

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Russia

Introduction

Russia does not have a long history of providing pro bono legal services, as the Russian legal market has been developing for only around 30 years. Although there has been a long tradition of pro bono legal clinics and charities, there is an increasing trend toward providing more pro bono legal services by law firms in Russia—pro bono platforms are emerging and law firms have started collaborating on pro bono projects.

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	No	No	No	No	No

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>The provision of legal services is not comprehensively regulated in Russia. There is a dual system of lawyers providing legal services: state-licensed attorneys (advocates) and other lawyers. The only legal activity reserved for advocates is the representation of clients in criminal proceedings; all other types of work can be done by both advocates and non-advocates.</p> <p>Advocates are subject to specific professional conduct rules and disciplinary procedures, whereas other legal professionals (including in-house counsel) are not subject to any similar rules and procedures.</p>
Regulatory landscape for pro bono	
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>Pro bono legal services are regulated by the Federal Law “On Free Legal Aid” (the Free Legal Aid Law). According to the Free Legal Aid Law, pro bono legal services can be provided by any</p>

	<p>person who has a legal degree from a Russian university, except for representation in criminal proceedings, which can only be provided by advocates. At the same time, the Free Legal Aid Law generally regulates only pro bono legal services provided by law school legal clinics and non-governmental centres of pro bono legal services, which can be established by advocates, notaries, law firms, bar chambers of advocates, and notaries. Pro bono legal services that are provided by private law firms or individual attorneys remain unregulated and thus are solely subject to arrangements with such law firms and individual attorneys.</p> <p>Basic requirements for non-governmental centres of pro bono legal services are set out in the Free Legal Aid Law and include (i) existence of office facilities where legal services can be provided and (ii) provision of such services by individuals who have a legal degree from a Russian university.</p> <p>The types of legal services that are provided by law schools' legal clinics and non-governmental centres of pro bono legal services, as well as categories of individuals that can receive pro bono legal services, is determined by internal regulations of such organisations. The Free Legal Aid Law simply stipulates that pro bono legal services shall be preferably provided to vulnerable social groups. No minimum fees are imposed. There are also no differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>Any person who has a legal degree from a Russian university can provide legal services including pro bono legal services. However, representation of clients in criminal proceedings can only be provided by advocates.</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 lawyers in Russia do not require any additional licences to provide pro bono legal services, but foreign lawyers must also have a legal degree from a Russian university to provide pro bono legal services connected with the Russian law. Foreign lawyers may provide pro bono legal services on legal matters of their home jurisdiction without obtaining a degree</p>

	from a Russian university.
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	Lawyers in Russia are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours.
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	Aspiring lawyers in Russia are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers.
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?	No, there are no such targets.
8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Lawyers in Russia do not receive any CLE or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked.
Insurance and advertising	
9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers? 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?	Lawyers in Russia do not require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide. There are no differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	There are no rules in Russia that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting 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 recipients of pro bono legal services in Russia are mainly socially vulnerable groups; therefore, providers of such services mainly specialise in economic, social, and cultural rights protection and government relations, which are the main areas of individuals’ legal needs. The economic conditions in Russia do not provide many opportunities to socially vulnerable group

	<p>members to hire law firms or advocates; thus, individuals either protect their rights on their own or approach providers of pro bono legal services.</p> <p>EU Council Regulation (EU) 2022/1904 and its subsequent amendments generally prohibit international law firms from advising Russian companies and the government in most areas of legal services and this also applies to pro bono legal services. These measures are part of the broader sanctions imposed in response to Russia's actions in Ukraine. However, there are limited exceptions, such as legal representation in judicial proceedings or services that ensure access to justice. The withdrawal of international law firms due to sanctions has potentially increased the unmet legal needs in Russia, particularly affecting NGOs, vulnerable communities, and individuals who previously relied on cross-border pro bono support.</p>
12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?	There are no official statistics on who the main providers of pro bono legal services are in Russia. Generally, provision of pro bono legal service by private law firms and individual attorneys is less developed. Thus, in practice, the main providers of pro bono legal services are still law school legal clinics and non-governmental centres of pro bono legal services.
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?	There are no such noteworthy examples.

Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts

14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Russian Ministry of Justice maintains a list of existing pro bono legal services providers in various regions of Russia: https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/pages/spisok-centrov-besplatnoj-yuridicheskoy-pomoshi/ (in Russian language; the link may not be available outside of Russia).• “LegalCharity”, a platform that brings together reputable Russian law firms to provide pro bono services: https://legalcharity.ru/ (in Russian language; the link may not be available outside Russia).
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<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>There are no public or private organisations with which a local or foreign attorney can register in Russia in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities.</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>There are no separate pro bono rankings in Russia. Occasionally, awards for pro bono work are granted for notable projects in the national legal rankings.</p> <p>As part of the Pravo 300 ('Law 300') national ranking, there is a nomination for the best pro bono project of the year¹.</p>

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.

¹ See <https://pravo.ru/story/256831/> (last visited on 14 February 2025).