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2026 Global Pro Bono Guide

Practical guidance on pro bono practices
and opportunities worldwide.

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The global landscape of in-house pro bono

Introduction

Corporate legal departments have an important role to play in the pro bono landscape. They bring business acumen, sector expertise and global reach, and there is growing appetite to use those skills for good.

The 2026 Global Pro Bono Guide, covering 103 jurisdictions, provides a practical roadmap to help law firms and corporate legal departments navigate the regulatory, licensing and insurance requirements for local and foreign-qualified lawyers delivering pro bono services where they work. This edition aims to clearly highlight where the regulatory or insurance positions are distinct for corporate legal teams as compared with lawyers in private practice.

The guide maps the regulatory landscape corporate legal departments need to navigate, and this overview highlights practical tips to overcome some barriers to doing pro bono.

01. Navigating practice limitations

In most of the world, in-house lawyers do not face specific regulatory restrictions on pro bono. They are subject to the same professional rules as all lawyers and are not singled out or excluded. As a result, in-house pro bono is growing and thriving in many places, from Latin America to India.

On the other hand, a sizable minority of jurisdictions do impose specific practice limits on in-house lawyers: 31 of 103 (27%). These limits typically restrict or prohibit in-house lawyers from providing legal services to anyone other than their employer. Where they exist, they can feel like a significant obstacle, but often practical workarounds are available to engage with pro bono while remaining compliant.

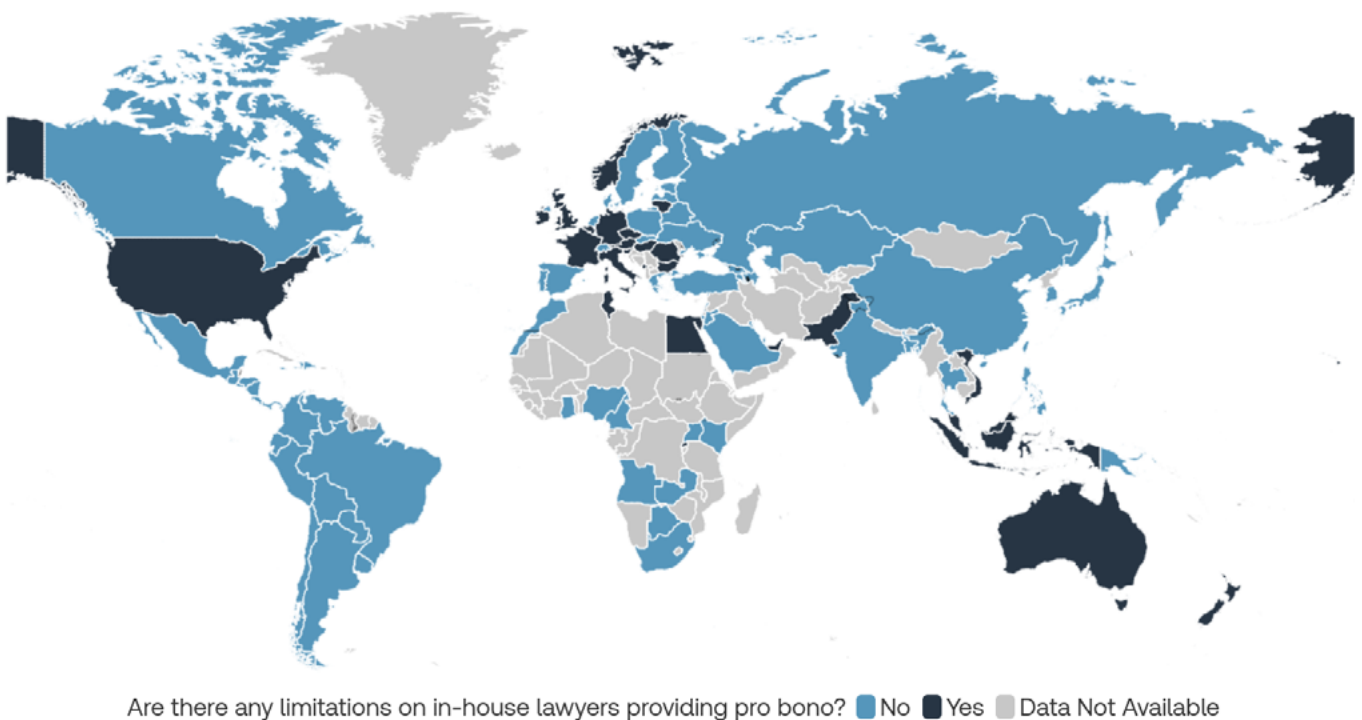


Image credit: Thomson Reuters Foundation¹

These restrictions are more concentrated in Europe, where 19 of 40 jurisdictions (48%) impose some form of limit. This reflects a civil law tradition of treating lawyers employed by corporations as a distinct category from independent practitioners. The picture elsewhere is more open.

The restrictions vary in degree. At the stricter end, in-house lawyers in Pakistan are effectively barred from any external legal work, including pro bono.² In the Republic of Ireland in-house lawyers are not allowed to advise external clients directly.³ However, they can still do pro bono work by partnering with organisations such as private law firms, community law centres, or citizens' advice bureaux respectively. In many European civil law countries, in-house lawyers are classified as employees or "jurists" rather than as regulated lawyers. As a result, they are not bar members and are generally limited to advising their employer and cannot represent external clients in court, regardless of their legal qualifications. The extent of restriction varies. The position is strongest in Austria and Lithuania, where in-house lawyers are not admitted advocates for external practice;

¹ See country chapters Survey questions 1, 2 and 9 on the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services (including professional indemnity legal insurance cover) in general and those that specifically regulate provision of pro bono services.

² See country chapter: Pakistan

³ See country chapter: Republic of Ireland

France and Italy are similar in principle, although the nuance is that a bar-admitted in-house lawyer may in some circumstances undertake external pro bono separately from their employment role, subject to professional rules, conflicts and insurance. Germany is the clearest example of a formal split: *Syndikusrechtsanwälte* are legally confined to advising and representing their employer, so external pro bono must be undertaken outside the in-house role, typically through separate bar-regulated practice or in partnership with a law firm or pro bono organisation with appropriate professional indemnity cover⁴. In others, including Czechia and Slovenia, the restrictions focus mainly on representing clients in court or before administrative authorities, meaning in-house lawyers can still provide out-of-court pro bono advice and research work.

Latin America sits at the other end of the spectrum. None of its 20 surveyed jurisdictions impose practice limits or insurance requirements on in-house lawyers. The picture in other regions is mixed: in the Asia-Pacific region, 35 percent of surveyed jurisdictions (6 of 17) impose practice limits on in-house lawyers, while in Africa, such restrictions affect 21 percent (3 of 14) of surveyed jurisdictions.



Practical tip: Navigating practice restriction

In most restricted jurisdictions, in-house lawyers can still participate in pro bono by working under the supervision of, or in partnership with, an authorised body such as a law firm or legal services organisation (LSOs). In England and Wales, in-house solicitors may deliver pro bono provided the work is supervised by an authorised firm or not-for-profit law centre⁵ in the Republic of Ireland, collaboration with a law firm or community law centre is the recognised route. This collaborative model works in most restricted jurisdictions and has the added benefit of providing access to the supervising firm's or relevant organisation's professional indemnity insurance.



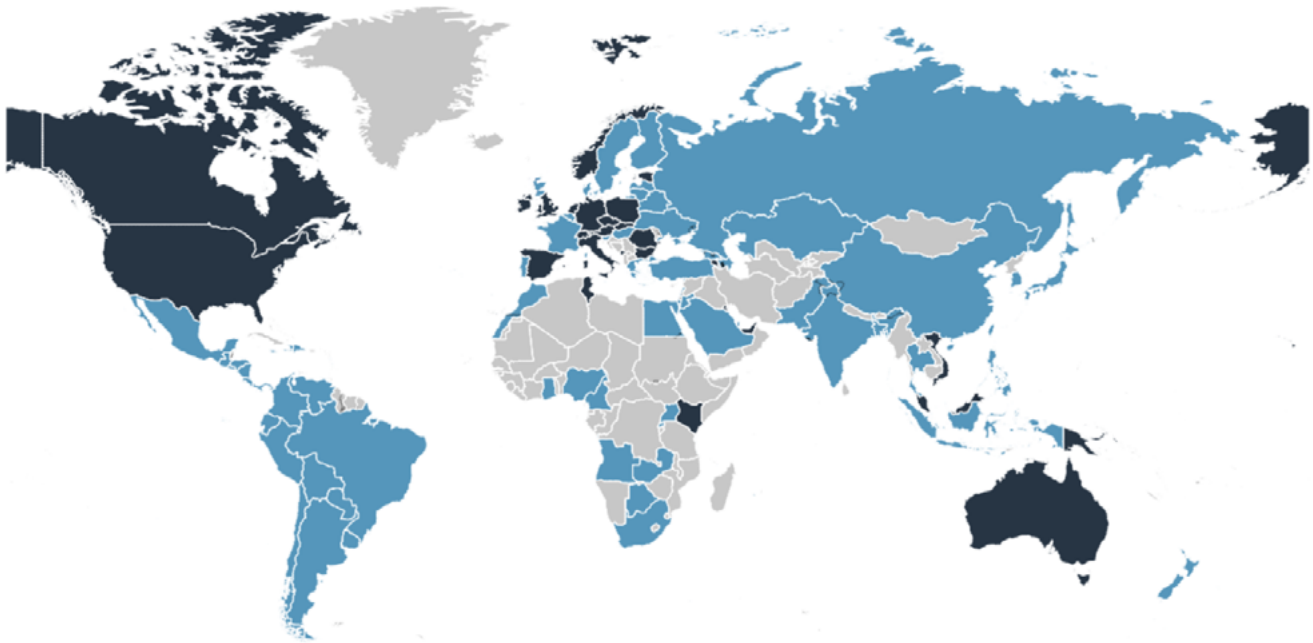
REUTERS/Ivan Alvarado

⁴ See country chapter: Germany

⁵ See country chapter: England and Wales

02. Professional indemnity insurance

A common consideration for corporate pro bono teams is professional indemnity insurance. Where such insurance is mandatory and such coverage is not readily available, it can pose a meaningful barrier to participation. Based on the results of our survey, 31 of 103 jurisdictions require in-house lawyers to hold professional indemnity insurance for pro bono work, including Australia, Canada, England and Wales, Germany, the Netherlands, and Singapore. Even where insurance is not strictly mandatory, it can be advisable to consider particularly for higher-risk work.



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

Image credit: Thomson Reuters Foundation⁶



Practical tips: Getting insurance coverage for pro bono work

- **Check your existing policy first.** Ask your risk management team whether your company's existing policy covers pro bono work. Some do.
- **Ask your insurer for a rider.** Increasingly, insurers are willing to add a free or low-cost endorsement to an existing corporate policy to cover employed lawyers doing pro bono.
- **Use a partnership model.** Where in-house lawyers work collaboratively with a law firm or authorised body or a legal services organisation, the firm or LSO's professional indemnity insurance may extend to cover the work of the in-house lawyers.
- **Work with a pro bono membership organisation that offers insurance.** Some pro bono clearinghouses and organisations provide insurance coverage for volunteer lawyers. The Australian Pro Bono Centre operates a National Pro Bono Professional Indemnity Insurance Scheme, underwritten by LawCover, which provides in-house lawyers with free insurance for approved pro bono projects.⁷ This is the most developed model of its kind. In England and Wales, LawWorks membership offers a comparable insurance pathway.⁸

⁶ See country chapters Survey question 9: *Is professional indemnity insurance required or a standard feature for pro bono work by in-house lawyers?*

⁷ See country chapter: Australia.

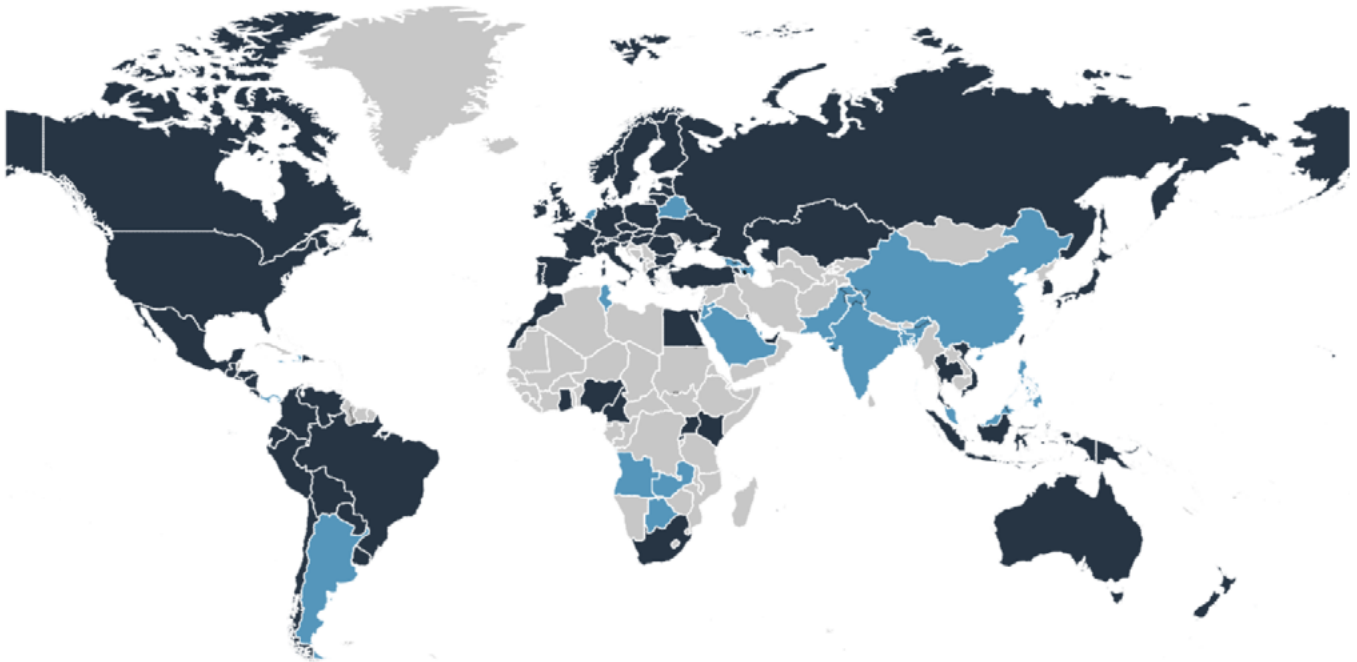
⁸ See [LawWorks, 'In house pro bono' and 'Practice guidance: solicitors and pro bono – regulatory issues' \(LawWorks, 2020–2024\)](#).

03. Foreign-qualification rules and multinational teams

Many corporate legal departments are multinational, routinely employing foreign-qualified lawyers in jurisdictions where they are not locally admitted. In most places, practice rules permit foreign-licensed in-house lawyers to represent their employer — often through a registration process — but many of these rules limit representation to the employer-client only. The question of whether a foreign-qualified in-house lawyer can also do pro bono is a separate and often more restrictive consideration.

The 2026 Guide reveals that 70 percent (72 of 103) of jurisdictions require foreign-qualified lawyers to obtain additional licensing to provide pro bono.

In Hong Kong, for example, foreign-qualified in-house lawyers are generally limited to advising on their home jurisdiction's law and cannot appear as Registered Foreign Lawyers in their own individual capacity;⁹ they may only assist locally qualified colleagues under supervision. In the United States, many jurisdictions permit non-locally US licensed lawyers to provide pro bono legal services, whether broadly or subject to certain conditions.¹⁰ By contrast, fewer jurisdictions expressly allow foreign-qualified lawyers to provide pro bono legal services.



Can foreign lawyers practice pro bono in this jurisdiction? ■ No ■ Yes ■ Data Not Available

Image credit: Thomson Reuters Foundation¹²

¹² See country chapters Survey question 4: “Do foreign qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?”



Practical tips: If your team includes foreign-qualified lawyers

- **Check the rules before assigning pro bono work.** Rules vary significantly. Check the relevant chapter and with local regulatory bodies for the position in each jurisdiction.
- **Use supervision to enable participation.** In most jurisdictions that permit foreign-qualified in-house lawyers to do pro bono, services must be provided in association with an approved organisation or under the supervision of a locally licensed lawyer. Creating an easy to access supervision structure is a reliable way to include foreign-qualified colleagues.
- **Register where registration is available.** In several jurisdictions, foreign-qualified in-house lawyers can register with the local bar or court, and that registration may also unlock permission to do pro bono work. In Japan, for example, foreign-qualified lawyers can register as registered foreign lawyers (*gaikokuho-jimu-bengoshi*) with the local bar association which formally allows them to provide pro bono legal services within their permitted scope of practice.¹³ Check whether registration is available in your jurisdiction and what pro bono opportunities it might unlock.
- **Broaden your approach.** Not every valuable contribution to a pro bono project requires a licence to practise. Non-admitted lawyers and non-lawyers alike can offer skills such as research, administration and subject matter expertise including data privacy, anti-money laundering and communications. Corporate legal teams are often particularly well-placed to contribute this kind of specialist knowledge.
- **Consider international projects.** Certain international projects (such as cross-jurisdictional research) will require an understanding of legal requirements in multiple jurisdictions. Where your team includes lawyers qualified in the relevant jurisdiction(s), this can be an asset. Global clearinghouses like TrustLaw and PILnet often facilitate these types of cross-border pro bono opportunities.



¹³ See country chapter: Japan

04. Targets and other incentives for pro bono

Most jurisdictions do not mandate a minimum number of pro bono hours for in-house lawyers (or other lawyers), but aspirational targets are increasingly influential in driving participation, including:

- Pro Bono Institute Corporate Pro Bono Challenge® Initiative (global/US): encourages 50% of legal staff to participate in pro bono
- Australian National Pro Bono Target: 20-hour annual target, open to in-house lawyers; 300+ signatories covering nearly 20,000 lawyers
- UK In House Pro Bono Pledge: graduated participation target of 25%, rising to 50%
- Ireland Pro Bono Pledge: 20-hour annual target, open to in-house teams
- Singapore SCCA Pro Bono Pledge: dedicated pledge for in-house lawyers

Similarly, CLE credit for pro bono remains rare — only six jurisdictions currently enable it (some jurisdictions in the United States, Tanzania, the Philippines, England and Wales, Malaysia and the UAE) — but where it is available it provides a straightforward professional incentive for pro bono participation. Legal departments operating in those jurisdictions should make sure their lawyers are aware of it. While jurisdictions like Uganda and Singapore do not offer general CLE credit for pro bono, they do offer niche incentives, for example, points for participating in a specific annual day or supervising students. In Kenya, CLE points are only issued subject to the determination of a Continuous Professional Development Committee.

Explore the [country chapters of the Guide](#) to find out about other local initiatives and collaboratives that can support and help grow engagement with your corporate legal department pro bono programme, from pro bono recognition lists to pro bono weeks and days.

A note on the road ahead for corporate pro bono

The global trend is towards greater support, more dedicated pledges and a growing recognition among corporate legal teams that pro bono is more than good citizenship: it is good for business, good for the profession and good for the communities that need legal help most.

We hope the Guide is a useful tool for everyone working to expand that contribution.

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.

Explore the full [Guide](#).

Other useful resources

- The [Guide to In-House Pro Bono](#) (2024) issued by the In-House Pro Bono Group in the UK is a short practical resource for navigating and overcoming common challenges for in-house pro bono.
- The [Corporate Pro Bono Project \(CPBO\)](#) from Pro Bono Institute regularly publishes helpful, practical resources for in-house teams, including the Pro Bono Development Guide: How to Start an In-House Pro Bono Program, the Business Case for In-House Pro Bono, and many others.
- [Pro Bono Legal Work: A Guide for In-House Corporate Lawyers](#) (2023) from the Australian Pro Bono Centre offers helpful tips for in-house pro bono generally and in the Australian context, along with examples of successful pro bono collaborations.

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.