

Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Uruguay

Introduction

The Uruguayan Constitution guarantees free legal services for persons without resources who qualify for them. Historically, such assistance has been offered by governmental agencies, legal clinics, and NGOs in relation to certain specific areas of law. However, lawyers and law firms in Uruguay are increasingly committed to providing pro bono legal services. The conditions of pro bono programmes in Uruguay are independently regulated by each organisation.

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 legal profession in Uruguay is regulated by Law N° 15,750, <i>Ley Orgánica De La Judicatura y de Organización de Los Tribunales</i>.¹</p> <p>Although bar affiliation is not mandatory in Uruguay, the Uruguayan Bar Association has approved a code of ethics for the legal profession. Lawyers affiliated with the Uruguayan Bar Association are bound by this code of ethics.²</p> <p>Lawyers in Uruguay must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possess a university degree that qualifies the holder to practise law; • be at least 21 years of age; and • be sworn in by the Supreme Court of Justice and be enrolled in the registry.³ <p>It is not compulsory for a lawyer in Uruguay to</p>

¹ See <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/15750-1985> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

² See <https://www.cau.org.uy/codigo-de-etica/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

³ See <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/15750-1985> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	<p>belong to the bar association; a lawyer may practise law without belonging to the Uruguayan Bar Association (<i>Colegio de Abogados del Uruguay</i>).⁴</p> <p>There are no differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel</p>
Regulatory landscape for pro bono	
2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.	<p>There are no laws regulating the performance of pro bono legal services in Uruguay.</p> <p>Several private organisations and firms provide this kind of legal service. In such cases, the conditions of each pro bono programme are independently regulated by each organisation.</p>
3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?	No licence is required for lawyers to provide pro bono legal services in Uruguay.
4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?	To provide pro bono legal services, foreign lawyers must have their law degree validated in Uruguay, but no additional licence is required.
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	Lawyers in Uruguay 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 Uruguay are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers. However, most law schools in Uruguay run legal clinics as a mandatory course for law degree candidates.
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?	There are no mandatory or formal aspirational pro bono hour targets set by the Uruguayan Bar Association (<i>Colegio de Abogados del Uruguay</i>) or any regulatory body in Uruguay. While pro bono work is encouraged as a professional and ethical commitment, participation remains voluntary and is left to the discretion of individual lawyers or law firms. Firms may voluntarily adopt structured pro bono commitments. For instance, the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas (PBDA)

⁴ See <https://www.cau.org.uy/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	commits participating firms to an average of more than 20 hours of pro bono work per lawyer per year.
8. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Lawyers in Uruguay 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?	There is no mandatory requirement for professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services provided in Uruguay.
10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	There are no specific rules that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients or apply to pro bono matters. General provisions apply regarding advertising (i.e., misleading advertising is prohibited. Misleading advertising is understood to mean any type of information or communication contained in advertising messages that is wholly or partially false, or in any other way, including by omitting essential data, is capable of misleading the consumer regarding the nature, quantity, origin, price, or products and services). ⁵
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 income thresholds set by law for legal aid entitlement are both strictly enforced (individuals with an income even slightly above such threshold will not receive assistance) and set so low that those who only just exceed the threshold are very likely to be unable to afford legal representation. Therefore, the main areas of law that require the

⁵ See <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/15750-1985> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

	provision of pro bono legal services are family and inheritance law, housing, and access to health services and high-cost medication.
12. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services?	<p>Aside from legal aid, the main providers of pro bono legal services in Uruguay are the legal clinics run by law schools. Law firms typically devote resources to pro bono legal services for NGOs.</p> <p>Universities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of the Republic,⁶ • UDE,⁷ • Catholic University of Uruguay,⁸ and • University of Montevideo.⁹ <p>Law Firms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferrere,¹⁰ • Hughes and Hughes,¹¹ • Jiménez de Aréchaga, Viana & Brause,¹² and • Guyer & Regules.¹³ <p>NGOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay</i> (IELSUR),¹⁴ and • <i>Servicio Paz y Justicia Uruguay</i> (SERPAJ).¹⁵
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?	Currently, there are no widely recognised AI or technology-driven initiatives specifically for pro bono legal services in Uruguay. However, there have been initiatives for implementing AI in legal matters, ¹⁶ and there is potential for these sorts of initiatives to help in pro bono matters in the future.

⁶ See <https://www.fder.edu.uy/consultoriojuridico> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

⁷ See <https://ude.edu.uy/facultad-de-ciencias-juridicas/> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

⁸ See <https://carreras.ucu.edu.uy/programas/ver/carrera-en-abogacia--mvd--presencial> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

⁹ See <https://www.um.edu.uy/noticias/consultorio-juridico-una-forma-de-ayudar-familias-y-formar-profesionales-de-primer-a-linea> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁰ See <https://www.ferrere.com/es/novedades/ferrere-fue-nuevamente-reconocida-como-pro-bono-leading-light/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹¹ See http://www.hughes.com.uy/corporate_responsibility (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹² See <https://www.dentons.com/es/global-presence/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/uruguay> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

¹³ See <https://www.guyer.com.uy/casos/mas-informacion-sobre-trabajo-pro-bono> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁴ See <https://www.escri-net.org/member/instituto-estudios-legales-y-sociales-del-uruguay-ielsur> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁵ See <https://www.serpai.org.uy/quienes-somos/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

¹⁶ See <https://cie.ort.edu.uy/emprendimientos/uruguayai-legal> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts

14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.

Legal aid services are administered by the Office of the Public Defender of the Capital. Legal assistance for criminal proceedings is provided free of charge, regardless of the financial situation of the individual. Legal aid in civil matters is only available for those with an income level below the thresholds set out in Supreme Court of Justice Decisions No. 7,414 and 7,807. Anyone who is single, has no significant assets, and does not have any dependents shall be granted legal aid if their income is no greater than three times the national minimum wage. Any individual who is married or has dependents and does not have any significant assets shall be granted legal aid if their income is not more than five times the national minimum wage.¹⁷

Pro Bono Clearing House

A pro bono clearing house has been set up in Uruguay with the support of the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice in New York.¹⁸ This is intended to be a link between those people who cannot access a legal service and the lawyers who can provide pro bono legal services to cover it. The Faculty of Law of the Universidad de Montevideo also participates in this project, so that its students can work on pro bono cases together with the lawyers of the Uruguayan legal firms.¹⁹

Legal Clinics

The University of the Republic provides free legal assistance through its legal office, which runs a legal clinic. This was established in 1950 as a mandatory internship for students of law at the University of the Republic. Since its inception, the legal clinic has expanded to other parts of Uruguay, resulting in the formation of neighbourhood legal clinics. The University of the Republic also has an agreement with the Municipality of Montevideo in which the University of the Republic provides staff and the municipality

¹⁷ See <http://seleccion.poderjudicial.gub.uy/seleccion/archivos/acordada7414.pdf> and <https://www.poderjudicial.gub.uy/documentos/69-2014/2829-087-2014-acordada-7807-modifica-art-3-de-la-acordada-7414-acceso-a-defensorias-publicas.html> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

¹⁸ See <https://fundacionprobonouy.org/> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

¹⁹ See <https://www.um.edu.uy/noticias/presentacion-de-la-fundacion-pro-bono-uruguay> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

provides the necessary infrastructure. Similar legal offices have been founded throughout other cities in Uruguay, including Salto, Paysandú, Bella Union, and Maldonado.

The University of Montevideo and the Catholic University also run legal clinics.

Neighbourhood Legal Clinics (C.E.D, Faculty of Law, University of the Republic).

The C.E.D. is the trade association formed by law and notary students. The primary and essential object of their offices (of which there are many across Montevideo) is to provide advice, assistance, and free legal representation to people who request them according to certain pre-established criteria.²⁰

Law Firms

Several law firms and private practitioners also provide pro bono legal services:

- Ferrere: The firm is aware of the difficulties to access justice faced by some community members, and it has assumed an ethical commitment to performing pro bono activities to provide such access. Therefore, pro bono work is promoted as an integral part of the professional duties.²¹
- Hughes and Hughes: The firm is a founding member of the pro bono clearing house in Uruguay. The firm also provides pro bono legal services to: (i) Fundación Los Pinos; (ii) Movimiento Scout del Uruguay; (iii) One Laptop per Child; (iv) Cande Down side Up; (v) Cámara de Comercio Uruguay-Australia; (vi) Cámara de Comercio Uruguay-EEUU; (vii) Cámara de Comercio Uruguayo-Británica; and (viii) Club Social y Deportivo CYSSA de Juan Lacaze.²²
- Jiménez de Aréchaga, Viana & Brause: The firm participates in social projects such as the Ronald McDonald House Association of

²⁰ See <https://ced.uy/index.php> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²¹ See <https://www.ferrere.com/es/novedades/ferrere-fue-nuevamente-reconocida-como-pro-bono-leading-light/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²² See http://www.hughes.com.uy/corporate_responsibility (last visited on 7 January 2025).

Uruguay (a non-profit organisation focused on promoting philanthropic, educational, and scientific work in order to help Uruguayan children and their families).²³

- Guyer & Regules': Lawyers at this firm each provide 12-15 hours of pro bono legal services a year. Recipients include: (i) the Jubilar High School, a private school whose goal is to provide education to the most disadvantaged sectors of the population; and (ii) DESEM, the local arm of Junior Achievement Worldwide, which seeks to develop entrepreneurial skills at early ages. Guyer & Regules' also successfully negotiated with Uruguay's Ministry of Economy and parliament to introduce to the national budget tax deductions on donations to (high) school education in low-income neighbourhoods.²⁴

NGOs

- *The Instituto de Estudios Legales y Sociales del Uruguay* (IELSUR): The IELSUR is an NGO that was founded in July 1984 by a group of lawyers to provide litigation and other forms of legal support in human rights violations that occurred during the civil-military dictatorship between 1973 and 1985. Today, IELSUR continues to fight human rights violations on a wider scale. IELSUR collaborates with several organisations, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, ESCR-Net, the International Action Network on Small Arms, and the Latin American Coalition Against Gun Violence.²⁵
- *Servicio Paz y Justicia Uruguay* (SERPAJ): SERPAJ is an NGO that focuses on advocacy, education, and defence of human rights and peace. SERPAJ does not provide direct legal assistance but rather organises conferences and maintains a reference network of lawyers providing pro bono legal services.²⁶

²³ See <https://www.dentons.com/es/about-dentons/news-events-and-awards/news/2021/september/dentons-iimenez-de-arechaga-supports-the-ronald-mcdonald-house-association> (last visited on 29 January 2025).

²⁴ See <https://www.guyer.com.uy/casos/mas-informacion-sobre-trabajo-pro-bono> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁵ See <https://www.es-cr-net.org/member/instituto-estudios-legales-y-sociales-del-uruguay-ielsur> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

²⁶ See <https://www.serpaj.org.uy/quienes-somos/> (last visited on 7 January 2025).

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?	There is no public or private organisation that centralises pro bono opportunities in Uruguay. A foreign attorney interested in conducting pro bono work should contact the organisations mentioned in II.(d).2 above.
16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?	There are no national awards, lists, or rankings specifically recognising pro bono work in Uruguay.

Acknowledgements

In connection with this chapter, we are grateful for the support and insight of local counsel: **Ferrere**

Learn more

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