

REUTERS/Kacper Pempel

# 2026 Global Pro Bono Guide

Practical guidance on pro bono practices  
and opportunities worldwide.

Explore the Guide in full: [probonoguide.trust.org](https://probonoguide.trust.org)

LATHAM & WATKINS<sup>LLP</sup>

PBI | PROBONO  
INSTITUTE

TrustLaw

Thomson Reuters  
Foundation

# Executive Summary

# The Global Landscape of Pro Bono

Pro bono legal services have never been more widely practised, more institutionally supported, or more geographically widespread than they are today. And yet the gap between supply and need remains significant. An estimated two-thirds of the world's population has unmet justice needs, and legal needs in the third sector continue to rise.

The 2026 Global Pro Bono Guide was designed as a practical resource to make information on pro bono practice more accessible and to support the legal community in expanding pro bono services worldwide. It helps legal teams navigate the pro bono landscape and deliver meaningful support to those who need it most and to help close the justice gap. The Guide draws on research from more than 70 local law firms and a Latham team of more than 140 lawyers. It covers 103 jurisdictions and offers in depth insights into pro bono practice around the world.

This edition marks a milestone. For the first time, it brings together the Survey of Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities, first published by Latham & Watkins and Pro Bono Institute in 2005 and expanded significantly over the years, and the Global Corporate Pro Bono Map, published by Latham & Watkins and TrustLaw, the Thomson Reuters Foundation's global pro bono network, in 2017. The result is a single, practical Guide to navigating pro bono across the globe, with guidance for corporate legal departments and law firms alike.



Across the 103 jurisdictions, a few themes emerge:

- Pro bono is expanding in reach and maturing in its institutional infrastructure, while slowly attracting the attention of lawmakers, regulators, and sector-led collaboratives working to increase access to justice.
- Mandatory pro bono targets and CLE recognition remain the exception, while voluntary targets and initiatives to grow the practice are spreading.
- Insurance and licensing remain important considerations, especially for corporate legal teams and foreign-qualified lawyers.
- Opportunities for pro bono abound and tech innovations are being deployed around the world in new, creative ways to support stronger pro bono administration and to expand access to reliable legal information and advice.

The overall picture is an encouraging one, with a growing range of opportunities to engage with pro bono and momentum continuing to build in markets with less institutionalised pro bono practices.

<sup>1</sup> World Justice Project, *Measuring the Justice Gap: A People Centered Assessment of Unmet Justice Needs Around the World (2019)*. Available at: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/publications/special-reports/measuring-justice-gap>

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Reuters Foundation, *Rising Pressure, Rising Needs: A TRF Insights Survey (2026)*, which found that 50% of civil society organisations reported rising legal needs over the last year, with figures even higher in some regions (65% in Asia, 70% in North America).

<sup>3</sup> Latham & Watkins LLP & Thomson Reuters Foundation (TrustLaw), *Global Corporate Pro Bono Map* (July 2017)

## Themes emerging from the 2026 Guide

### Pro bono remains largely unregulated as a standalone practice, but sector-led initiatives are spreading

In most jurisdictions, lawyers provide pro bono legal assistance under the same general professional conduct rules that govern their paid work. Notably, across all 103 jurisdictions surveyed, not one requires a separate licence or standing specifically for pro bono work.

On balance, this is positive. It reflects a largely permissive environment that allows lawyers to offer pro bono services without bureaucratic barriers. Where regulatory intervention has occurred, it has not always helped: mandatory frameworks can sometimes entrench narrow definitions of pro bono, and risk substituting for — rather than supplementing — properly funded legal aid. But the absence of regulatory attention to pro bono is not without risk: where regulatory bodies neither encourage, recognise, nor protect pro bono activity, pro bono may remain niche and individualised, or may be unintentionally caught up in regulatory barriers for paid work, such as minimum fee regulations.

Here, sector-led and voluntary models have a meaningful role to play. Pro bono recognition lists,<sup>4</sup> dedicated pro bono days and weeks<sup>5</sup>, sector-led collaboratives<sup>6</sup>, and voluntary targets are spreading. As a result, we see stronger ecosystems of pro bono practice emerging built on professional commitment and collaboration rather than obligation.

### Regulatory mandatory targets for pro bono remain the exception

A few jurisdictions have introduced mandatory pro bono requirements, but these remain the exception: only 8 of the 103 jurisdictions surveyed have adopted them. South Korea and South Africa are among better-known examples, but similar approaches have taken hold in other markets. In the EU region, for the first time, the European Commission's 2025 EU Strategy for Civil Society explicitly recognises pro bono legal support as a “strategic pillar” of a healthy civic ecosystem.



REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

<sup>4</sup> For example, the [Pro Bono Recognition List of England & Wales](#), launched in 2024.

<sup>5</sup> [Collaboration for organising your jurisdiction's pro bono week](#) (2023)

<sup>6</sup> Global Pro Bono Hub, [The Rise of Networks for Dedicated Law Firm Pro Bono Professionals](#) (2024)

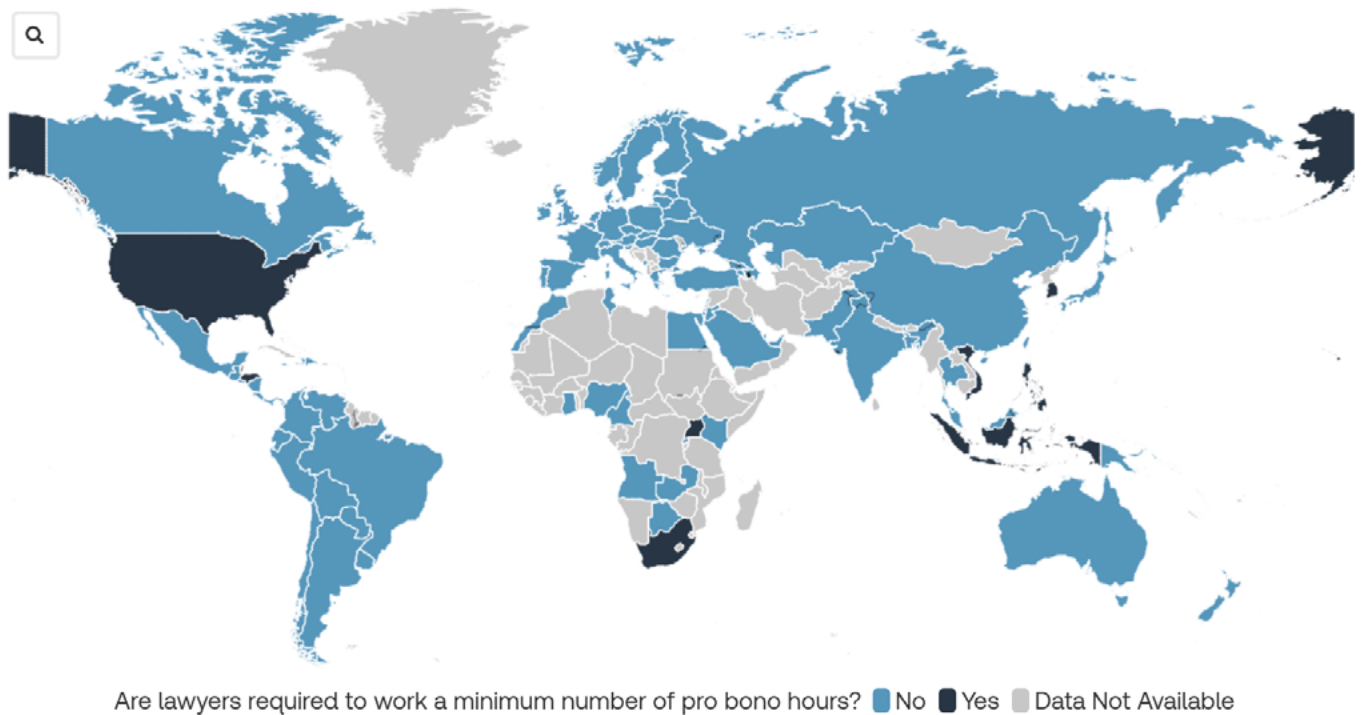


Image credit: Thomson Reuters Foundation<sup>7</sup>

Mandatory targets are most notable in Asia and Africa. South Korea requires 30 hours of pro bono annually, with the option to make a financial contribution to a pro bono fund in lieu. Vietnam sets a minimum of 4 hours per year, while Indonesia's PERADI recommends 50 hours, with non-compliance potentially affecting an advocate's ability to obtain or renew their identity card. In the Philippines the recently approved Unified Legal Aid Service (ULAS) Rules require covered lawyers to provide at least 60 hours of pro bono legal aid every three years. While Malaysia does not impose any obligation to perform pro bono work under the Legal Profession Act, every aspiring lawyer is required to serve on a pro bono basis at a legal aid centre for at least 14 days during their period of pupillage.

In Africa, South Africa requires lawyers to contribute 40 hours of community service annually under the Legal Practice Act, and Uganda similarly mandates 40 hours of pro bono per year, with a payment in lieu option. In Nigeria, lawyers seeking appointment as Senior Advocate must demonstrate the diligent conduct of at least three pro bono cases in the preceding year.

In the United States, mandatory requirements remain largely limited: only New York State requires pro bono work, setting 50 hours as a condition for bar admission. Elsewhere in the country, aspirational targets prevail. The American Bar Association recommends 50 hours per year, and many states have adopted targets ranging from 20 to 50 hours.

There is debate about how effective mandatory requirements are. The available data does not show a clear link between regulated mandatory targets and higher reported pro bono hours.<sup>8</sup> Critics worry about unintended consequences: mandatory frameworks can undermine political will to fund legal aid properly, and regulated

<sup>7</sup> See country chapters Survey question 5: "Are there regulations that require lawyers to work a minimum number of pro bono hours?"

<sup>8</sup> Thomson Reuters Foundation, [Index of Pro Bono 2024](#). While we do not see a relationship of increased hours in jurisdictions with mandated targets from regulators, it is of interest to note that mandatory targets for lawyers within law firms do tend to correlate to higher reported hours in those firms. See also, [Pro Bono Institute, 2025 Report on the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative](#). "[T]here is some indication that [law] firms requiring lawyers to participate in pro bono appear to have higher participation rates and pro bono hours overall. However, . . . it also appears that firms with the highest pro bono hours do not have mandatory pro bono policies."

definitions of pro bono are often narrower than the full scope of community need<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, pro bono practice is robust and growing in both South Africa and New York, suggesting that well-designed mandatory frameworks may support strong cultures of contribution. Much depends on how pro bono is defined within any given framework: a narrow definition may risk distorting participation, while a more open and flexible one may dilute the focus on the most underserved clients.

Voluntary targets have proven at least as influential, and in many markets more so. Such measures are typically championed by bar associations and law societies such as the Canadian Bar Association's 50-hour target and the Hong Kong Law Society's Gold-Silver-Bronze recognition tiers from 20 to 100 hours, as well as by pro bono organisations such as the Australian National Pro Bono Centre, which maintains a 35-hour target, and the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas, led by the Vance Center, which sets a 25-hour benchmark<sup>10</sup>. Law firm and corporate legal department collaboratives are playing an increasingly important role, with the UK Collaborative Plan's 25-hour target among the most prominent examples.

Beyond voluntary or aspirational targets, Continuing Legal Education (CLE) or equivalent credits can be used to promote and incentivise pro bono participation. While still relatively rare, 6 of the 103 surveyed jurisdictions, namely the United States, Tanzania, the Philippines, England and Wales, the United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia, now offer some form of professional development or CLE credit for pro bono hours. In some of these countries this may depend on whether the pro bono work qualifies as training or learning activity for regulatory purposes.

## Insurance and licensing as structural considerations

Professional indemnity insurance requirements and local licensing rules generally apply to pro bono, as for paid work, but can sometimes act as a barrier. Two groups tend to be more affected: in-house lawyers who in many jurisdictions are excluded from employer insurance coverage when providing advice outside their organisation, or are restricted by their terms of admission to advising only their employer; and foreign-qualified lawyers, who may need to navigate local qualification requirements before they can volunteer.

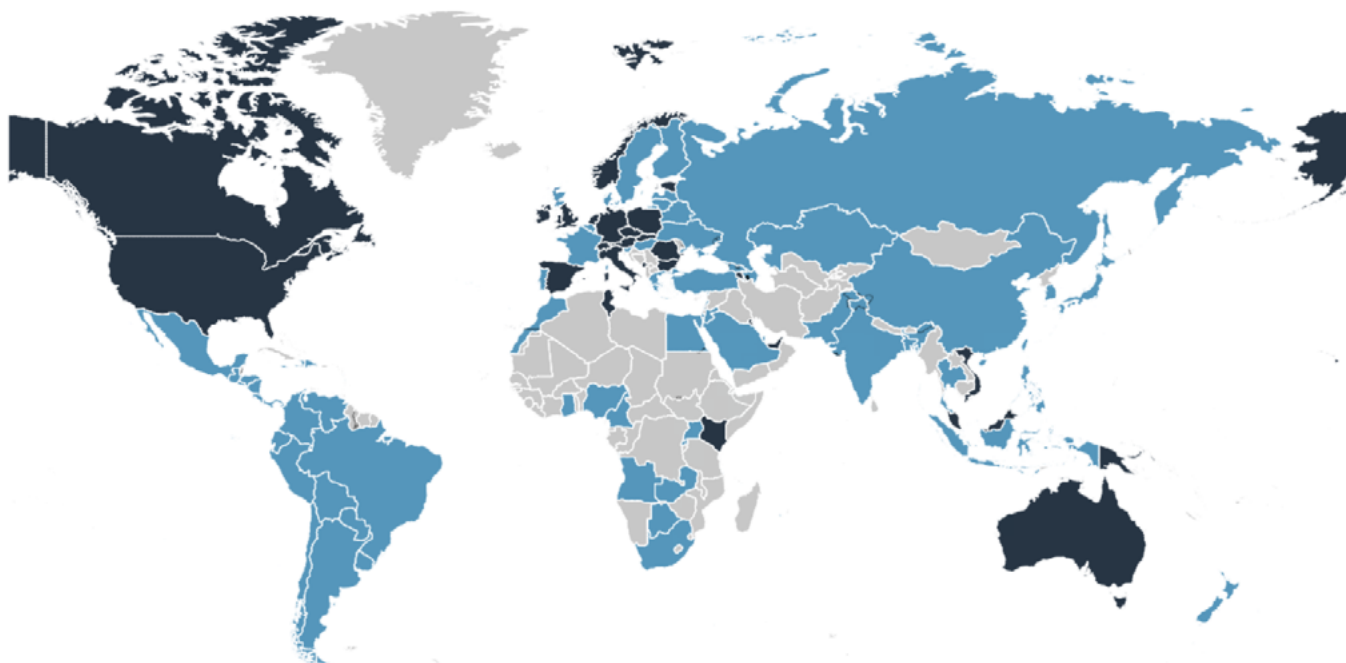
The data offers some reassurance. Just under a third of jurisdictions require insurance cover for in-house lawyers to deliver pro bono, meaning that in most markets, insurance is not a regulatory barrier (though it can still be worth seeking out, depending on the work involved). For foreign-qualified lawyers, 77% of jurisdictions require additional licensing, registration or other steps before providing pro bono legal advice.



REUTERS/Eric Vidal

<sup>9</sup> International Bar Association Pro Bono Committee, *'The Development of Pro Bono in Asia: Opportunities and Challenges'* (IBA 2019); 'Mandatory Pro Bono in the Philippines'.

<sup>10</sup> In the United States, Pro Bono Institute sets benchmarks for law firms of three to five percent of billable hours or 60-100 hours per lawyer, and a 50 percent participation target for legal staff at corporate legal departments.



Is professional indemnity insurance required for pro bono work by in-house lawyers? ■ No ■ Yes ■ Data Not Available

Image credit: Thomson Reuters Foundation<sup>11</sup>

Where insurance is mandatory for in-house lawyers, it need not be a bar: practical routes forward include partnering with a law firm or clearinghouse whose insurance will extend to cover the work, focusing on non-reserved activities such as legal education or governance advice, and seeking specialist support from clearinghouses. For a full discussion of the landscape for corporate legal departments see our dedicated in-house chapter: [The global landscape of in-house pro bono](#).

Similarly, foreign-qualified lawyers are rarely without options: supervised work, desk-based legal research, and other non-reserved activities often provide a practical route into pro bono even where full local licensing is required. To find out more, please see the [Guide's country chapters](#).

## A growing ecosystem of support

One of the most encouraging developments over the years has been the proliferation of initiatives designed to support, recognise, and expand pro bono practice. Pro bono recognition lists, dedicated pro bono days and weeks,<sup>12</sup> and sector-led pro bono professional networks<sup>13</sup> have become increasingly common features of the landscape. Voluntary targets, championed by bar associations, pro bono organisations, and sector collaboratives alike, provide a framework for participation without the rigidity of regulation.

Equally important has been the growth of local, regional, and global clearinghouses, intermediary organisations that connect lawyers with those who need their help, reduce the friction of pro bono engagement, and build the institutional knowledge that sustains practice over time. International players such as the Thomson Reuters Foundation (TrustLaw), PILnet and the Vance Center offer local and cross-jurisdictional pro bono opportunities across the globe, while strong national actors such as Fundación Pro Bono Colombia<sup>14</sup> and ProBono.Org<sup>15</sup> in

<sup>11</sup> See country chapters Survey question 9: "Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?"

<sup>12</sup> [Collaboration for organising your jurisdiction's pro bono week](#) (2023)

<sup>13</sup> Global Pro Bono Hub, [The Rise of Networks for Dedicated Law Firm Pro Bono Professionals](#) (2024)

<sup>14</sup> [Fundación ProBono Colombia](#)

<sup>15</sup> [ProBono.org](#)

South Africa galvanise support and facilitate pro bono engagement within local ecosystems. Leading pro bono organisations and networks such as Pro Bono Institute in the US, Australian Pro Bono Centre, and Thomson Reuters Foundation (TrustLaw) also play a crucial role providing research, coordination and advocacy for stronger pro bono practice.

## Technology as an enabler

Globally, we see technology initiatives — from AI-powered intake tools to chatbots providing multilingual legal triage — reshaping how pro bono services are delivered, and how legal advice and information are offered at scale. This is a fast-moving trend.

In Australia, for example Justice Connect has launched SmartAssist—a natural language processing model that generates plain English summaries of legal issues. In South Korea, UNHCR partnered with a South Korean AI/IT services company to deploy AI for refugee litigation.<sup>16</sup> In Argentina, the Justibot chatbot (relaunched in 2025) provides free, plain language guidance on procedures, documents, and deadlines in the Buenos Aires courts.<sup>17</sup> By handling basic information and triage for unrepresented users, the aim is to free up pro bono lawyers to focus on complex cases rather than routine queries. Chatbots are proliferating globally, from Thailand's LAW-U to Hong Kong's Pobot and Pakistan's NAZ Assist (trained on over 450,000 legal assistance calls).

In the United States, Microsoft's pro bono programme developed an AI-powered Copilot to automate the preparation of complex immigration forms, while Thomson Reuters' AI for Justice programme equips legal nonprofits with CoCounsel, an AI-assisted legal research tool. European firms are also deploying AI in public interest work. Norton Rose Fulbright used an AI-assisted e-discovery platform for the UK's Covid-19 inquiry,<sup>18</sup> and Hogan Lovells is collaborating with LawFairy, a UK-based legal technology platform, on an AI tool for immigration casework.<sup>19</sup>

The rapid adoption of AI is not without regulatory complexity. The EU Artificial Intelligence Act imposes transparency and human oversight requirements for high-risk AI systems, and many bar associations and regulators around the globe are rightfully scrutinising AI-assisted legal delivery. As AI and other automated technologies are adopted to improve pro bono efficiency and expand access to justice, rigorously managing key risks, such as inaccurate outputs and algorithmic bias, will be crucial to successful and ethical innovation.

## A note on the road ahead

The gap in legal need and access to justice is not a problem that pro bono alone can solve. State-funded legal aid, structural legal reform, and investment in the institutions that deliver justice are all essential.

But the legal profession's willingness to contribute its expertise freely, and enabling those contributions with the right regulatory and institutional frameworks, makes a significant difference. We hope this Guide serves as a useful tool for everyone working to expand that contribution.

---

<sup>16</sup> [LG CNS Donates AI Legal Support Service to UNHCR to Aid Refugees](#) (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Oxford University, Blavatnik School of Government, ['Argentina – Focused AI adoption, with expansion'](#) (Tech & Justice, 2025)

<sup>18</sup> [Lawyers turn to AI to expand pro bono work](#), Financial Times.

<sup>19</sup> [Hogan Lovells Partners with LawFairy to Launch Legal Intelligence System for Undocumented Children](#) (2026).

## How to use the Global Pro Bono Guide

From the homepage of the Global Pro Bono Guide, you can navigate by region to the jurisdiction you are interested in.

Each country chapter opens with an "At a glance" table covering the most operationally important regulatory questions: whether insurance is required, whether foreign lawyers need additional licensing to do pro bono, whether in-house lawyers face practice limitations. The narrative sections that follow in each chapter provide additional context.

The Guide speaks to:

- Law firms who are planning cross-border projects and growing their pro bono engagement across offices. The Guide offers a quick reference to assess regulatory considerations, identify clearinghouse and social sector partners, and understand insurance requirements.
- Corporate legal departments who are looking to grow participation in pro bono, to be able to quickly identify where corporate lawyers can participate directly and where insurance requirements might benefit from working in partnership with a law firm or clearinghouse partner.
- Clearinghouses, bar associations and sector actors to compare frameworks and models of participation and identify opportunities for growth and reform to support the practice of pro bono.

Explore the [full Guide](#).

*The Global Pro Bono Guide is a collaborative initiative of Latham & Watkins LLP, Pro Bono Institute and TrustLaw, the Thomson Reuters Foundation's global pro bono network. Latham & Watkins led and coordinated the research, and most country chapters were prepared by local law firms who are acknowledged in each chapter (where applicable). Each chapter reflects the regulatory position as of 2025, when the bulk of research was conducted. The Guide is an introductory resource, not a substitute for local legal advice.*