

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Spain

Introduction

The Spanish Constitution recognises the right to free legal assistance for those who can demonstrate insufficient means to litigate. Law 1/1996, of January 10,¹ on Free Legal Assistance outlines the specific provisions and procedures for accessing these services. This law defines the eligibility criteria, the scope of services covered, and the procedural aspects of obtaining free legal aid. Pro bono services in Spain complement this system by providing legal assistance and advice to individuals and groups excluded from free legal aid. They also encompass broader social responsibility initiatives beyond legal proceedings.

In recent years, pro bono initiatives by private law firms and NGOs have grown significantly. Many firms have established dedicated pro bono departments and partnerships to provide organised, high-quality legal support to charities, NGOs, and marginalised individuals. On 28 June 2018, 28 law firms founded Fundación Pro Bono España² to strengthen pro bono efforts nationwide. By February 2025, the foundation had expanded to include 47 law firms and over 10 individual lawyers. Its mission is to facilitate access to professional legal services for those facing financial or other barriers while fostering collaboration between legal professionals, universities, and the nonprofit sector to maximise impact. These developments highlight the Spanish legal community's increasing commitment to promoting justice and equal access to legal services through structured pro bono initiatives.

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 provision of legal services by Spanish-qualified lawyers is primarily regulated by the following legal frameworks: (i) Royal Decree 135/2021, of 2 March, approving the Spanish Lawyers' Statute³ (<i>Real Decreto 135/2021, de 2 de marzo, por el que se aprueba el Estatuto General de la Abogacía Española</i>); and (ii) the</p>

¹ See <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1996-750> (last visited on 14 Feb. 2025).

² See <https://www.probonoespana.org/> (last visited on 14 Feb. 2025).

³ See <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2021-4568> (last visited on 14 Feb. 2025).

	<p>Deontological Code of Lawyers⁴ (<i>Código Deontológico</i>).</p> <p>Additionally, Law 1/1996, of 10 January,⁵ on Free Legal Assistance regulates the provision of free legal aid (<i>Asistencia Jurídica Gratuita</i>) for individuals with limited financial means.</p> <p>Private practice and in-house lawyers are required to be admitted to one of the regional Bar Associations either as a practicing lawyer (<i>abogado ejerciente</i>) or as a non-practicing lawyer (<i>abogado no ejerciente</i>).</p> <p>In addition, candidates seeking admission to a Spanish Bar Association are required: (i) to complete a specific LLM (<i>Máster de Acceso a la Abogacía</i>), which includes a period of compulsory work experience (i.e., an internship lasting between four (4) and six (6) months); and (ii) to pass the Spanish Bar Exam (Spanish Law 34/2006, of 30 October, regarding the admission to the bar (<i>Ley 34/2006, de 30 de octubre, sobre acceso a las profesiones de abogado y procurador de los tribunales</i>)).</p>
Regulatory landscape for pro bono	
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>In Spain, pro bono legal services are primarily regulated by Law 1/1996, of January 10⁶, on Free Legal Assistance, which ensures access to legal aid for individuals with insufficient financial resources. Eligible beneficiaries include low-income individuals, victims of gender-based violence, terrorism, and human trafficking, as well as certain workers and non-profit organisations. While the state-funded legal aid system is structured and regulated, there are no mandatory or minimum fees imposed on private legal services, allowing lawyers to voluntarily offer pro bono assistance. The Bar Associations facilitate access to free legal aid through Legal Guidance Services, ensuring broader access to justice.</p> <p>In addition to the above, individuals and entities that do not qualify for free legal assistance can still access pro bono legal services provided by in-</p>

⁴ See <https://www.abogacia.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Codigo-Deontologico-2019.pdf> (last visited on 14 Feb. 2025).

⁵ See <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1996-750> (last visited on 14 Feb. 2025).

⁶ See <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1996-750> (last visited on 14 Feb. 2025).

	<p>house and private practice lawyers. These lawyers may offer pro bono assistance independently or through clearinghouses and local Bar Associations, which help match cases with volunteer lawyers. The provision of these services is subject to the internal policies of each company or law firm.</p> <p>Bar Associations and clearinghouses, such as Fundación Pro Bono España, have played a key role in expanding the reach of pro bono work in Spain. Both in-house and private practice lawyers are permitted to participate in pro bono programs organised by these entities, further strengthening access to legal support for those in need.</p>
<p>3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?</p>	<p>In Spain, lawyers are required to be members of a Bar Association (<i>abogados colegiados</i>) in order to practise law. This means that to provide legal services, including pro bono services, a lawyer must be officially registered and comply with the regulations of their local Bar Association. However, the local Bar Associations do not impose specific licensing or regulatory requirements for lawyers providing pro bono services.</p> <p>Clinical legal practices (<i>clínicas jurídicas</i>), a growing practice in Spain, allow law students to offer legal assistance under the supervision of qualified lawyers. These clinics provide a unique learning environment where students, under the guidance of professionals, offer free legal services to people who cannot afford them. Although students are the ones interacting with clients, they do so under the supervision of qualified lawyers to ensure the quality and legality of the advice provided. These legal clinics are becoming increasingly popular as a means of combining legal education with pro bono work, allowing students to gain practical experience while assisting vulnerable individuals.</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>In Spain, foreign lawyers who wish to provide pro bono legal services are generally required to meet specific conditions to practice law. While they do not need a separate licence solely for pro bono work, they must comply with the</p>

	<p>following requirements⁷:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Membership in a Spanish Bar Association: To practise law in Spain, foreign lawyers must be registered with the Bar Association (<i>Colegio de Abogados</i>) in the region where they intend to work. The process for foreign lawyers to join a Bar Association typically involves recognition of their qualifications, either through a direct equivalency or by completing certain procedures, such as passing exams or demonstrating sufficient legal knowledge of Spanish law. Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: If the foreign lawyer's qualifications are not automatically recognised, they may need to go through a process of homologation or obtain special authorisation to practise law in Spain. This process is overseen by the Ministry of Justice or the relevant regional authorities
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	Lawyers are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours. However, each company or law firm may have its own internal regulations regarding pro bono work with which the relevant in-house lawyer or private practice lawyer will be expected to comply.
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	No, the rules of Bar Association (<i>Colegio de Abogados</i>) do not require aspiring lawyers 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
8. Do lawyers receive any "Continuing Legal Education" (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	In Spain, there is no mandatory Continuing Legal Education (CLE) system like in other jurisdictions, but some Bar Associations (<i>Colegios de</i>

⁷ See <http://www.abogacia.es/2016/03/30/ejercicio-de-la-abogacia-en-espana-por-graduados-o-abogados-extranjeros/> (last visited on Feb 13, 2025).

	<p>Abogados) do recognize pro bono work as part of ongoing legal training.</p> <p>However, there is no unified national system for granting formal CLE-equivalent credits for pro bono work. The recognition depends on each local Bar Association's policies.</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>Under Spanish Law, lawyers are required to cover, through insurance or an equivalent guarantee, the liability risks they may incur as a result of their business.</p> <p>Any lawyer being admitted to practice in Spain shall be covered by a professional civil liability insurance policy provided by the relevant local Bar Association. Such professional civil liability insurance policy covers pro bono legal services provided either through clearinghouses or through the relevant Bar Association.</p> <p>As an example, the professional civil liability insurance policy provided by the Madrid Bar Association (<i>Colegio de Abogados de Madrid</i>) to protect all attorneys registered therein in case of professional errors due to negligence provides the following coverage:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. insured amount: Up to €330,000 per claim; and 2. deductible: €2,500 per claim.⁸
<p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>	<p>The rules about advertising legal services in Spain apply to all legal services, including pro bono services. The Deontological Code of Lawyers in Spain prohibits several forms of advertising that could compromise the dignity of the legal profession. Specifically, it bans: (i) misleading or false advertising that could confuse or deceive the public; (ii) unsolicited advertising that might be considered aggressive or intrusive; (iii) comparative advertising that could unfairly harm the reputation of other legal professionals; and (iv) advertising that focuses on commercial or self-promotional interests, rather than public service and the professional's commitment to justice.</p>

⁸ See <https://web.icam.es/en/members-menu/civil-liability-insurance/> (last viewed on 15 October 2025).

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>In Spain, pro bono legal work mainly focuses on human rights, immigration, gender violence, housing, and labour rights. In Spain, pro bono unmet legal needs include digital rights, strategic litigation, and legal aid for social enterprises.</p>
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?</p>	<p>In Spain, pro bono legal services are provided by a mix of NGOs, such as Fundación Pro Bono España, public institutions, universities, private law firms, and corporate organisations.</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>There are no technological innovations designed specifically for pro bono legal services in Spain and no noteworthy examples as of October 2025.</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

<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Spanish law establishes the right to free legal assistance (Asistencia Jurídica Gratuita), which is funded by the State and regulated by Law 1/1996 of January 10. This right applies exclusively to individuals (natural persons) who lack sufficient financial resources involved in judicial proceedings (litigation or defence) who meet specific low-income criteria, as determined by the Commissions for Free Legal Assistance in each region.</p> <p>Such services are provided by practicing lawyers (abogados ejercientes) who voluntarily sign up</p>
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	<p>for the service through their local Bar Association (Colegio de Abogados).</p> <p>These lawyers are compensated by the State for their services, although at a lower rate than private clients.</p> <p>The most common resource for pro bono legal services are those offered by lawyers in different law firms.</p> <p>Additionally, private practitioners usually come together to set up private associations that offer pro bono legal services. The most relevant association in Spain is Fundación Pro Bono España.</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>There is no single resource that unifies all the information regarding pro bono opportunities. The most common way lawyers become aware of pro bono opportunities is through their own law firms or the associations to which the law firm is engaged, such as Fundación Pro Bono España.</p> <p>There are also global pro bono clearinghouses and legal services providers such as TrustLaw or PILnet.⁹</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>There are no Spanish national awards, lists, or rankings for pro bono work, but a Spanish financial newspaper Expansión coordinates the “Expansión Jurídico Award for Best Pro Bono Initiative”, which is a recognition granted as part of its annual awards for excellence in business law.</p>

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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.

⁹ See <https://www.trust.org/trustlaw/> and <https://www.pilnet.org/fighting-disability-discrimination-in-armenia/> (Last viewed on 14 October 2025).