



PRO BONO CONNECT

EVALUATION SECOND PHASE & GOALS 2022 - 2024

PRO BONO CONNECT

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Amsterdam, December 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pro Bono Connect is a project of the Dutch section of the International Commission of Jurists (Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten, NJCM). In 2015, the NJCM commissioned a study into both the need of NGOs for free legal assistance and the willingness among Dutch law firms to provide this service. NGOs appeared to often encounter (complex) legal issues, but did not always have the capacity, resources or knowledge to provide solutions. At the same time, law firms were enthusiastic to use their expertise for the benefit of society and public interest. Based on this, thirteen law firms (AKD, Baker Mckenzie, Clifford Chance, CMS, De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek, DLA Piper, HVG Law, Houthoff, Linklaters, Loyens en Loeff, NautaDutilh, Simmons & Simmons, and Stibbe) joined forces with the NJCM in January 2016 and a three-year pilot project was initiated: Pro Bono Connect. In 2018 two more law firms (Dentons and Van Benthem & Keulen) joined the project, and in 2020 BarentsKrans followed suit, bringing it to a total of 16 law firms currently affiliated to Pro Bono Connect.

The pilot phase was evaluated in 2018 and the findings were presented in the report 'Looking back and ahead - Evaluation of the pilot phase of Pro Bono Connect & Vision for the future'. The evaluation demonstrated that Pro Bono Connect had successfully and efficiently bridged the gap between the legal profession and the non-profit world. In the second phase (2018-2021), Pro Bono Connect has grown in many ways and adopted an even more holistic approach by including more partners and means towards assisting NGOs together with the affiliated law firms. This report looks back on the past 3 years and all its activities, as well as the governance and financial sustainability. Furthermore, we look ahead and present our goals and ideas for the third phase of Pro Bono Connect (2022-2024).

Goals and core values

The most important goals of Pro Bono Connect have been and will be:

Improving
access to justice

Empowering NGOs

Inspiring lawyers to
advance public interest

We work according to our following core values:

Connecting &
Cooperating

Strategic &
Innovative

Personal &
Transparent

2. GOVERNANCE

The team

Until mid-2020, Pro Bono Connect was managed by one part-time Project Coordinator. To create sustainability within the team, the idea came up to split the full-time Project Coordinator role into two part-time positions. In consultation with the Board of the NJCM and Pro Bono Connect's Project Board and Advisory Committee, former lawyer Klaas Jan Smit was appointed as Head Pro Bono Connect a.i. in January 2020. His task was to set up a new and sustainable team for Pro Bono Connect. With the pro-bono support of Legal People, two enthusiastic part-time Project Coordinators were recruited in April 2020. Klaas Jan successfully formed the team with Hope Rikkelman and Lois Vaars as new Project Coordinators in the beginning of 2020. Klaas Jan's commitment to Pro Bono Connect was fulfilled in February 2021 and Hope Rikkelman was then appointed Head of Pro Bono Connect.

The fact that the tasks and responsibilities now can be divided between two people according to each person's strengths, experience and knowledge makes the team very complementary and strong. In the third phase, the team will discuss with the Board of the NJCM and the Project Board of Pro Bono Connect the possibilities to expand the working hours of the team or expand to three part-time positions.

From the start of Pro Bono Connect, several interns have been supporting the team. The interns support the Project Coordinator and Head in their daily tasks, assisting them in writing the newsletters, social media posts and handling the NGO requests. Interns are given a unique opportunity to get to know the Dutch pro bono culture, various NGOs, and 16 of the top Dutch law firms. In principle, interns are recruited to work two days a week for a fixed five-month contract. Since the beginning of 2021 we have had three interns assisting the Head and Project Coordinator of Pro Bono Connect.



Project Board

The Project Board of Pro Bono Connect consists of members of the executive Board of NJCM and an independent advisor. They provide the Head of Pro Bono Connect with guidance and assistance in bi-monthly meetings.



Monique Steijns
Chair NJCM
Research associate WRR



Herman Veerbeek
NJCM Member
Head Legal ING

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee of Pro Bono Connect acts as a sounding board for the Project Coordinators and Head of Pro Bono Connect. Both the NGOs and affiliated law firms as well as independent members are represented in the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee meets twice a year and advises the Project Coordinator and Head of Pro Bono Connect on themes like the mediation criteria on whether to accept requests, conflict of interests, strategic requests, additional financing, long-term cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholders, criteria for requests by social enterprises and how Pro Bono Connect should increase (online) visibility.



Machteld de Monchy
De Brauw Blackstone
Westbroek



Jana van der Pennen
Stichting War Child



Brianne McGonigle
Studie- en Informatiecentrum
Mensenrechten (SIM)



Wilmy Westerhof
DLA Piper



Eef Verkade
Greenpeace
International



Dirk Steen
Steen Consultancy



Lisa van der Made
Stibbe



Frederiek de Vlaming
Nuhanovic Foundation



Klaas Jan Smit
El Valle

The Dutch section of the International Commission of Jurists

The NJCM was established in 1974 as the Dutch section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). It has grown into an authoritative association that is committed and has successfully contributed to the protection of human rights in the Netherlands and Dutch foreign policy. The NJCM is an organisation of volunteers and consists of more than a thousand members. The active members unite in thematic working groups around a particular area of law. Each working group is supported by a prominent expert who provides assistance as an external party to the working group.



After extensive research conducted among law firms, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and foreign clearinghouses, the NJCM set up Pro Bono Connect (PBC) in 2015 as the first public interest clearinghouse in the Netherlands. In 2016, Pro Bono Connect was officially established as a project by the NJCM. Pro Bono Connect currently does not have a separate legal entity. In terms of organisation, staff, and network it is in the best interest of Pro Bono Connect to remain a project of the NJCM this next phase.

3. ACTIVITIES

In the first place, Pro Bono Connect is a matchmaker. Pro Bono Connect assists NGOs that have a legal request by i.e. matching these requests to the affiliated law firms. Throughout all of Pro Bono Connect's work, the promotion of pro bono culture is the silver lining. Furthermore, Pro Bono Connect engages in other related activities, as will be described below.

Matchmaking

Pro Bono Connect links NGOs to lawyers from top Dutch law firms to give them free legal advice or assistance in (strategic) legal proceedings. NGOs may contact Pro Bono Connect with legal questions concerning 1. strategic importance for their work and 2. their structure or internal organization. Pro Bono Connect first carefully evaluates the requests based on the selection criteria, and if necessary, supports NGOs to formulate clear legal questions, before matching the requests to one of the affiliated law firms. To make sure the matchmaking is successful, we focus on maintaining personal contact with our contact persons at the law firms and the NGOs in our network by checking in with them on a regular basis.

Round Table law firms

The Round Table is an annual event held in May or June where the participating law firms and Pro Bono Connect meet. During the Round Table, Pro Bono Connect discusses its present work, the pro bono culture in the Netherlands and shares its ideas about future projects. This yearly event is a great opportunity to discuss the different CSR / pro bono policies among the law firms and see each other in person.



Seminars and talks

Being an organisation focused on bringing people together and promoting pro bono culture, Pro Bono Connect has held various seminars and talks in the past three years.

Some examples are:

- Lunch talks on Pro Bono Connect & Pro Bono Culture (Town hall talk Clifford Chance)
- Talk Dentons and their European Partners on Pro Bono work
- Seminars employment law Stibbe
- Talk Legal Defence Fund Houthoff and Free Press Unlimited
- NOV Talk about Pro Bono work

Connecting with our law firms

Twice a year, the Pro Bono Connect team visits all affiliated law firms to catch up, evaluate and look ahead. Due to COVID-19, most of these check-ins have taken place online over the past year and a half. During these meetings, the following topics are discussed and evaluated:

- Requests received, accepted and declined
- Preferences regarding the type of NGO and/or request
- Pro Bono culture and internal pro bono structure of the firm
- Communication between the firms, NGOs and Pro Bono Connect
- Events and projects
- Future plans
- Finances

Based on these conversations, Pro Bono Connect can adapt the amount and/or kind of requests we send to the law firms. For instance, sometimes law firms indicated they would welcome more (strategic) requests through Pro Bono Connect or that they are not able to accept requests at all for a certain period. All of these preferences we add to our dashboard.

Since 2020, we have accompanied the meetings with a detailed visual overview of the requests the firms received. The overview presents the number of requests matched and denied, charts of the legal areas requested and feedback from the NGOs to the law firm. We naturally also request the law firms to give feedback on the work of Pro Bono Connect and their experience with the NGOs they supported. We have received positive and enthusiastic feedback concerning these overviews provided to the law firms and it is considered a valuable addition to the meetings. We will continue to provide these overviews to the law firms.

Furthermore, we have received very positive feedback from the law firms regarding the work and communication with Pro Bono Connect. The law firms perceive the communication as professional, well organised and pleasant.

European Pro Bono week

European Pro Bono Week is co-organized by the European Pro Bono Initiative, comprising several international law firms, along with PILnet, TrustLaw, and the European Pro Bono Alliance. During this week, we celebrate the role played by volunteer lawyers in supporting civil society and those in need. Events take place all across Europe, including in Amsterdam. During European Pro Bono week Pro Bono Connect organises an Amsterdam Pro Bono event. The Amsterdam Pro Bono Day highlights and promotes pro bono culture through events organised together with our law firms.

In 2019 the first Amsterdam Pro Bono day was organised together with De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek. In 2020, Pro Bono Connect organised the second Amsterdam Pro Bono Day together with Dentons and Linklaters in the steering committee. It was a great success with 5 seminars within the theme of 'Pro Bono In Times of Crisis' by: NautaDutilh, De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek, Dentons, Stibbe and Linklaters.

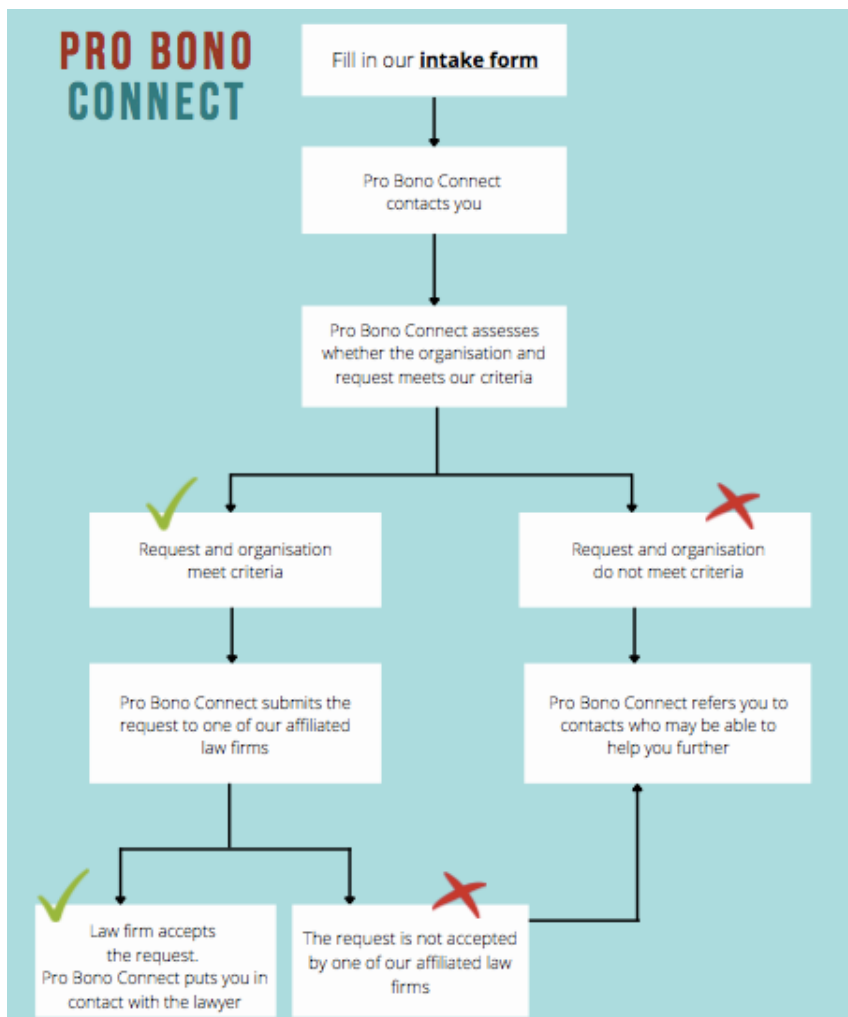
For 2021, Pro Bono Connect would like to involve at least 8 of our law firms in this year's Amsterdam Pro Bono day with public events. This year we will also organise a closed round table on the future of strategic litigation for our affiliated law firms in addition to the open events.

4. REQUESTS

The matchmaking process is the core of the work of Pro Bono Connect. Pro Bono Connect plays an active and vital role in reviewing and matching these requests. During the mediation process, we use a personal approach towards the NGOs as well as towards the law firms. Once a request is submitted, we thoroughly analyse the request and contact each NGO to discuss the request. Pro Bono Connect often assists the NGO with (re)formulating the request, so that it becomes clear what is needed from the lawyers. Once a request is approved to be mediated, Pro Bono Connect assesses which law firm is the best match. We then contact a law firm, taking into account the law firm's pre-expressed preferences, in-house knowledge and expertise, as well as a fair distribution of the number of requests per law firm. This customised and personalised approach is what distinguishes Pro Bono Connect and makes for successful matches between the NGOs and the law firms.

When an NGO or request does not meet the criteria of Pro Bono Connect, or if we are unable to match it with a law firm, we always aim to help the NGO by referring them to partners in the network of Pro Bono Connect (e.g. other NGOs, international and European clearinghouses, legal aid offices or law clinics). This is in line with our holistic approach and commitment to assist NGOs in the work that they do.

Beneath, you see a flowchart of Pro Bono Connect's Matchmaking process made with the assistance of Stibbe.



The mediation criteria

The criteria for the acceptance of a request were established in 2015 after careful deliberation with the affiliated law firms, Advisory Board and Project Board. The criteria include:

- Is the request or organisation focused on improving human rights?
- If not, does the NGO/organisation pursue a public interest?
- If not either, does the request serve a public purpose, or is it a specific request with strategic relevance for the NGO/organisation?

These criteria still serve as guidelines to facilitate the assessment of the organisations and requests. The criteria leave room for evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

Over the years, Pro Bono Connect has further defined the policy of mediating requests. For example, Pro Bono Connect is cautious regarding the mediation of the following types of requests:

- NGOs opposing each other
- Concerning the dismissal of employees within an NGO
- Involving the rejection of a grant
- From social enterprises
- From individuals

Strategic versus organisational requests

Requests can be categorised as either organisational or (strategic) litigation requests.

Organisational requests concern the general functioning, strategy, funding structure and legal structure (governance) of NGOs. On average, 70% of the requests Pro Bono Connect received from 2019 until present are organisational requests. Most of these requests are from startup NGOs, which need a lot of guidance in setting up their organisation. They mainly concern the following topics:

- Requests concerning setting up a foundation
- Contract related questions (e.g. reviewing the general terms and conditions, setting up contracts with partner organisations and employment contracts),
- GDPR advice
- Fiscal questions, including the application for an ANBI status.

Litigation (strategic) requests concern requests that are focussed on using legal action to bring about social, political or legal changes. Examples of strategic requests are:

- Advice on legislative proposals
- Strategic litigation
- Legal clarification for national campaigns

For the next phase, Pro Bono Connect will focus on actively encouraging NGOs to submit more litigation(strategic) requests. This has always been one of the initial goals of Pro Bono Connect. From conversations with NGOs, we found out that several NGOs were not quite aware of this option. In addition, we also received feedback from several affiliated law firms indicating they like to receive more complex, (strategic) litigation, legal requests. Moreover, we noticed that the law firms do not always have the capacity to assist with the organisational requests. Based on the feedback from the NGOs as well as the law firms, we will launch an annual Roundtable for NGOs starting in 2022 to i.a. promote the submission of (strategic) litigation requests.

5. STATISTICS

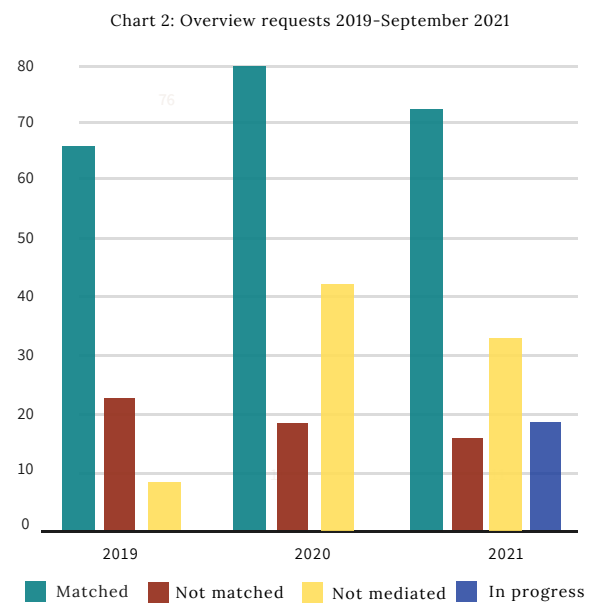
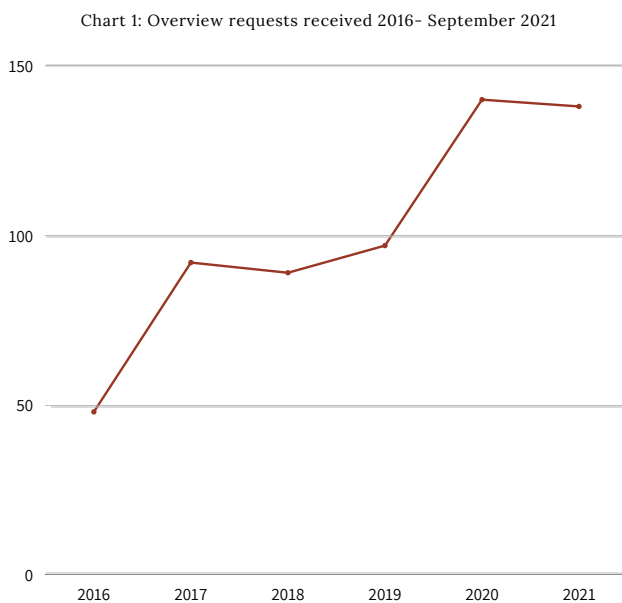
To have a better overview of the requests and to further professionalise Pro Bono Connect, we developed a new database in 2020 where we integrated all the information and improved the data set and its user-friendliness. For instance, in the new database, we started registering the specific reasons for not mediating requests, and the reasons why a request could not be matched to a law firm. Further developing our database and digitalising our work is one of the aims for the future of Pro Bono Connect. In that light, we are happy and proud to share that in 2022 Pro Bono Connect will receive 200 hours of pro bono help from data-analysts from Deloitte to assist with this digitalisation to further professionalize our work methods.

In this chapter, we will take a closer look at statistics on requests over the past 3 years. All figures related to the year 2021 are measured until September 2021.

Overview of requests

In the first chart, we see an increase in the number of the requests received over the past 6 years. Simultaneously, we also see an increase in the number of matched requests (see chart 3). The number of requests received, as well as the number of matched requests, indicates that, despite COVID-19, the work and need for legal advice for NGOs has continued and even increased. From January 2019 until September 2021, 218 requests have already been matched to one of our affiliated law firms.

Chart 2 provides an overview of the numbers of requests matched, not matched and not mediated in the second phase of Pro Bono Connect. In the following paragraphs, we will provide more detailed information regarding these three categories.



Matched

Chart 3 provides an overview of matched requests in the first and second phase of Pro Bono Connect. In 2019, Pro Bono Connect received 97 requests, of which 66 were matched. In 2020, Pro Bono Connect received 140 requests, of which 80 were matched. From January to September 2021, Pro Bono Connect received 138 requests, of which 67 were matched to one of our law firms. 5 requests have been matched to PILnet, which Pro Bono Connect is a partner of, as well as their initiative the European Pro Bono Alliance (EPBA). PILnet and the EPBA bring all the clearinghouses of Europe together. When a request does not fit the Dutch jurisdiction, we often match a request with the help of another European clearinghouse with the assistance of PILnet. 18 requests are currently still in progress. When a request is in progress, it means we are still in contact with the NGO to discuss the request or that the request is currently pending at one of the law firms.

A wide variety of NGOs come to us for assistance, ranging from small start-up NGOs to larger NGOs with complex legal issues. The fields in which the NGOs operate varied from humanitarian law, children's rights, women's rights, indigenous rights, animal rights, privacy rights and access to justice, to people on the move, youth and education, local development, environmental justice, poverty, and more. Most of the NGOs were based in the Netherlands, but also NGOs from i.e. India, Uganda, Australia, Italy and France have been assisted.

Chart 3: Overview matched requests January 2016 - September 2021

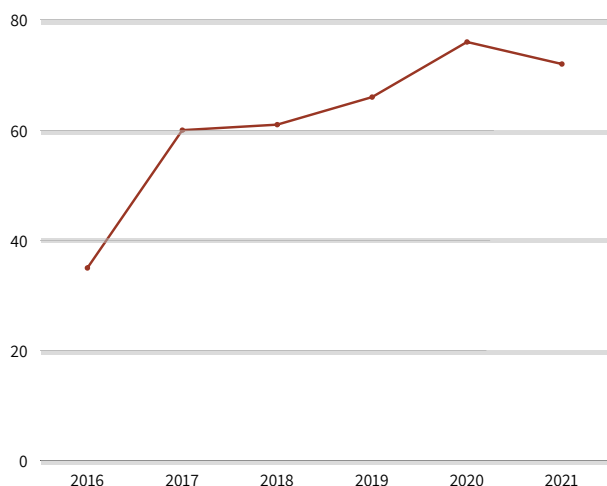
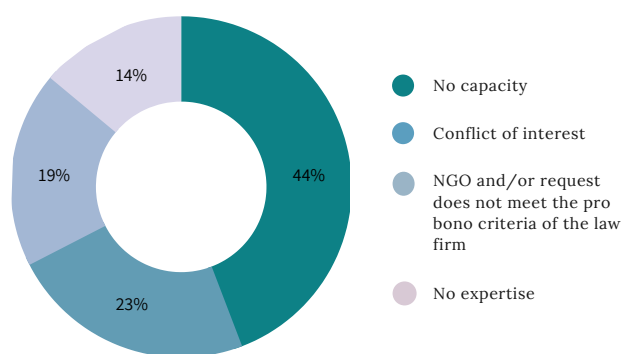


Chart 4: Overview reasons requests were not matched



Not matched

Since 2020, Pro Bono Connect registers the reasons why requests could not be match to one of our affiliated law firms. By understanding why a request is not accepted by multiple law firms, we can continue to modify our matchmaking process to the needs of the law firms.

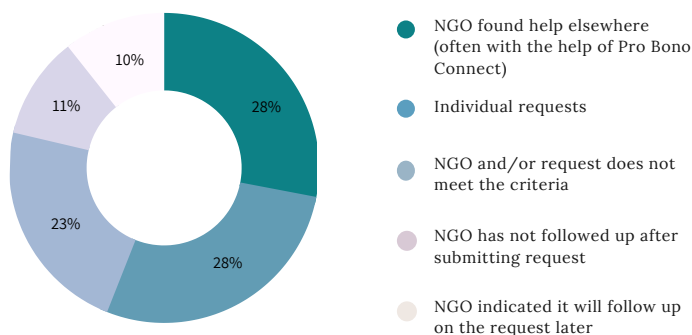
The most frequent reason why requests are not accepted is because of no capacity. Especially requests related to notary law are difficult to match due to a lack of capacity. In 23% of the 'no matches', the law firm had a direct or potential conflict of interest. A conflict of interest mainly occurs when the request made by an NGO opposes a (potential) client of the affiliated law firms. Also requests identified as politically sensitive by the law firms is categorised as a conflict of interest. In 17% of the 'no matches', the law firm denied the request because the request did not meet the law firm's internal pro bono criteria, and in 16% of the cases, the affiliated law firm did not have the relevant in-house knowledge.

Not mediated

Requests that do not fulfil the criteria of Pro Bono Connect are categorised as not mediated. When a request is not mediated by Pro Bono Connect, it means that the request is not submitted to the law firms.

In the following paragraphs we will present the reasons for not mediating a request. These are the request we specifically make an effort to assist anyway by referring them to other relevant organisations, clearinghouses, law clinics and other partners within our network.

Chart 5: Overview reasons requests were not mediated



NGO found help elsewhere

In 28% of the cases where Pro Bono Connect decided not to mediate a request, the NGO found help elsewhere, often with assistance of Pro Bono Connect.

In cases of high urgency of a request or a lack of notarial capacity on the side of the law firms, Pro Bono Connect decides together with the NGO not to mediate the request. In that case Bono Connect advises the NGOs to contact Pro Bono Club or Doe Het Zelf Notaris.

Individual request

28% of the requests that are not mediated were made by individuals. In principle, Pro Bono Connect does not mediate requests of individuals, since it is important that Pro Bono Connect does not become a substitute for state-funded or subsidized legal aid. These requests are forwarded to Free Legal Advice Centre or the Juridisch loket.

NGO and/or request do not meet the criteria

23% of the not mediated requests did not meet our mediation criteria. Part of these requests were not mediated for a reason related to their content. For example, a request falls outside the scope of the law firms in-house knowledge; the request concerns opposing another NGO; or a request concerns the dismissal of employees of the NGO. Furthermore, requests are not mediated when the organisation who made the request does not serve the public interest.

NGO does not follow up after submitting the request

In 11% of the requests that were not mediated, the NGO did not respond after submitting the request. Once a request is submitted, we email the NGO to make an appointment to discuss the request. When an NGO does not respond to our request for follow up, we do not further pursue the request.

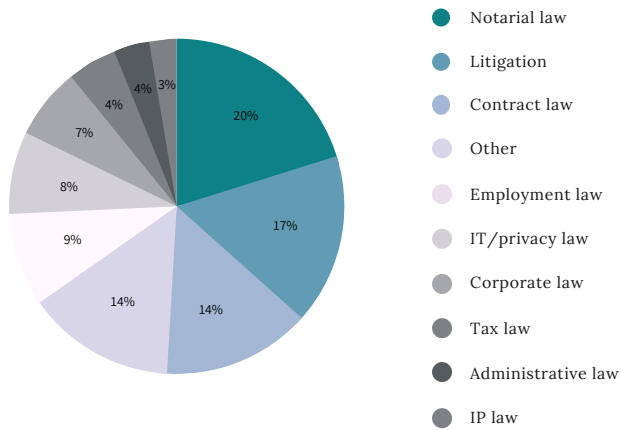
NGO indicated it will follow up on the request later

In 28% of the cases where Pro Bono Connect did not mediate, the NGO indicated that it was not yet ready to pursue the request after discussing the request. Together we decide that the NGO can come back later to follow up on the request.

Legal areas

Chart 6 presents an overview of the legal areas requested since 2019. There is a great variety in the type of legal areas requested by NGOs. Most requests were made in the field of notarial law, procedural law (litigation) and contract law. Important to note is that almost all of the litigation and administrative law requests have a human rights dimension.

Chart 6: Overview legal areas requested






6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Pro Bono Connect will keep monitoring the results on a regular basis. In June 2020, we drastically updated the internal administration. Pro Bono Connect now systematically records the submitted requests in terms of content (area of legal expertise, strategic or operational request), acceptance rate and acceptance process in a precise manner.

Besides the input we receive from our Project Board, Advisory Board and feedback we receive from our law firms during our biannual coffee meetings, our monitoring and evaluation also coincides with the feedback from the surveys we receive from the NGOs. The survey is an evaluation form we send to all NGOs after a request has been completed. We ask the NGO for feedback on the work of Pro Bono Connect as well as on the legal advice the law firms have provided. The overall feedback is very positive and there is a clear consensus on the successes of the work of Pro Bono Connect. The organisations who have submitted requests were satisfied with the legal assistance they received, with only a few exceptions. These exceptions were mainly due to slow communication between the appointed lawyers and the NGO. But overall almost all NGOs are delighted with the legal services and the contact they had with the lawyers.

The surveys also indicate that the assistance or advice obtained via Pro Bono Connect is essential and important for their projects or organisation.

NGO feedback 2019-2020

Communication with Pro Bono Connect	
Clarity of the intake form of Pro Bono Connect	
Speed of services provided by Pro Bono Connect	
Overall rating of the services of Pro Bono Connect (out of 10)	9,24
Percentage of NGOs who recommends Pro Bono Connect	100%

NGO testimonials

"From the start I could tell that the team of Pro Bono Connects puts in a lot of effort to help those in need. Also the lawyers who helped us were very engaged and motivated. They kept asking us questions about our organisation and gave us a lot of freedom to give our own opinion on the legal matter."

- The Widow and Orphan Development Foundation

"We are very glad that Pro Bono Connect exists as it provides thorough legal support to organisations that are truly important to society and cannot afford the support themselves. The lawyers are assisting us with our case go to great lengths to sort everything out."

- Justice & Peace

"The unique quality of Pro Bono Connect lies within its personal approach and its ability to connect NGOs - that otherwise would not know where to turn to with a legal question - to law firms willing and able to assist. We are very grateful for the help."

- Young Leaders Community

In the second evaluation report, NGOs stated that Pro Bono Connect should invest more in its relationships with NGOs and their branch organisations. We strive to implement all feedback in a structured manner. For this second evaluation report it is important to mention that since then, we are planning to organise the Roundtable for the NGOs in 2022. Furthermore, we have regularly been in touch with organisations like Vereniging Nederlandse Organisaties Vrijwilligerswerk (NOV), the Good Lobby, Young Leaders Community, Makers Unite, Widows and Orphan Development Foundation, Free Press Unlimited, NOV, CPBO Pro Bono, Justice and Peace, and Mensen maken Amsterdam in order to assess what the needs are of the NGOs and will continue to do so.

Goals 2019-2021

In the second evaluation report 'Looking back and ahead – Evaluation of the pilot phase of Pro Bono Connect & Vision for the future', the following goals were set out:

- To increase the annual budget to EUR 90,000 by attracting additional participating law firms up to 18 or more;
- To successfully match at least 200 requests in the next three years;
- To ensure that all participating law firms take on at least three requests per year;
- To encourage 50 'new' organisations to submit one or more requests
- To build and intensify contacts with public interest branch organisations;
- To build and intensify contacts with universities and law clinics;
- To increase our marketing efforts (newsletters, social media, other publicity);
- To keep a continuous dialogue with the participating firms and to stay up to date on what is going on and what pro bono cases and activities they are interested in; and
- To ensure that Pro Bono Connect is widely known among lawyers from the participating law firms.

We are happy to share that almost all of the above goals have been achieved. We do acknowledge that we currently have 16 participating law firms and will make more effort in attracting additional participating law firms in the next phase.

7. DEVELOPMENT PRO BONO CONNECT

Pro Bono Connect strives to continuously promote pro bono culture and actively engage law firms in advancing public interest. Besides encouraging and assisting our affiliated law firms to (further) develop their internal pro bono culture (CSR policy), we aim to promote pro bono culture in a broader sense. This next phase Pro Bono Connect will focus on adding academics and (law)students to the equation. The concept of making a stronger connection between the different stakeholders has been discussed and carefully considered with the law firms during the individual coffee meetings and Round Table, and with our Advisory Committee and Project Board.

Strategy days

Since 2020, several strategy days have been organised with the Pro Bono Connect team. During these strategy days we zoom out, discuss, and brainstorm on the strategy and future of Pro Bono Connect.

Pilot Start-up & Stichtingen Law Clinics

Pro Bono Connect finds it important that NGOs in their startup phase get the legal guidance they need. For these reasons, we are setting up a pilot project, called Start-up & Stichtingen Law Clinics.(before Project Foundation) This project focuses on a more holistic and sustainable approach towards organisational requests. Together with our law firms and the Amsterdam Law Hub we will guide NGOs in their start-up phase. During a number of months, Pro Bono Connect will host various seminars, workshops and clinics on different themes relevant to the start-up phase of NGOs (e.g. contract law, notarial law, tax law, GDPR etc.). These events will be set up together with our affiliated law firms and with other interested stakeholders and academics. To ensure that the information from these seminars is not lost, we will ask the legal experts to write legal notes on each theme. With the help of legal design, these notes will be converted into visualisations to make the legal information accessible to our NGOs. A special platform will be developed together on Miro.com (Provided Pro Bono) in order to share this information, making it accessible for all participating NGOs. We will work on further developing this pilot project in the third phase of Pro Bono Connect.

Secondments

Pro Bono Connect's main goal is to be a matchmaker between NGOs and law firms. In 2021, we were able to take this to a higher level when we mediated two secondments for our sister organisation PILP-NJCM. This was the first time we made a match that was not focused on short-term advice for a specific project, but general assistance for a longer period of time.

From March until June, a lawyer from De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek, and a lawyer from Houthoff, were seconded to PILP-NJCM. Both the lawyers as well as PILP-NJCM were very enthusiastic about the cooperation. Pro Bono Connect is extremely happy about the secondments, as this creates a new dimension to the Pro Bono work we are facilitating. From 2022 on, Pro Bono Connect will set up secondments on an ad hoc basis. In the next phase we will analyse the feasibility of structurally facilitating secondments.

External communication and outreach

Together with our law firms we set up an external communication strategy to increase our (online) visibility in order to reach out to even more NGOs. We have created a rotation schedule whereby each affiliated law firm is responsible for outreach together with Pro Bono Connect one month per year regarding a request or partnership with an NGO. This can be in the form of a story telling text, photo, video or podcast. In the next phase, we will focus on this outreach as well as updating our website.

Round table NGOs

In the beginning of 2022 Pro Bono Connect will be hosting a Round Table for NGO. The Round Table aims to inform NGOs about the work of Pro Bono Connect and what kind of legal assistance we can offer.(e.g. strategic litigation requests). The purpose of the Roundtable is threefold: 1. inform the NGOs within our network as well as new NGOs what types of requests they can submit to Pro Bono Connect, and encourage them to reach out to us for more strategic requests; 2. give the NGOs an overview of all current and upcoming projects and events of Pro Bono Connect; 3. collect information from NGOs on their current needs concerning legal expertise.

Brainstorm sessions

To circumvent the issue of requests being denied because of a conflict of interest, we introduced brainstorm sessions without any obligations in the beginning of 2021. By organising a brainstorming session with a lawyer and the requesting NGO prior to actually accepting a request, a law firm does not formally accept a request with which they potentially are in conflict with. The law firm can advise the NGO in a preliminary stage. These brainstorms often also involve other stakeholders, such as University Clinics, academics, individual interested lawyers and other NGOs. By facilitating these brainstorms, we do not deny the request and the NGO is assisted by discussing their legal questions with multiple experts that can still give them guidance and legal advice.

Goals 2022-2024

The past years have been dedicated to solidifying the basis of Pro Bono Connect as a clearinghouse. Pro Bono Connect has been put on the map in the Dutch legal landscape and pro bono culture has been stimulated and spread throughout the Netherlands and beyond. For the upcoming years, we aim to further strengthen the organization. Important goals for the third phase are:

- Encourage NGOs to submit more (strategic) litigation requests
- Further develop tools to guide startup NGOs
- Further increase our (online) visibility
- Include other stakeholders in pro bono projects
- Further professionalize and digitalize our work
- Intensify contact with civil society organizations and universities
- Work more closely together with clearinghouses worldwide
- Continue to organize events and seek opportunities to promote pro bono culture
- Keep a continuous dialogue with the affiliated law firms on what is going on and what pro bono cases and activities they are interested in
- Involve specialized (notaries etc) and more regional law firms to work with Pro Bono Connect
- Further develop a way to sustain the legal information Pro Bono Connect provides and gains
- Increase the yearly budget to expand the Pro Bono Connect team

8. FINANCES

Financial overview second phase

The financial overview below is a general overview. It clearly shows the growth of the organisation. For a detailed financial overview we kindly refer you to the NJCM annual financial report available on NJCM.nl.

Incurring costs

2019	€78.230,00
2020	€82.664,00
until sept, 2021	€70.000,00

Income

2019	€75.000,00
2020	€80.000,00
2021	€80.000,00

Funding

Taking into consideration the growing number of incoming requests and the overall success of projects Pro Bono Connect, there is a need to increase our yearly budget.

During the coffee meetings with the law firms, Pro Bono Connect discussed the possibility of raising the fixed annual contribution with a small amount. All firms responded positively to this proposal. This way, Pro Bono Connect can continue with the preferred financial model. In addition, Pro Bono Connect will focus on funding through acquisition of participating law firms. This also builds on to the need for more notarial support.

As Pro Bono Connect especially aims to improve access to justice for NGOs with limited financial resources, Pro Bono Connect will continue to not charge fees to the requesting NGO seeing this would deter (small) NGOs from using the services of Pro Bono Connect.

Budget third phase

For the third phase, we made a yearly estimate of expenses. Staff expenses will amount to approximately €83,000 a year which includes a pension that Pro Bono Connect staff currently do not receive. A budget of around €4,000 for rent, €8,000 for other project related expenses, and €5,000 unforeseen. A total annual budget of €100,000 at least is needed. It is therefore essential to obtain additional funding of €1,500 per law firm on a yearly basis.

Yearly budget 2022 - 2024 €100.000,00 Expected yearly income €104.000,00

9. AFTERWORD

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our law firms. The success of Pro Bono Connect stands or falls with the participation of the law firms and lawyers involved.

The impressive achievements of Pro Bono Connect the last three years would not have been possible without the commitment of our 16 law firms. Again a special thanks to our affiliated law firms: AKD, Baker McKenzie, BarentsKrans, Clifford Chance, CMS, De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek, Dentons, DLA Piper, Houthoff, HVG Law, Linklaters, Loyens & Loeff, Nauta Dutilh, Simmons & Simmons, Stibbe and Van Benthem & Keulen.

We are very proud to announce that all of the above partners have committed for the next phase 2022 – 2024. We look forward to together advancing the public interest by supporting NGOs with their legal needs.

