Rights \(HLCMR\)](#) (last visited on February 16, 2025) at Humboldt University in Berlin focuses on constitutional and human rights law. The [Refugee Law Clinic Munich](#) (last visited on February 16, 2025), affiliated with Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. The [Pro Bono Student Legal Advice Clinic Heidelberg](#) (last visited on February 16, 2025) at Heidelberg University offers legal advice in civil law, administrative and asylum law. The [Bucerius Law Clinic](#) (last visited on February 16, 2025) at Bucerius Law School in Hamburg provides legal services in areas such as immigration social justice, family law and labor law.

²⁰ <https://www.caritas.de/glossare/beratungshilfe#:~:text=Die%20Beratungshilfe%20erm%C3%B6glicht%20Menschen%20mit,kann%20auch%20das%20Gericht%20erteilen> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

²¹ <https://www.drk-sz.de/angebote/beratung/rechtsberatung-familienrecht.html> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

²² <https://awo-mitte.de/beratung/#rechtsberatung> (last visited on November 4, 2025).

	<p>tools such as multilingual chatbots and rights checkers, which could help empower vulnerable groups to understand and assert their legal rights.</p> <p>While specific examples of pro bono matters using AI are lacking in Germany, global trends around how technology and AI are used to enhance access to legal services²³, such as AI-powered chatbots²⁴, agentic AI, translation tools, and online platforms connecting lawyers with pro bono opportunities are being explored by the pro bono community. For example, Pro Bono Allianz Deutschland and UPJ Pro Bono Rechtsberatung explored the topic of “Using Artificial Intelligence Responsibly” at an event²⁵ with Correlaid, a non-profit organisation with a community of data science volunteers who use their skills for good causes.²⁶</p> <p>The German Bar Association has also recently indicated support for the use of AI tools by practising lawyers.²⁷</p>
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Sources of pro bono opportunities and key contacts

<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Notable sources in Germany include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro Bono Deutschland e.V.:²⁸ Founded in 2011, the association has grown from 11 firms and now brings together 47 member law firms. It promotes and supports pro bono legal advice for the common good, especially for charitable purposes. While it does not provide legal services directly, it serves as a valuable resource for information, collaboration and policy change in the pro bono community.
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²³ See <https://www.globallegalpost.com/news/german-bar-association-strikes-first-ai-partnership-to-offer-tech-to-its-60000-members-1659835970> and <https://www.noxtua.com/>. Noxtua is a legal-AI product tailored for law firms and corporations, compliant with German data-protection/regulation.

²⁴ The AsyLex project in Switzerland, for example, uses AI-powered chatbots to provide asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Ukraine with access to legal support. It provides information on legal issues and allows users to request individual advice: <https://www.asylex.ch/hvtemplate> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

²⁵ <https://www.pro-bono-allianz.de/en/news-dates/> (last viewed on May 4, 2026).

²⁶ <https://correlaid.org/en/using-data/projects/> (last visited on November 4, 2025).

²⁷ <https://www.globallegalpost.com/news/german-bar-association-strikes-first-ai-partnership-to-offer-tech-to-its-60000-members-1659835970> (last visited on November 4, 2025).

²⁸ <https://www.pro-bono-deutschland.org/en/home/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPJ e.V.²⁹ Founded in 1996, <i>UPJ e.V.</i> collaborates with <i>Pro Bono Deutschland e.V.</i> and law firms to connect legal professionals with non-profit organizations in need of pro bono legal services. • Start Right e.V.³⁰ A student-run legal advice initiative offering pro bono legal advice to social initiatives and enterprises. • startsocial e.V.³¹: A non-profit organization supported by German corporations, startsocial e.V. assists selected small and medium-sized social projects by matching them with advisory teams, including law firms. • University Law Clinics: There are a number of student legal advice centres and clinics, including ones that specialize in certain legal areas, such as immigration and refugee support.³² These clinics often seek qualified lawyers to supervise law students and contribute to pro bono efforts. <p>There are also global pro bono clearinghouses such as TrustLaw, PILnet or A4ID that provide regular transactional and research pro bono opportunities.³³</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>Lawyers can keep abreast of pro bono developments and opportunities for collaboration via Pro Bono Deutschland.</p> <p>Lawyers seeking pro bono opportunities in advising non-profit organizations can register with UPJ, which acts as a pro bono clearinghouse, vetting organizations requesting pro bono legal assistance and offering a newsletter service for interested lawyers and law firms who can apply for pro bono mandates. Opportunities for advising individuals can be found through university law clinics and local advice offices such as the Public Legal Advice and Settlement Offices in Hamburg (<i>Öffentliche</i></p>

²⁹ <https://www.upj.de/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³⁰ <https://www.start-right.de/> (last visited on November 4, 2025).

³¹ <https://startsocial.de/> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³² For example, the [Bund Studentischer Rechtsberater e.V.](#) (last visited on February 16, 2025), and the [Refugee Law Clinics Deutschland e.V.](#) (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³³ See <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/>, <https://www.pilnet.org/> and <https://a4id.org/> (Last viewed on 14 October 2025).

	<p><i>Rechtsauskunft- und Vergleichsstelle Hamburg</i>³⁴) or local lawyers' associations such as the Lawyers Association of Frankfurt (<i>Frankfurter Anwaltsverein</i>³⁵) or of Cologne (Kölner Anwaltverein e.V.).³⁶</p> <p>Lawyers can register their interest in transactional and research pro bono opportunities with TrustLaw or PILnet.³⁷</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>While formal pro bono awards are lacking in Germany, organizations like Chambers Europe Awards³⁸, and the Financial Times Innovative Lawyers Awards Europe³⁹ recognize pro bono contributions.</p> <p>There are also global pro bono awards offered by TrustLaw, PILnet and the International Bar Association.⁴⁰</p>

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Latham & Watkins (Germany) LLP

Learn more

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

³⁴ <https://www.hamburg.de/politik-und-verwaltung/behoerden/sozialbehoerde/einrichtungen/oera> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³⁵ [https://www.frankfurter-anwaltsverein.de/buergerservice/rechtsberatung/#:~:text=Soweit%20es%20sich%20aus%20Ihrer,Anwaltsverein%20\(analog%20dem%20BeratungshilfeG\)%20](https://www.frankfurter-anwaltsverein.de/buergerservice/rechtsberatung/#:~:text=Soweit%20es%20sich%20aus%20Ihrer,Anwaltsverein%20(analog%20dem%20BeratungshilfeG)%20) (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³⁶ <https://www.ag-koeln.nrw.de/aufgaben/Anwaltliche-Beratungsstelle/index.php#:~:text=Das%20Angebot%20richtet%20sich%20an,%2C%20Luxemburger%20Stra%C3%9Fe%20101%2C%201> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³⁷ See <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/> and <https://www.pilnet.org/> (last viewed on 14 October 2025).

³⁸ <https://chambers.com/events/chambers-europe-awards-2021> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

³⁹ <https://lawyereurope.live.ft.com/page/4156998/2024-winners> (last visited on February 16, 2025).

⁴⁰ <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/awards/the-2025-awards/>, <https://www.pilnet.org/event/pilnet-global-forum/awards/> and <https://www.ibanet.org/Annual-IBA-Pro-Bono-Award> (last viewed on 14 October 2025).