

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in South Korea

Introduction

In South Korea, non-State funded legal aid is primarily delivered through three channels. The first is pro bono services offered by law firms and individual attorneys. The second is legal aid provided by or with the support of non-governmental organisations and other public interest bodies. The third is legal aid facilitated by or with the assistance of the Korean Bar Association. These services address a wide variety of legal matters, tailored to the specific circumstances and needs of each applicant.¹

Pro bono activities by Korean attorneys in South Korea have evolved significantly in recent decades. While in the past, they generally took the form of providing free legal advice and assistance in litigation to needy individuals, large law firms have signalled a change toward a more holistic approach to pro bono work, with a focus on the wider community and society. In 2016, the country's 11 major domestic law firms launched the Law Firm Public Interest Network, signing an agreement to jointly explore and promote public interest activities. The network hosts seminars and networking events to promote greater cooperation in pro bono projects and other public interest 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? |
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| Yes | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No |

The landscape

| Professional regulation | |
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| <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>In Korea, provision of legal services is limited to those qualified as attorneys. The basic law governing attorneys is the Attorney-at-Law Act, which includes basic mission, duties, qualifications, registration, and opening of business, rights, and obligations of attorneys, as well as provisions on law firms, lawyers' associations, and disciplinary actions and penalties related to legal activities.</p> <p>Attorney-at-Law Act Article 4 (Qualifications for Attorneys-at-Law) provides that a person falling under any of the three categories below qualifies</p> |

¹ <https://www.pilnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Legal-Aid-Memo-SOUTH-KOREA.pdf> (Last viewed on 24 January 2026).

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| | <p>as an attorney-at-law:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) a person who has completed the required curriculum of the Judicial Research and Training Institute after passing the Judicial Examination; 2) a person who is qualified as a judge or a public prosecutor; or 3) a person who has passed the Bar Examination. <p>A Korean lawyer wishing to practise law in South Korea after receiving their licence² must register with the Korean Bar Association (KBA)³ Membership of the KBA is compulsory for all practising lawyers.</p> <p>A foreign lawyer wishing to practise law in South Korea must register as a Foreign Legal Consultant (FLC) under the Foreign Legal Consultant Act. A FLC must have at least three years of legal work experience in his/her home country of qualification and cannot advise or provide legal services with regards to Korean law.</p> <p>There are no separate laws or regulations specifically regulating in-house counsel, including their practice of pro bono activities.</p> |
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| <p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p> | <p>Details of the instruments listed here are provided in other responses to this survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attorney-at-Law Act Article 27 (Duty to Perform Designated Services, such as Public Interest Activities);⁴ • Association Rules of the KBA Article (9-2 Participation in Public Interest Activities, Etc.);⁵ |

² With regards to the licensing requirement, the traditional Korean Judicial Examination system was replaced in 2017 with one resembling the American system, consisting of three years of law school (*Juris Doctor* degree) and subsequent passage of the bar examination.

³ Attorney-at-Law Act Article 7(1), Association Rules of the Korean Bar Association Article 36.

⁴ Attorney-at-Law Act Article 27 (Duty to Perform Designated Services, such as Public Interest Activities):

- (1) Each attorney-at-law shall engage in public interest activities for not less than a specified number of hours per year.
- (2) Each attorney-at-law shall handle affairs designated by public agencies, the Korean Bar Association, or the local bar association with which he/she is affiliated under Acts and subordinate statutes.
- (3) Necessary matters concerning the scope of public interest activities and the method of performing such activities shall be determined by the Korean Bar Association.

[This Article Wholly Amended by Act No. 8991, Mar. 28, 2008]

⁵ Association Rules of the Korean Bar Association Article 9-2 [Participation in Public Interest Activities, Etc.]

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| | <p>and</p> <p>The Seoul Bar Association (SBA) Regulations Regarding Public Interest Activities (<i>공익활동 등에 관한 규정</i>) and Directives on the Evaluation of Public Interest Activities (<i>공익활동심사지침</i>).</p> |
| 3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)? | No additional licence is required for the provision of pro bono legal services beyond that required for the practice of law in Korea. |
| 4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)? | No additional licence is required for the provision of pro bono legal services beyond that required for the practice of law by a foreign lawyer in Korea; however, only licenced Korean lawyers may represent clients in litigation. ⁶ |
| 5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many? | <p>There is a mandatory 30-hour per year pro bono requirement under Attorney-at-Law Act Article 27, the Association Rules of the KBA Article 9-2, and the Regulation on Public Interest Activities (<i>공익활동 등에 관한 규정</i>)⁷ of the KBA Article 3.</p> <p>In case of special circumstances, local bar associations have the authority to decrease the requirement to 20 hours. For example, the SBA has exercised its authority to do so every year, decreasing the pro bono requirement for its members to 20 hours.⁸</p> <p>This requirement may also be satisfied by making a specified payment to the pro bono fund instead of working the specified number of hours. Those who have been practising for less than two years, those who are older than 60 years of age, and those who cannot perform ordinary legal services due to illness, etc. are also exempt from the requirement.</p> |

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- (1) Each individual member shall engage in public interest activities for not less than a specified number of hours per year.
 - (2) Each individual member shall handle affairs designated under the Acts and subordinate statutes by public agencies the Korean Bar Association, or a local bar association with which he/she is affiliated.
 - (3) Matters concerning scope, performing method, etc. of public interest activities shall be determined by the regulations.

[This Article Newly Inserted, Jul. 19, 2000]

⁶ Civil Procedure Act Article 87.

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https://www.koreanbar.or.kr/pages/board/law_view.asp?teamcode=&category=3&page=1&seq=8794&types=6&searchtype=&searchstr= (last visited on September 24, 2025)

⁸ During the several years of COVID-19, the SBA exempted its registered attorneys from the pro bono requirement.

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| <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 Korea are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers.</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 KBA, other local bar associations, or any other regulatory body.</p> |
| <p>8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p> | <p>Lawyers in Korea do not receive any CLE or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked.</p> |
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| <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>Law firms often maintain malpractice insurance. However, insurance is not mandatory for the practice of law in general in Korea. In addition, no professional indemnity insurance is required for the provision of pro bono legal services in Korea.</p> |
| <p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p> | <p>No special or additional rules pertain to advertising of pro bono matters.</p> <p>However, rules regarding solicitation and advertisement by attorneys-at-law are set forth generally in laws and regulations such as the Attorney-at-Law Act Article 23, the Association Rules of the KBA,⁹ and KBA’s Rules on Attorney-at-law advertisement (<i>변호사 광고에 관한 규칙</i>)¹⁰ and Attorney-at-law advertisement</p> |

⁹ Article 44 [Remuneration and Advertisement of Attorneys-at-Law, Law firms, Limited Liability Law Firms, Law Firm Partnerships, Etc.] [...]

(5) Any member and foreign legal consultant shall, when he/she advertises, promotes, or installs office sign, comply as determined by the rules or the regulations of the Korean Bar Association or the local bar association with which he/she is affiliated.

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https://www.koreanbar.or.kr/pages/board/law_view.asp?teamcode=&page=1&seq=14069&types=6&category=3&searchtype=title&searchstr=%EA%B4%91%EA%B3%A0 (last visited on September 24, 2025).

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| | <p>regulation (<i>변호사 광고에 관한 규정</i>¹¹, which regulate, among others, the method and content of advertisement by attorneys-at-law.</p> <p>The Foreign Legal Consultant Act, KBA's Advertisement Regulations for Foreign Legal Consultant, and KBA's Code of Ethics for Foreign Legal Consultant govern foreign law firms and foreign lawyers practising law in Korea. A Foreign Legal Consultant may advertise by providing information and materials (including information regarding the partners of Foreign Legal Consultant Office) and services provided in order to help potential clients in selecting a Foreign Legal Consultant and to attract clients,¹² subject to certain prohibitions including but not limited to restrictions on contents¹³ and methods¹⁴ of advertisement.</p> <p>A foreign legal consultant may not make an exaggerated publicity or advertisement of her career, specialty, or performance, and in publicising or advertising her services, must comply with the Regulations on Advertisement of Services provided by Foreign Legal Consultant established by the KBA.¹⁵ A foreign legal consultant may not contact potential clients or make a clerical employee or a third party to induce the engagement of herself by potential clients for the purpose of soliciting cases.¹⁶</p> |
| <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 various areas of law that require or present opportunities for the provision of pro bono legal services in Korea. Issues regarding rights of women, children, LGBT minorities, and people with disabilities are among the most common. Various organisations currently receive government-funded subsidies for their pro bono activities.</p> <p>Immigration and refugee assistance is another area of legal need where pro bono assistance is</p> |

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https://www.koreanbar.or.kr/pages/board/law_view.asp?teamcode=&page=1&seq=12387&types=6&category=3&searchtype=&searchstr= (last visited on September 24, 2025).

¹² Advertisement Regulations for Foreign Legal Consultant Article 2 (Definition of Advertisement).

¹³ Article 4 (Restrictions on Contents of Advertisement).

¹⁴ Article 5 (Restrictions on Methods of Advertisement).

¹⁵ Code of Ethics for Foreign Legal Consultant Article 6 (Prohibition of Exaggerated Advertisement).

¹⁶ Code of Ethics for Foreign Legal Consultant Article 6 (Prohibition of Solicitation of Case).

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| | useful. ¹⁷ |
| 12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services? | <p>Main providers of pro bono legal services in Korea include the Ministry of Justice, the SBA, large domestic private law firms, and the Korea Legal Aid Corporation (KLAC)¹⁸.</p> <p>KLAC is among the most active, benefiting from a provision under the Korean law permitting male attorneys to provide pro bono legal services at KLAC for three years in lieu of the obligatory military service.</p> <p>KLAC provides free legal advice for eligible citizens or entities on a broad range of matters, including civil, family, criminal, and administrative legal issues. Face-to-face advice is provided at local legal aid offices. Online advice is provided on the KLAC website and by e-mail. A nationwide hotline is accessible by telephone and video phone. KLAC provides assistance with preparing forms and documents such as complaints, briefs, and provisional seizure for monetary issues of less than 10 million won, and in which the case is relatively simple or self-evident. KLAC also represents clients on a pro bono basis in certain criminal cases, including representation of sexually abused children and victims of sexual violence.</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>KLAC's digital platforms and mobile applications incorporate AI-powered question-and-answer tools and chatbot functionality, enabling users to access legal information efficiently across a range of areas, including family law, housing leases, inheritance, and personal rehabilitation. These systems provide reference-level legal guidance and assist users in understanding their available options.¹⁹</p> <p>LG CNS and the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) have developed AI-powered tools that will assist lawyers in drafting legal documents for refugee litigation, using LG CNS's 'Agent Works' platform. The technology aims to overcome barriers such as language differences and complex procedures, reducing the time to prepare complaints from several days to a fraction of that whilst improving the accuracy of</p> |

¹⁷ <https://www.pilnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Legal-Aid-Memo-SOUTH-KOREA.pdf> (Last viewed on 14 February 2026).

¹⁸ <https://klac.or.kr/> (Last viewed on 26 February 2026).

¹⁹ https://chrome-stats.com/d/com.klac.or.homeview1_1?utm_ (Last viewed on 14 February 2026).

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| | <p>legal submissions.²⁰</p> <p>We have not yet seen specific instances of AI technology utilised for pro bono services delivered by law firms, but the possibility will certainly be explored as lawyers increasingly use AI tools in commercial legal work.²¹</p> <p>However, it is important to note that the KBA will likely scrutinise the use of AI in the delivery of legal services, in light of recent disciplinary action taken against a law firm which offered certain AI legal services that the KBA found to have violated the Attorney-at-Law Act.²²</p> |
| <p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p> | <p>The main governmental sources of pro bono and/or other legal services in Korea are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Korea Legal Aid Corporation • Ministry of Justice • Seoul Bar Association • KBA <p>The main non-governmental sources of pro bono and/or other pro bono resources in Korea are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MINBYUN—Lawyers for a Democratic Society;²³ • GongGam Human Rights Law Foundation—non-profit and full-time public interest lawyer’s organisation;²⁴ • Large local private law firms (Kim & Chang; Lee & Ko; Yoon & Yang; Bae, Kim & Lee, etc.); • Major law schools provide venue for law students’ participation and assistance in pro bono activities, including Seoul National University’s Public Interest & Legal Clinic Centre.²⁵ |
| <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>Organisations that inform lawyers of pro bono opportunities include the KBA²⁶ and the SBA²⁷.</p> <p>The Seoul Bar Association Pro Bono Support Centre²⁸ provides a bulletin board for lawyers to</p> |

²⁰ https://www.lg.co.kr/media/release/29493?utm_ (Last viewed on 15 February 2026).

²¹ https://cm.asiae.co.kr/en/article/2024070912231009181?utm_ (Last viewed on 16 February 2026).

²² <https://www.lawtimes.co.kr/news/203074> (last visited on September 24, 2025)

²³ <https://www.minbyun.or.kr/> (last visited on April 1, 2025).

²⁴ <https://www.kpil.org/about-us/> (last visited on April 1, 2025).

²⁵ <https://slcc.snu.ac.kr/?lang=en> (last visited on April 1, 2025).

²⁶ <https://www.koreanbar.or.kr/pages/main/main.asp?v=1> (last visited on April 1, 2025).

²⁷ <https://www.seoulbar.or.kr/> (last visited on April 1, 2025).

²⁸ <https://probono.seoulbar.or.kr/> (last visited on April 1, 2025).

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| | volunteer for pro bono activities. |
| 16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work? | The Lawyer Public Service Award ²⁹ is an award established and conferred by the KBA to recognise individuals and groups who advocate for human rights and contribute to society each year. In particular, the status of pro bono activities carried out by various law firms is collected through the Law Firm Public Service Evaluation Index and is taken into account for group awards. |

Acknowledgements

Name of Law Firm: Kim & Chang

Name of lawyer: Joongwon Park

Learn more

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

²⁹<https://www.koreanbar.or.kr/pages/news/view.asp?teamcode=&category=&page=1&seq=13987&types=1&searchtype=&searchstr=> (last visited on April 1, 2025).