

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Republic of Ireland

Introduction

The Republic of Ireland has a longstanding commitment to pro bono and several public interest groups offer pro bono legal services. For example, the Public Interest Law Alliance (“PILA”), a project of the Free Legal Advice Centre (“FLAC”), is a public interest law network that seeks to engage the legal community and civil society in using the law to advance social change. PILA works to engage lawyers in pro bono work by supporting a culture of legal practice that actively delivers free legal assistance to those who are unable to pay for or access legal help. PILA supports a diverse network of stakeholders interested in growing the practice of law in the public interest, with particular emphasis on combining the legal needs of NGOs with the expertise of lawyers. One of the ways in which they do this is through a brokering service matching unmet legal needs of civil society with their panel of lawyers who are members of the pro bono referral scheme.¹

Recently, law firms have expanded structured pro bono work by hiring senior solicitors to enhance their human rights law expertise and support civil society and social enterprise's unmet legal needs.

In November 2020, a group of law firms, barristers and in-house legal teams collaborated to launch the Pro Bono Pledge Ireland (the “Pledge”). The Pledge is Ireland’s first collaborative effort to articulate the shared professional responsibility of lawyers to promote access to justice and provide pro bono legal assistance to those in need. The Pledge sets out the core values of such work, aiming to support both the practitioners and their clients. Signatories of the Pledge commit to reporting annually on their progress towards the aspirational goal of providing 20 hours of pro bono legal work per lawyer at their firm.²

The Bar of Ireland, the representative body for barristers in Ireland, operates a Voluntary Assistance Scheme (“VAS”), launched in 2004, whereby civil society groups can gain direct professional access to members of the Bar to address unmet legal need in the community.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	No	No	Yes

The landscape

¹ See www.pila.ie and www.flac.ie (last visited on 27 March 2025)

² See <http://probonopledge.ie/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

³ See <https://www.lawlibrary.ie/legal-services/pro-bono-services/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

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>Every barrister called to the Bar of Ireland is subject to the Code of Conduct which sets the standards of professional conduct and practice required of barristers in Ireland.⁴</p> <p>Every solicitor registered with the Law Society of Ireland is subject to various regulations which set the standards of professional conduct and practice required of solicitors in Ireland.⁵</p> <p>The Legal Services Regulatory Authority also has the power to issue guidance and to act as an impartial complaints body for both sides of the legal profession.⁶</p>
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 rules or regulations specific to the provision of pro bono legal services in the Republic of Ireland, but practitioners are encouraged to do so by both the Bar of Ireland and the Law Society of Ireland.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>Both practising barristers⁷ and solicitors⁸ must maintain a practising certificate on an annual basis.</p> <p>Provision of any form of legal services, including on a pro bono basis, without a current practising certificate constitutes professional misconduct.</p> <p>Lawyers working in an in-house capacity are prohibited by Law Society of Ireland regulations from providing pro bono legal services to any third party organisation or individual under the title of their employer. Should they wish to engage in pro bono legal services, they must do so in collaboration with a private law firm or community law centre and the Law Society of Ireland must be notified of such work.⁹</p>
<p>4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono</p>	<p>Foreign lawyers must obtain a practising certificate from the Law Society of Ireland to practice law in Ireland and such practising certificate would also be</p>

⁴ See - <https://www.lawlibrary.ie/about/governance/code-of-conduct/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

⁵ See - <https://www.lawsociety.ie/lra-professional-codes/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

⁶ See - <https://www.lra.ie/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

⁷ See - <https://www.lra.ie/for-law-professionals/roll-of-practising-barristers/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

⁸ See - https://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/regulation/practising-certificate-pc/pc-applications/?utm_source=Email&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Email (last visited on 27 March 2025)

⁹ See - <https://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/knowledge-base/Practice-Notes/in-house-solicitors-and-pro-bono-work/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?	required to cover the provision of pro bono legal services. Otherwise foreign lawyers may only provide pro bono services under the supervision of an Irish qualified lawyer.
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	No, but they are encouraged to engage in pro bono legal services by the Bar of Ireland and the Law Society of Ireland.
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	No, aspiring lawyers in the Republic of Ireland are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers – this applies equally for both barristers and solicitors.
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?	In 2020 the Pro Bono Pledge Ireland, was launched. The Pledge provides a common definition of pro bono, a commitment to a minimum aspirational target of 20 pro bono hours per lawyer per year, and a mechanism to benchmark progress through annual reporting of anonymous pro bono data.
8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	No.
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>Both barristers¹⁰ and solicitors¹¹ require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide in the Republic of Ireland. Neither barristers nor solicitors are prohibited from working under the cover of another pro bono provider, such as a private law firm or organisation working on the same pro bono project.</p> <p>Lawyers working in an in-house capacity are prohibited by Law Society regulations from providing pro bono legal services to any third party organisation or individual. Should they wish to engage in pro bono activity, they must do so in collaboration with a private law firm or community law centre.¹² This insurance requirement applies equally to in-house lawyers when they provide pro bono services through</p>

¹⁰ See - <https://www.lsr.ie/lra-issues-professional-indemnity-insurance-regulations-for-barristers/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

¹¹ See - <https://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/business-career-resources/PII/>

¹² See - <https://www.lawsociety.ie/Solicitors/knowledge-base/Practice-Notes/in-house-solicitors-and-pro-bono-work/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

	collaboration with a private law firm or community law centre.
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	No, there are no express prohibition in the Republic of Ireland for barristers or solicitors to advertise pro bono successes or solicit new pro bono clients.
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?	The main areas of law include charity law and governance, immigration law, housing law, social welfare law and family law.
12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?	The main providers of pro bono legal services in the Republic of Ireland are non-governmental organisations, independent law centres, private law firms and barristers, public services and universities.
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>Currently, there are no widely recognised AI or technology-driven initiatives specifically for pro bono legal services in the Republic of Ireland.</p> <p>However, 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	
14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.	<p>The main non-governmental sources of pro bono and/or other pro bono resources in the Republic of Ireland are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Refugee Council¹³

¹³ <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/> (last viewed on 27 January 2026).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mercy Law Resource Centre¹⁴ • Immigrant Council of Ireland¹⁵ • FLAC (the Free Legal Advice Centres)¹⁶ • PILA (the Public Interest Law Alliance)¹⁷ • Irish Rule of Law International¹⁸ • Voluntary Assistance Scheme¹⁹ • Social Entrepreneurs Ireland²⁰
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?	See above. Lawyers can register their interest with PILA who runs Pro Bono Pledge Ireland, a collaborative initiative involving law firms, barristers, and in-house legal teams aimed at enhancing access to justice through pro bono legal services. The Pledge comprises a network of signatories, including firms, chambers, and in-house teams, who convene to share best practices and report on their pro bono activities annually. ²¹
16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chambers Ireland Sustainable Business Impact Awards²² • European Chambers D&I awards for pro bono²³ • FT Innovation for Pro Bono²⁴ • PILnet Global and Local Impact Award for Pro Bono²⁵

Acknowledgements

Name of Local Counsel: A&L Goodbody

Name of Individual at Local Counsel: Eithne Lynch, Head of Pro Bono

Learn more

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

¹⁴ <https://mercyllaw.ie/>

¹⁵ https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/?gad_

¹⁶ <https://www.flac.ie/>

¹⁷ <https://www.pila.ie/>

¹⁸ <https://www.irishruleoflaw.ie/>

¹⁹ <https://www.lawlibrary.ie/legal-services/pro-bono-services/>

²⁰ <https://www.socialentrepreneurs.ie/>

²¹ <https://www.pila.ie/get-involved/> (Last viewed on 27 January 2026).

²² See - <https://chambers.ie/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

²³ See - <https://chambers.com/diversity-equity-and-inclusion> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

²⁴ See - <https://lawyerseurope.live.ft.com/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)

²⁵ See - <https://www.pilnet.org/event/pilnet-global-forum/awards/> (last visited on 27 March 2025)