

**Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Russia**

**I. Introduction**

Russia does not have a long history of providing pro bono legal services as the Russian legal market has only been developing for less than 30 years. However, the trend is toward increasing the pro bono legal services provided by law firms in Russia due to the policies of international law firms which have introduced a good philosophy and tradition of pro bono.

**II. Overview of Pro Bono Practices**

(a)	<b>Professional Regulation</b>	
	<p>1. Describe the laws/rules that regulate the provision of legal services?</p>	<p>Pro bono legal services as well as legal aid are regulated by the Federal Law “On Free Legal Aid” (the “<b>Free Legal Aid Law</b>”). According to the Free Legal Aid Law, pro bono legal services can be provided by any person who has a legal degree from a Russian university, except for representation in criminal proceedings, which can only be provided by state-licensed attorneys (called “<b>advocates</b>”). At the same time, the Free Legal Aid Law generally regulates only pro bono legal services provided by law school legal clinics and non-governmental centers of pro bono legal services which can be established by advocates, notaries, law firms, bar chambers of advocates and notaries. Pro bono legal services that are provided by private law firms or individual attorneys remain unregulated and, thus, are solely subject to arrangements with such law firms and individual attorneys.</p> <p>Legal aid is provided by governmental authorities, advocates and notaries to certain categories of individuals who relate to vulnerable social groups.</p> <p>General information on pro bono legal services is available on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice.<sup>1</sup> Lists of existing pro bono legal services providers and free legal aid sources in particular regions of Russia are also published on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice.<sup>2</sup></p>
	<p>2. Describe any licensure requirements governing the provision of legal services.</p>	<p>Any person who has a legal degree from a Russian university can provide legal services including pro bono legal services. However, representation of clients in criminal proceedings can only be provided by state-licensed attorneys (the “<b>advocates</b>”). Advocates must successfully</p>

<sup>1</sup> See <https://minjust.ru/ru/kto-okazyvaet-besplatnuyu-yuridicheskuyu-pomoshch> (last visited on May 1, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> See <https://minjust.ru/ru/besplatnaya-yuridicheskaya-pomoshch-5> (last visited on May 1, 2019).

		complete an examination and application process administered by regional bar chambers in Russia.
(b)	<b>Pro Bono Practice and Culture</b>	
	1. Describe the rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services e.g. any explicit regulation or limitation on providing free legal services in some or all contexts, details of any mandatory or minimum fees imposed on provision of legal services.	<p>The Free Legal Aid Law regulates provision of pro bono legal services by law school legal clinics and non-governmental centers of pro bono legal services, which can be established by advocates, notaries, law firms, bar chambers of advocates and notaries. The procedure of establishing law school legal clinics and the regulation of their activities is determined by the Ministry of Education and Science. Basic requirements for non-governmental centers of pro bono legal services are set out in the Free Legal Aid Law and include (i) existence of office facilities where legal services can be provided and (ii) provision of such services by individuals who have a legal degree from a Russian university.</p> <p>The types of legal services that are provided by law schools' legal clinics and non-governmental centers of pro bono legal services as well as categories of individuals that can receive pro bono legal services is determined by internal regulations of such organizations. The Free Legal Aid Law simply stipulates that pro bono legal services shall be preferably provided to vulnerable social groups. No minimum fees are imposed.</p>
	2. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	Lawyers in Russia are not required to work a minimum number of pro bono hours.
	3. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers?	Aspiring lawyers in Russia are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become licensed lawyers.
	4. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for the provision of pro bono legal services? What are the major unmet legal needs?	Mostly, the recipients of pro bono legal services in Russia are socially vulnerable groups, therefore, providers of such services mainly specialize in economic, social and cultural rights protection and government relations which are the main areas of individuals' legal needs. The economic conditions in Russia do not provide many opportunities to socially vulnerable group members to hire law

		firms or advocates, thus, individuals either protect their rights on their own or approach providers of pro bono legal services.
	5. Who are the main providers of pro bono legal services? e.g., NGOs, governmental or other public services, schools and universities, private law firms (local or international) or corporate organizations?	There are no official statistics on who the main providers of pro bono legal services are in Russia. Generally, provision of pro bono legal service by private law firms and individual attorneys is less developed (except for provision of such services by offices of international law firms). Thus, in practice, the main providers of pro bono legal services are still law school legal clinics and non-governmental centers of pro bono legal services. The lists of non-governmental centers of pro bono legal services are available on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice. <sup>3</sup>
<b>(c)</b>	<b>Obstacles to Provision of Pro Bono Legal Services</b>	
	1. Do lawyers require a license to provide pro bono legal services?	Lawyers in Russia do not require a license to provide pro bono legal services, except for representation of pro bono clients in criminal proceedings as describe in II.(a).2 above.
	2. Do foreign lawyers require any additional license(s) to provide pro bono legal services?	Foreign lawyers in Russia do not require any additional licenses to provide pro bono legal services, but foreign lawyers must also have a legal degree from a Russian university to provide pro bono legal services connected with the Russian law. Foreign lawyers may provide pro bono legal services on legal matters of their home jurisdiction without obtaining degree from a Russian university.
	3. Do lawyers require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide? If so, are they prohibited from working under the cover of another pro bono provider, such as a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?	Lawyers in Russia do not require professional indemnity legal insurance cover for any pro bono legal services that they provide.
	4. Are there any rules that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?	There are no rules in Russia that prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://minjust.ru/ru/spisok-negosudarstvennyh-centrov-besplatnoy-yuridicheskoy-pomoshchi> (last visited on May 1, 2019).

	<p>5. Do lawyers receive any “Continuing Legal Education” or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?</p>	<p>Lawyers in Russia do not receive any “Continuing Legal Education” or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked.</p>
<p>(d) <b>Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts</b></p>		
	<p>1. Describe any governmental sources of pro bono and/or other legal services in Russia.</p>	<p>As a general rule, all governmental authorities shall provide free consultations regarding their activities and/or services. In addition, there are specifically designed state bureaus of free legal aid which can be established by the local authorities. State bureaus of free legal aid can provide any types of legal services to vulnerable social groups which are determined by the Free Legal Aid Law, including oral and written consultations, assistance with drafting of legal documents, representation in court.</p> <p>For the purposes of provision of free legal aid, state bureaus can engage advocates. Such engagement is made on the basis of agreements between the relevant state bureaus of free legal aid and local advocate chambers. A list of advocates that participate in the governmental free legal aid system in a particular region of Russia is published by the local authorities each year.</p> <p>The concept of “legal aid” is distinct from pro bono legal services in Russia. Legal aid is provided and funded by public bodies. Pro bono legal services are not organized by public authorities, but only by legal entities or individuals. However, providers of pro bono legal services may obtain governmental support, including funding.</p>
	<p>2. Describe the main non-governmental sources of pro bono and/or other pro bono resources in Russia.</p>	<p>Please see II.(b).5 above.</p>
	<p>3. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign attorney can register in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?</p>	<p>There are no public or private organizations with which a local or foreign attorney can register in Russia in order to be made aware of pro bono opportunities.</p>

May 2019  
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