

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Poland

Introduction

Earliest pro bono activity in Poland can be traced back to early 20th century, specifically the 1920s, when Poland regained independence and the Polish legal system was instated. This status quo continued up until World War II. After the war, between 1945–1989, pro bono was mainly associated with legal help connected to political activism. Due to communist repressions, pro bono lawyers were active in defending political prisoners and helping trade unions such as “Solidarność”. After the fall of communist regime, the pro bono culture transformed and widened its scope with the introduction of different non-governmental organizations (“**NGO’s**”) and private law firms. Pro bono legal services were supported by the state and in the 1990’s and early 2000’s, the foundations were laid for the current pro bono landscape in Poland. Upon joining the European Union (“**EU**”) in 2004, Poland needed to adopt the EU’s legal requirements and extensive jurisprudence on the right of access to justice. Subsequently, pro bono activity in Poland grew, with NGOs, university legal clinics and private law firms being at the forefront. The provision of pro bono legal services is currently often a result of collaboration between these actors. Pro bono culture in Poland has gained further traction in recent years, especially with the ongoing war in Ukraine and different social issues in Poland requiring legal assistance, and with more firms and NGOs being engaged. Pro bono legal services are not mandatory in Poland, and they exist due to the determination of lawyers who wish to pursue such activities.

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 following set of laws and regulations apply to the provision of legal advice in Poland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Constitution of April 2, 1997 – the supreme law in Poland. Ratified international agreements, regulations, directives and decisions of the EU.

- The May 26, 1982 Law on Attorneys¹ (*Prawo o Adwokaturze*) regulates the organization and responsibilities of advocates (“**Law on Attorneys**”).
- The July 6, 1982 Law on Legal Advisers² (*Ustawa o Radcach Prawnych*) regulates the organization and responsibilities of legal advisers (“**Law on Legal Advisers**”).
- Any rules or regulations framed under the above-mentioned statutes or local government law.

The legal professionals licensed to provide legal advice consist of advocates (*adwokat*), and legal advisers (*radca prawny*).³ An advocate’s or legal adviser’s trainee may also provide legal services on behalf of their supervisors. Legal advice regarding tax issues can also be provided by licensed tax advisors. Currently, there is no material difference between advocates and legal advisers in respect of their scope of competence. The only difference lies in that a legal adviser can provide legal services on the basis of entering into an employment contract, but an advocate cannot render legal services under an employment contract.⁴ This may be of importance to an in-house lawyer, as they are more often contracted on the basis of an employment contract.

The Law on Attorneys regulates the organization and responsibilities of advocates. The Law on Legal Advisers regulates the organization and responsibilities of legal advisers, also known as attorneys-at-law in Poland. Additionally, there are ethics codes to each of the organizations. In order to be admitted to practice as an advocate or legal adviser, an individual is required to complete a five-year law program, followed by practical training for three years and six months and pass the final bar examination or pass a final bar examination after practicing law for a certain

¹ National Advocate Association (*Narodowa Rada Adwokacka*), Translation of the act:

https://www.adwokatura.pl/admin/wgrane_pliki/file-poa-ang-31382.pdf (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

² The Act in Polish can be found under this link: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19820190145>. There is currently no English version available

³ Lawyer’s training systems in the EU https://e-justice.europa.eu/407/EN/lawyers__training_systems (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

⁴ Lawyer’s training systems in the EU https://e-justice.europa.eu/407/EN/lawyers__training_systems (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

	amount of time. It is also possible to be admitted to a Bar without passing bar exam, for instance for law professors or other highly qualified legal practitioners. ⁵
Regulatory landscape for pro bono	
2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.	<p>There is no legal requirement in Poland to provide pro bono legal services. Apart from being a licensed legal professional, there are no additional requirements for the provision of pro bono services. Customarily, in Poland there are supervised pro bono services within University Legal Clinics, without any regulation. However, there are plans to introduce some regulations for such University Legal Clinics.⁶</p> <p>In Poland there is a well-established system of legal aid. For example, advocates and legal advisors are obligated to take on <i>ex officio</i> cases of all types. They are chosen randomly from the list of their local bar association. In practice, however, there are specific lists, where licensed lawyers can sign up and get assigned cases from their field of law. Currently, legal aid is available to every person that proves that they are not able to bear costs of legal representation. In addition, for such persons there may be a possibility of free of charge mediation and tax advice within some NGOs.</p> <p>All private licensed lawyers are welcome to take pro bono cases directly or through local bar association programs or in cooperation with an NGO.</p>
3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?	No, in order to provide pro bono legal services lawyers in Poland are required only to be admitted to a particular bar association in Poland.
4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?	Subject to reciprocity and the international agreements ratified by the Republic of Poland or the provisions of the international organizations, foreign lawyers are entitled to practice law in

⁵ Lawyer's training systems in the EU https://e-justice.europa.eu/407/EN/lawyers__training_systems (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

⁶ See: <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-universyteckie-kliniki-prawa-ustawa-ms> (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

	<p>Poland on a permanent basis after having been entered onto one of the lists of foreign lawyers kept by District Bar Councils or Councils of District Chambers of Legal Counsellors.</p> <p>A lawyer from the EU entered on the list kept by the District Bar Council is entitled to practice within the scope corresponding to the profession of advocate, whereas a lawyer entered on the list kept by the Council of District Chamber of Legal Counsellors can practice within the scope corresponding to the profession of legal counsellor.⁷</p> <p>A lawyer from outside the EU entered on the list kept by the District Bar Council is solely permitted to provide legal advice and prepare legal opinions on domestic law of their home state and on international law, within the scope corresponding to the profession of advocate, and a lawyer entered on the list kept by the Council of District Chamber of Legal Counsellors is permitted to solely provide legal advice and prepare legal opinions on domestic law of their home state and on international law, within the scope corresponding to the profession of legal counsellor.</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 is no legal requirement in Poland to provide pro bono legal services.</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>No, there is no requirement for aspiring lawyers to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services.</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 is no aspirational pro bono hours target for lawyers set by local bar associations.</p>
<p>8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>	<p>Legal professionals in Poland do not receive any credits or other benefits for time spent on pro bono work. Rules of credit system for CLE vary</p>

⁷ Art. 2 of the Act of July 5th, 2002 on the provision by foreign lawyers of legal assistance in the Republic of Poland. (*Ustawa o świadczeniu przez prawników zagranicznych pomocy prawnej w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*) <https://obsil.kirp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Ustawa-o-prawnikach-zagranicznych.pdf> (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

	<p>across different local bar associations, but in general pro bono work is not included as CLE. Law firms may introduce their own systems of encouragement for pro bono work.</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>Each licensed lawyer performing their professional duties in Poland is required to be insured. The Law on Attorneys, states that advocates are obliged to be insured in terms of civil liability for damages caused within the exercise of their professional activities. Advocates are obliged to prove to the regional Bar that they have entered into a proper insurance contract with a relevant insurance company. The Law on Legal Advisers reflects the above-mentioned requirement in respect to legal advisors⁸.</p> <p>In practice, the local bar associations, like the Warsaw Bar Association, enter into insurance contracts with insurance companies and the member-advocates of the given bar pay monthly, quarterly or annual contribution fees for this group insurance. At the same time, lawyers are free to purchase their own or additional insurance if they deem it necessary or appropriate.</p> <p>An in-house lawyer is bound by the same rules and is therefore obliged to have insurance. As can be seen above, the ways of getting insured are different and an in-house lawyer may choose the most suitable one for themselves.</p> <p>A foreign lawyer providing pro bono legal services in Poland is required to maintain civil liability insurance against damage done in the provision of legal assistance, pursuant to the principles applicable to advocates or the principles applicable to legal counsellors, depending on which list he/she has been entered onto. This requirement is not valid if a person can show that they are covered by insurance or a guarantee in their home country, which is</p>

⁸ Art. 8a Section 1 of the May 26, 1982 Law on Attorneys (*Prawo o Adwokaturze*), which regulates the and Art. 22 Section 7 of the July 6, 1982 Law on Legal Advisers (*Ustawa o Radcach Prawnych*),

	equivalent in terms and scope, as the insurance described above. If they are not equivalent or there is an equivalence only in part a foreign lawyer is obliged to have additional insurance ⁹ .
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	The set of rules established by both the National Bars (i.e. the National Advocate Bar and National Legal Advisor bar) under the respective sets of ethical rules (<i>Zbiór Zasad Etyki Adwokackiej i Godności Zawodu</i> and <i>Kodeks Etyki Radcy Prawnego</i>) generally prohibit advertisement of legal services ¹⁰ as well as solicitation of clients. However, lawyers are allowed to advertise provision of pro bono services by way of a public announcement on the internet, which bar associations often do in Poland.
Pro bono practice and culture	
11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?	<p>One of the major areas of law that requires and presents opportunities for pro bono lawyers is the area of migration and refugee law, especially in connection with the war in Ukraine. With the influx of refugees coming to Poland in large numbers from Ukraine, legal assistance has been necessary to help people settle in Poland.</p> <p>Another unmet legal need is in the form of lack of lawyers for other asylum seekers in Poland. In recent years, there has been an increase in asylum seekers from the Middle East and Africa, especially through the Polish-Belarus border. Foundations such as “Ocalenie” are working on such cases, however, the number of legal professionals included in their activities is limited, despite joint efforts with some private law firms, who launched dedicated programs to deal with the situation.</p> <p>Standing issues are present in civil, criminal, family law, inheritance, administrative, housing, financial, social aid and healthcare, disability law, domestic violence (or violence in general) and legal assistance for the LGBTQ+ community is</p>

⁹ The obligation is expressed in Art. 11 i2 of the Act of July 5th, 2002 on the provision by foreign lawyers of legal assistance in the Republic of Poland. (*Ustawa o świadczeniu przez prawników zagranicznych pomocy prawnej w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*)

¹⁰ Art. 23 of the Advocate Code: https://www.nra.pl/admin/wgrane_dokumenty/20210701kodeksetykiadwokackiejtekst-jednolity.pdf and Art. 31 of Legal Advisers Code: <https://kirp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/kodeks-etyki-radczy-prawnego-i-regulamin-wykonywania-zawodu.pdf> (both, last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

	needed.
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>The main providers of pro bono legal services in Poland are: (i) private law firms; (ii) NGOs; (iii) Bar Associations; and (iv) University legal clinics.</p> <p>Currently, many domestic and international law firms in Poland have different pro bono programs providing significant legal assistance. The Pro Bono Center (<i>Centrum Pro Bono</i>) publishes an annual report that highlights the activities of all private law firms in Poland that collaborate with the Pro Bono Center. According to the most recent report¹¹, in 2023, law firms collaborating with the Pro Bono Center provided legal advice in a wide range of cases, including matters involving non-profit organizations, people with disabilities, environmental protection, migration and asylum, and animal rights. Lawyers also advise on their respective fields of law.</p> <p>The Pro Bono Center regularly organizes a roundtable, where law firms together with NGOs discuss challenges applicable to pro bono work and future collaborative opportunities.¹² Currently, the Pro Bono Center collaborates with 36 law firms.¹³</p> <p>There are numerous notable NGOs active in Poland. Pro Bono Center often facilitates the legal side of such work and the NGOs themselves are concentrated on certain issues. The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights¹⁴ (“HFHR”) is a foundation dedicated to the protection of human rights in Poland, as well as the east of Poland in Ukraine and Belarus. HFHR monitors violations of human rights and provides pro bono services in the form of legal advice and representation at administrative proceedings, gives opinions on acts drafted in Poland and organizes educational seminars on human rights law. NGOs providing legal assistance to women</p>

¹¹ Pro Bono Center report for 2023, as well as, other reports are downloadable on this site: <https://www.centrumprobono.pl/o-programie/raporty-roczne-z-dzialalnosci-centrum-pro-bono/> (link not working)

¹² See: <https://www.centrumprobono.pl/blog/2024/12/03/25-pro-bono-roundtable-i-szkolenie-dla-organizacji-pozarzadowych/> (link not working)

¹³ See: <https://www.centrumprobono.pl/wspolpracujace-kancelarie/> (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

¹⁴ Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka: <https://hfhr.pl/en> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

in distress include Center for Women’s Rights¹⁵ (*Centrum Praw Kobiet*) and The Federation for Women and Family Planning¹⁶ (*Federacja na Rzecz Kobiet I Planowania Rodziny*). They provide legal advice to women who experience domestic violence. The Federation also provides legal advice through the phone and online. NGOs providing pro bono services to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers include Foundation Ocalenie¹⁷ and Migration Consortium¹⁸ (which consists of 9 different foundations). Ocalenie is especially concerned with the refugees and migrants from the Polish-Belarus border and with providing them free legal assistance and other forms of help, while the Migration Consortium has wider aims. Other NGOs of note include: The Polish Society of Legal Intervention¹⁹; Campaign Against Homophobia²⁰; Empowering Children Foundation²¹, and Lawyers for Animals²².

Both the National Bar Association and National Association of Legal Advisers provide different forms of pro bono services and promote pro bono services through seminars and education. The National Bar Association has more of an ad-hoc approach to organizing pro bono work as a response to a crisis or an emergency. Examples of such projects include pro bono work during floods in Poland in 2024 and pro bono services for Ukrainian refugees. National Association of Legal Advisers also commits to such short-term projects, but also since 2018 runs an on-going program under the name “Legal Advisers Pro Bono Legal Center”²³, in which licensed Legal Advisers and aspiring Legal Advisers can sign up and choose from a selection of cases.

University Legal Clinics also provide pro bono services in Poland, in which students provide advice, while being supervised. The Legal Clinics

¹⁵ Centrum Praw Kobiet: <https://cpk.org.pl/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

¹⁶ Federacja na Rzecz Kobiet I Planowania Rodziny: <https://federa.org.pl/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

¹⁷ Fundacja Ocalenie: <https://ocalenie.org.pl/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

¹⁸ Konsorcjum Migracyjne: <https://konsorcjum.org.pl/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

¹⁹ Polskie Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej: https://interwencjaprawna.pl/en/#pll_switcher (link not working)

²⁰ Kampania Przeciwko Homofobii: <https://kph.org.pl/en/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

²¹ Fundacja Dajemy Dzieciom Się: <https://fdps.pl/en/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

²² Prawnicy dla Zwierząt: <https://dlazwierzat.org.pl/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

²³ Legal Advisers Pro Bono Center: <https://www.oirp.warszawa.pl/pro-bono/>

	<p>Foundation²⁴, established in 2002, coordinates a network of 27 legal clinics in 16 cities (the “Clinics”). It also provides a report on the activity of the Clinics with the most recent one being from the 2019/20 academic year²⁵. There are 1219 students participating in the Clinics in Poland. In addition to that, The Legal Clinics Foundation has the aim of incorporating pro bono principles into legal education in Poland and to promote the provision of pro bono services.</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>While there are currently no notable examples of innovative technology or artificial intelligence being used in matters specifically related to pro bono, NGOs are increasingly using AI and digital tools (such as chatbots, document automation, translation AI and data analytics) to expand access to justice, support refugees and vulnerable groups, improve court transparency, and deliver legal, health, and civic services more efficiently at scale.</p> <p>For example, Tech To The Rescue connects software agencies with mission-driven NGOs to build tech solutions for climate, education, crisis response, and social impact²⁶. HFHR uses secure digital case-management systems, online legal guides in multiple languages, and encrypted communication tools for vulnerable clients. It has also published a report on the use of AI in the justice system²⁷.</p>
<h3>Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts</h3>	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Notable sources regarding non-governmental sources are described above.</p> <p>On the governmental level there are various Commissioners, who have authority over legal control and protection in different areas of law. Commissioners are independent from other state authorities. In total there are 8 Commissioners, with two being prescribed in the constitution. The first constitutional Commissioner is the</p>

²⁴ Fundacja Uniwersyteckich Poradni Prawnych: <https://www.fupp.org.pl/en/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

²⁵ The report can be downloaded on this site: <https://www.fupp.org.pl/en/legal-clinics/publications/reports/297-summary-of-the-academic-year-2019-2020-activity-in-polish-legal-clinics> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

²⁶ <https://www.techtotherescue.org/> (Last visited on 22 January 2026).

²⁷ https://hfhr.pl/publikacje/nowe-technologie?utm_ (Last visited on 22 January 2026).

	<p>Commissioner for Human Rights²⁸. The Commissioner is also obliged to provide free legal advice. The second Commissioner prescribed by the constitution is the Commissioner for Children's Rights²⁹. Other Commissioners include the Commissioner for Patient's rights or Commissioner for Consumers³⁰. All of the Commissioners provide free legal advice in their respective field on an individual basis, where there is an indication of violation of freedom and rights. One of the main roles of the Commissioners is to generally spread awareness of the rights that the citizens have.</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>A local or foreign attorney can register with the Pro Bono Centre in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities. Law firms may also register to cooperate with the Pro Bono Center. Details regarding registration are described in the footnote³¹.</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>Yes, there are awards lists and rankings for Pro Bono lawyers. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year Award³², given by the Legal Clinics Foundation the Pro Bono Centre, and the Rzeczpospolita newspaper – these are annual awards for the best pro bono lawyer. • Crystal Heart of Legal Advisor³³ (<i>Kryształowe Serce Radcy Prawnego</i>) – an annual award, given to the best pro bono Legal Advisor. • Ranking by the Rzeczpospolita newspaper of law firm's regarding pro bono³⁴. The ranking is divided between small law firms and large ones.

²⁸ Commissioner for Human Rights: <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

²⁹ Commissioner for Children: <https://brpd.gov.pl/> (last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

³⁰For Commissioner of Patient's Rights information see: <https://www.gov.pl/web/rpp/rzeczniczka-praw-pacjenta>. For Commissioner of Consumers see: <https://uokik.gov.pl/rzeczniczka-konsumentow> (both last visited on 14th of January, 2024)

³¹ See: <https://www.centrumprobono.pl/> (link not working)

³² See: <https://www.centrumprobono.pl/prawnik-pro-bono-roku/> and <https://www.centrumprobono.pl/blog/2024/06/21/mec-radoslaw-baszuk-zostal-laureatem-xxi-edycji-konkursu-prawnik-pro-bono/> (links not working)

³³ See: <https://krysztaloweserce.kirp.pl/> (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

³⁴ This year's award winners: <https://www.rp.pl/zawody-prawnicze/art40660061-pro-bono-prawnicy-o-dobrych-sercach-z-rzeszowa-i-wroclawia> (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ranking by the Rzeczpospolita newspaper of tax advisor law firms providing pro bono legal services³⁵. |
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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.

³⁵ This year award winners: <https://www.rp.pl/zawody-prawnicze/art40111551-ranking-firm-doradztwa-podatkowego-oni-niosa-darmowa-pomoc-od-lat> (last visited on 15th of January, 2024)