

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Netherlands

Introduction

The Dutch Constitution (*Grondwet*) and the European Convention on Human Rights provide for a right to access to justice and legal representation. As a result, people in the Netherlands with limited means seeking legal advice are generally well-represented by a comprehensive system of government-subsidized legal services. As a consequence, true pro bono work in the Netherlands has been very limited and is less focused on indigent individuals and more on interest groups and foundations serving broader social needs and advocating for human rights. These foundations have a substantial need for pro bono legal services since they are not entitled to receive government-subsidized legal aid.

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	No	Yes	Yes	No	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>Every <i>advocaat</i> practicing in the Netherlands is a member of the Dutch Bar Association (<i>Nederlandse Orde van Advocaten</i>) and is subject to the Dutch Act on Lawyers (<i>Advocatenwet</i>)¹, the administrative decrees and other rules, including the general rules regulating lawyer conduct (<i>Gedragsregels</i>)², issued by the Dutch Bar Association. Lawyers who do not comply with these rules are subject to disciplinary proceedings and can ultimately be disbarred.</p> <p>The Dutch Act on Lawyers, its implementing regulations, and the Dutch Bar Association provide rules on the practice of an <i>advocaat</i>.</p>

¹ See [Act on Advocates \(July 2022\) | Regelgeving Advocatenorde](#) (last visited on 2 December 2025).

² See [Code of Conduct for European Lawyers | Regelgeving Advocatenorde](#) (last visited on 2 December 2025).

	<p>These regulations include rules on education and entry in the profession, as well as professional rules of conduct.</p> <p>Any student who completes a legal education is a <i>jurist</i>. A <i>jurist</i> is not allowed to practice in court, but is allowed to give legal advice. A <i>jurist</i> is not a member of the Bar nor subject to codes of conducts or other requirements. In this overview, the term <i>lawyer</i> only refers to the Dutch term <i>advocaat</i> and not to a <i>jurist</i>.</p>
Regulatory landscape for pro bono	
2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.	The Dutch regulatory regime does not generally allow lawyers to provide their services based on a contingency fee. ³ Lawyers are required to charge a reasonable fee. However, lawyers in the Netherlands are permitted to provide legal services completely free of charge (i.e., pro bono legal services). There are no other rules that specifically regulate the provision of pro bono legal services in the Netherlands.
3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?	Dutch lawyers do not require a license to provide pro bono legal services; this includes a <i>jurist</i> .
4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?	The rules on foreign lawyers practicing in the Netherlands are fairly complex and differ for EU and non-EU citizens. In practice, there are no reports of foreign lawyers practicing pro bono in the Netherlands. While pro bono projects may be multi-jurisdictional, Dutch lawyers normally act as local counsel and deal with the Dutch elements of a project.
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	Dutch lawyers have no legal duty to provide pro bono legal services, in part due to the governmental provision of extensive legal aid. Working with the subsidised legal aid program (pro deo) or providing services for free (pro bono) is a decision left entirely to the individual lawyer.
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	Aspiring lawyers in the Netherlands are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become a lawyer.

³ See article 7.7 of the Lawyer Decree ([Verordening op de advocatuur](#)) (last visited on 2 December 2025).

<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 aspirational pro bono hours targets for Dutch lawyers.</p>
<p>8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>	<p>No, the Dutch equivalent to CLEs are only received for training, not for work (pro bono or otherwise).</p>
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 obliged to be insured against civil legal liability arising out of their legal practice to an extent which is reasonable having regard to the nature and extent of the risks incurred by their professional activities.⁴ Generally, professional insurance covers liability arising out of pro bono work. There are no extra insurance requirements for pro bono lawyers. In general, Dutch law firms ordinarily limit liability in their engagement letters or terms and conditions to the amount of fees paid (which is zero for pro bono engagements).</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 rules in the Netherlands that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients.</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>The nature of pro bono work in the Netherlands is focused on interest groups and foundations serving public or social needs and human rights. These foundations are not entitled to receive government-subsidized legal aid and therefore have a substantial need for pro bono legal services.</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>Several large, commercial law firms in the Netherlands provide pro bono legal services. Large law firms that provide pro bono legal services to organisations often require that the case holds demonstrable social significance or sets a legal precedent.</p>

⁴ See article 3.9 of the [Code of Conduct for European Lawyers](#) and article 6.24 of the Lawyer Decree ([Verordening op de advocatuur](#)) (in each case, last visited on 2 December 2025).

	<p>Also, there are many non-profit organizations in the Netherlands that provide legal advice at no cost. These foundations are commonly known as <i>Rechtswinkels</i> (law clinics)⁵. Staff usually consists of law students and other volunteers, and they can exist as separate foundations or be part of a university.</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. 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>
Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Pro Bono Connect⁶ is a Dutch pro bono clearinghouse that sits between civil society organisations in need of legal advice and law firms offering their services for free.</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>In the Netherlands, Pro Bono Connect is the first public interest clearinghouse which acts as an intermediary between non-governmental organisations and law firms. Sixteen of the Netherlands' largest law firms support Pro Bono Connect.⁷ It is not possible for individual lawyers to become a member of Pro Bono Connect.</p>

⁵ Examples of these law clinics are the Law Clinic Utrecht, Law Clinic Leiden and Law Clinic Rotterdam (see <https://www.rechtswinkelutrecht.nl/>, <https://www.leidserechtswinkel.nl/> and <http://rechtswinkelrotterdam.nl/>) (in each case, last visited on 2 December 2025).

⁶ [Pro Bono Connect](#) (last visited on 2 December 2025).

⁷ [Partnerkantoren - Pro Bono Connect](#) (last visited on 2 December 2025).

16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?	There are no national awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work.
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Acknowledgements

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Learn more

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