

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Italy

Introduction

Historically, pro bono legal services have not been embedded in Italy's legal culture or framework. Pro bono work is largely voluntary and not regulated by law, which distinguishes it from state-funded legal aid (patrocinio a spese dello Stato)¹. Basic legal information is also offered to citizens before they choose to contact a lawyer by organisations such as local bar associations or notaries' associations. However, in recent years, large global law firms with offices in Italy have increasingly started to participate in and strongly encourage pro bono engagement. International and local Italian firms have also joined Pro Bono Italia (part of the European Pro Bono Alliance²), a non-profit association that has worked to promote a culture of pro bono in Italy. Pro Bono Italia raises awareness of pro bono through Italy Pro Bono Day (together with other non-profit partners and law firms), regular roundtables³ and its online clearinghouse platform.⁴

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	No	No	Yes

The landscape

Professional regulation	
<p>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.</p>	<p>In Italy, the provision of legal services is primarily regulated by the “<i>Ordinamento della Professione Forense</i>” (Law No. 247/2012), which outlines the rules and requirements for practicing law in the country⁵.</p> <p>To practice law and represent clients in court in Italy, individuals must obtain a law degree (<i>Laurea in Giurisprudenza</i>) and complete an 18-month legal traineeship under the supervision of a</p>

¹ <https://www.trust.org/impact-story/italian-appetite-for-pro-bono-despite-regulatory-vacuum/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

² <https://www.pilnet.org/our-work/european-pro-bono-alliance/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

³ <https://www.probonoinst.org/2026/01/14/a-global-snapshot-developing-pro-bono-in-italy/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

⁴ <https://www.ibanet.org/article/8e934d6c-eb0d-428b-8907-61962e9339eb#:~:text=In%202017,%20I%20co-founded,defence%20being%20a%20constitutional%20right> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

⁵ For an outline of the Italian Attorney Professional Law, see <https://www.altalex.com/documents/codici-altalex/2014/11/05/riforma-forense-la-nuova-legge-professionale-in-gazzetta> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

	<p>qualified lawyer (<i>praticantato</i>), lastly candidates must pass the bar examination (<i>Esame di Stato</i>) to be admitted to the Bar (<i>Albo degli Avvocati</i>).</p> <p>In addition, lawyers' activities in Italy must be carried out in compliance with the provisions of the Italian Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics (as amended on June 12, 2018) (the "Professional Rules"), issued by the National Bar Association (Consiglio Nazionale Forense); the Professional Rules establish the rules of conduct that any lawyer is expected to observe in general and, specifically, in their relations with clients, with the other party, with other lawyers and with other professionals.⁶</p> <p>In-house counsel in Italy are lawyers employed by a corporation to provide legal services exclusively to their employer. They are considered employees (of the relevant company) and not independent lawyers. They may or may not be qualified lawyers and registered with a Bar Association (although, in practice, Bar admission is generally required by employers' companies). Their role is limited to providing legal advice within the company, and they cannot represent the company in court (where an external lawyer must be appointed).</p>
Regulatory landscape for pro bono	
2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.	There are no specific laws which regulate the provision of pro bono legal services. However, Italian law provides specific rules of professional conduct for Italian lawyers ⁷ .
3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?	In Italy, lawyers do not need a separate license to provide pro bono legal services beyond the usual qualifications required to practice law. However, they must be duly qualified and registered with a local bar association (<i>Ordine degli Avvocati</i>) to practice law in any capacity, including pro bono work.
4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any	Foreign lawyers must have their qualifications

⁶ The compliance with the Professional Rules is supervised by the local Bar Associations. See <https://www.consiglionazionaleforense.it/web/cnf/codice-deontologico-forense> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

⁷ See <https://www.consiglionazionaleforense.it/web/cnf/codice-deontologico-forense> (last visited on 8 September 2025).

<p>additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>recognised in Italy to practice law. They need to register with a local bar association (Ordine degli Avvocati). This may require demonstrating proficiency in Italian law and language. In addition, they have to comply with professional conduct rules.</p>
<p>5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?</p>	<p>In Italy, there is no mandatory requirement for lawyers 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 lawyers in Italy are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed.</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>In Italy, there are no mandatory pro bono hour requirements for lawyers, and there are also no formal aspirational targets set by local bar associations or regulatory bodies.</p>
<p>8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>	<p>In Italy, the concept of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) is known as “<i>Formazione Continua</i>”, and compliance is a requirement for lawyers to maintain their professional competence. However, as of now, pro bono hours are not automatically recognized for CLE credit under the standard regulations.</p> <p>However, some organisers of pro bono–related training events such as Italy Pro Bono Day have successfully applied for formal recognition of training credits from the National Forensic Council (Consiglio Nazionale Forense, CNF)⁸.</p>
<p>Insurance and advertising</p>	
<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</p>	<p>All lawyers registered with the Bar Association are required to obtain insurance policies that cover professional liability for any potential damages clients may incur during the provision of legal services⁹. The essential criteria for these insurance policies are outlined in the Ministerial Decree dated 22 September 2016, which has</p>

⁸ https://probonoitalia.org/en/eventi/italy-pro-bono-day-sixth-edition/?utm_source (Last viewed on 2 March 2026).

⁹ Article 12 of Law No. 247/2012. See <https://www.consiglionazionaleforense.it/web/cnf/assicurazione-obbligatoria#:~:text=L%27art.,in%20conseguenza%20dell%27attiv%C3%A0%20svolta> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

<p>partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?</p>	<p>been effective since 11 October 2017¹⁰. In summary, the insurance must cover all types of damages, including gross negligence, for activities like legal representation, advice, and document custody. Coverage extends to acts by collaborators and includes joint liability. Insurance details must be accessible online, and existing policies must comply within a year of the decree's publication. It is important to note that this Ministerial Decree does not explicitly address whether the insurance coverage extends to pro bono legal services provided by lawyers.</p> <p>Foreign lawyers who wish to practice law in Italy must also secure these insurance policies, as the Professional Rules apply to any lawyer practicing within the country.</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 in Italy must adhere to ethical standards that prevent misleading or overly promotional advertising as regulated by the Professional Rules. While it is not explicitly prohibited to advertise pro bono successes, any such communication must be truthful, respectful, and not create unjustified expectations.</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>There are several areas of law where pro bono services are particularly needed, such as immigration and asylum, human rights, family law, and labour law¹¹.</p> <p>The major unmet legal needs typically involve individuals and communities who lack the financial resources to afford legal representation. It should also be noted that certain inefficiencies of the Italian judicial system, in particular, the excessive length of court proceedings and the number of bureaucratic formalities related thereto, affect the effectiveness of pro bono legal assistance and produce delays and inefficiencies that affect the possibility of pro bono clients receiving prompt satisfaction of their rights.¹²</p>

¹⁰ See [https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8_1.page?facetNode_1=1_1\(2016\)&facetNode_2=1_1\(201609\)&facetNode_3=0_5&contentId=SDC50208&previousPage=mg_1_8#](https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_8_1.page?facetNode_1=1_1(2016)&facetNode_2=1_1(201609)&facetNode_3=0_5&contentId=SDC50208&previousPage=mg_1_8#) (last visited on 7 November 2025).

¹¹ See <https://www.ibanet.org/article/8e934d6c-eb0d-428b-8907-61962e9339eb> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

¹² <https://droit.cairn.info/revue-francaise-d-administration-publique-2022-4-page-1015?lang=en> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>The main providers of pro bono legal services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State-Funded Legal Aid (“Patrocinio a spese dello Stato”) provides free legal representation to people whose income falls below a statutory threshold. This is managed by local Bar Associations under the supervision of courts. Individuals with low income, certain vulnerable groups, and specific cases (civil, criminal, administrative) are eligible for assistance.¹³• Local Bar Associations, such as the Milan Bar Association, encourage and support voluntary pro bono work through joint events.¹⁴• NGOs sometimes work in collaboration with law firms and create collaborative initiatives such as the Rule 39 Pro Bono Initiative. This initiative is led by the Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights (CILD), with the assistance of international law firms who provide pro bono legal assistance to support cases before the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁵ Another example is the KIND Italy Project where KIND worked with the Italian Refugee Council (CIR) and the pro bono legal community to establish a pro bono initiative to provide children and guardians with essential information about their rights and legal assistance to regularize their status and reunify with family.¹⁶• University Legal Clinics such as the International Humanitarian Law Legal Clinic that engages in pro bono support activities for relevant international and national institutions operating in the area
---	--

¹³ https://e-justice.europa.eu/topics/taking-legal-action/legal-aid/it_en (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

¹⁴ https://probonoitalia.org/en/eventi/pro-bono-activities-a-commitment-a-duty-an-opportunity/?utm_source (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

¹⁵ <https://cild.eu/en/special-projects/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

¹⁶ <https://supportkind.org/what-we-do/international/european-initiative/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

	<p>of international humanitarian law.¹⁷</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private law firms.
<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. 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>The Piattaforma Pro Bono Italia is a digital system to collect, examine, distribute, and manage requests for free legal assistance from NGOs or individuals who cannot afford legal help. This platform uses digital tools to streamline matching lawyers with cases.¹⁸</p> <p>At the 7th Italy Pro Bono Day, speakers emphasized AI's promise to streamline NGOs' intake and filtering of large volumes of pro bono requests, reflecting growing recognition that AI can boost efficiency and expand legal access across Italy's Third Sector.¹⁹</p> <p>The TuTeLa project seeks to establish the EU's first research center dedicated to AI-powered legal tech for social good by simplifying legal language and improving information retrieval to enhance access to justice for vulnerable</p>

¹⁷ <https://giurisprudenza.uniroma3.it/en/study/legal-clinics/international-humanitarian-law-legal-clinic/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

¹⁸ https://piattaforma.probonoitalia.org/it?utm_source (Last viewed on 2 March 2026).

¹⁹ https://probonoitalia.org/en/artificial-intelligence-legislation-and-the-third-sector-interview-with-lawyer-federico-fusco/?utm_source (Last viewed on 2 March 2026).

	people. ²⁰
Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>The most relevant governmental sources of pro bono work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Italian Bar Association - Notaries' website²¹ - Ministry of Justice <p>The most relevant non-governmental sources of pro bono work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avvocato di strada Onlus²². - Naga²³ - CILD (Coalizione Italiana Libertà e Diritti Civili)²⁴ - CSVnet (Coordinamento Nazionale dei Centri di Servizio per il Volontariato)²⁵ <p>There are also global pro bono clearinghouses and legal services, such as TrustLaw and PILnet²⁶, which offer pro bono matters.</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>Several initiatives are being undertaken to enable local and foreign lawyers to register their interest in pro bono opportunities in Italy. The most notable organisation through which lawyers can be made aware of pro bono opportunities is Pro Bono Italia²⁷</p> <p>Pro Bono Italia is a non-profit association of lawyers, law firms and forensic associations created for the promotion and spread of the culture of pro bono throughout Italy. It partners with two clearinghouses, established within the Italian Coalition for Civil Liberties and Rights and the Italian National Association of Service Centres for Volunteering. Requests are evaluated and filtered before being transferred to the network of pro bono lawyers, who offer their legal</p>

²⁰ https://frida.unito.it/709_il-progetto-tutela-e-la-rivoluzione-digitale-che-d%C3%A0-accesso-equo-alla-giustizia?utm_source (2 March 2026).

²¹ See <https://www.notariato.it/it/notariato/sportelli-di-consulenza/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²² See <https://www.avvocatodistrada.it/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²³ See <https://naga.it/attivita/servizio-legale/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²⁴ See <https://cild.eu/blog/2020/02/19/pro-bono-apre-richieste-individuali/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²⁵ See <https://csvnet.it/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²⁶ See <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/> and <https://www.pilnet.org/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²⁷ See <https://probonoitalia.org/it/homepage/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

	<p>assistance on a first-come-first-served basis.²⁸ Lawyers can register with them on their website.²⁹</p> <p>There is also a collaborative network of European clearinghouses and pro bono initiatives with the goal of supporting and promoting the work of its members and strengthening, championing, and informing the European pro bono movement.³⁰</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>There are no relevant awards, lists or rankings directly related to pro bono work in Italy.</p> <p>However, there are global pro bono awards offered by TrustLaw, PILnet, LawWorks and the International Bar Association, and Italian matters have featured and won at these.³¹</p>

Acknowledgements

In connection with this chapter, we are grateful for the support and insight of local counsel:

Latham & Watkins (Milan) LLP

Learn more

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

²⁸ See <https://www.ibanet.org/article/8e934d6c-eb0d-428b-8907-61962e9339eb> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

²⁹ See <https://probonoitalia.org/it/contatti/> (last visited on 7 November 2025).

³⁰ <https://www.pilnet.org/our-work/european-pro-bono-alliance/> (Last viewed on 1 March 2026).

³¹ <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>