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pro
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**FREE LEGAL ADVICE AND STRATEGIC
LITIGATION SUPPORT FOR NGOS**

Pro Bono Connect is a project of the Dutch Committee of Jurists for Human Rights (NJCM).

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Pro bono: looking past the obvious and innovating together

This month the Pro Bono Connect team participated in the PILNet Pro Bono Convening in London. The focus was on pro bono and the intersections of climate change, displacement, and civic space. We're moving forward with the same momentum with a full agenda of events in the Netherlands - join the conversation!

The high-energy event confirmed that pro bono professionals in Europe and further abroad share inspiration, but also dilemmas. It was heartening to hear the results achieved through pro bono collaboration, the persistence and commitment of professionals swimming against the stream (hoping to change the stream!), making room for social impact work.

It was also refreshing to see the self-awareness and creativity of those same professionals navigating issues of conflict, reputational and commercial risks and other "sticky issues" of pro bono collaborations. In frank conversation, we could reaffirm that pro bono lawyers can and will continue to contribute in unexpected and valuable ways.

As a clearinghouse, we have our work cut out for us. Keeping our ear to the ground of civil society and legal developments, translating civil society trends and needs to pro bono lawyers, building trust to facilitate collaboration. We hope you'll join us!



Pro Bono Connect is organizing an online meeting for an exchange of perspectives with academics, lawyers and activists. We hope to identify potential opportunities in the areas of research, advice, litigation and supporting sustainability initiatives in civil society. There will be a follow-up meeting in person during the Netherland's activities for European Pro Bono Week (10-12 June). You are invited to help us explore opportunities for pro bono legal support to play a role in this movement.

If you work in the area of environmental protection & sustainability in an NGO, as a lawyer, or in academia, please join us!

Please register me & send me a link to the online meeting

Lunch Lecture: Online Hate Speech against Women & the Digital Services Act

Bureau Clara Wichmann, a legal women's rights organisation, has been investigating the responsibility of online platforms (e.g. Instagram, X, and Facebook) to take action against online gender-based hate speech. Their team and the pro bono lawyers from HVG Law who assisted the research into the requirements and application of the Digital Services Act will present their main findings during a free lunch lecture. Come learn more about: the legal obligations & liability of online platforms, actions users can take, the role of the authorities. Come share your views!





Historic ruling on Dutch children's right to water

The Dutch government has a policy in place allowing water companies to disconnect children from drinking water in the event of non-payment, leading to a violation of their rights. In a collective action brought by [Defence for Children](#) and the [Dutch Section of the International Commission for Jurists \(NJCM\)](#), the Court of Appeal of The Hague recently ruled that the Dutch State and drinking water companies had acted unlawfully towards children and must reconnect children that were cut off. Defence for Children and NJCM were represented by [De Brauw](#) in collaboration with lawyers from [PILP](#). See the Defence for Children [video](#) explaining their approach and the experience of a family whose water was disconnected. We congratulate all involved on the successful collaboration!

**DE BRAUW
BLACKSTONE
WESTBROEK**

De Brauw lawyer, Johan Valk, "In this case, we got to work together closely with human rights lawyers from PILP and children's rights experts from Defence for Children. It was a truly inspiring experience to engage with one another and bring the case forward together. Working together also allowed us to contribute our specific litigation expertise to this important matter and achieve a great result for all children in the Netherlands."



"Diving into ESG, Pro Bono and Conflict of Interest"

Panel during PILNET Convening, 16 April, London

"A thought-provoking discussion exploring how firms are strategically developing their pro bono practices amidst the diverse interests and expectations of various stakeholders: business owners, clients, employees, future talent, clearinghouses and communities. This delicate balance of stakeholder considerations in nurturing a pro bono culture mirrors the broader challenge faced by firms and businesses of all sizes as they craft their ESG strategies." (PILNet)

Law firms might have been surprised to hear concerns of conflict and reputational risk aren't limited to the side of firms. Many NGOs go through intense internal discussions before engaging pro bono lawyers from firms who might represent clients with seemingly opposing interests.

On the other hand, NGOs might have been surprised to hear just how committed and passionate pro bono lawyers are in finding ways to support within the realities of large, competitive law firms. "There is no such thing as a law firm, just people." This echoes our experience with the pro bono professionals at our partner firms in the Netherlands.

From the perspective of the Netherlands' clearinghouse, we highlighted our aim to be reliable "cultural mediators" for our stakeholders who might not be familiar with each other's daily realities. As trust-builders, we can assist NGOs and lawyers in navigating conflict checks, reputational risks, managing expectations, and finding creative ways to work together. To steal an apt metaphor from the panelists - we shouldn't expect a cat to be a dog - pro bono lawyers can never replace civil society - but we can help cats & dogs make friends.

We will be continuing this conversation in the Dutch context during European Pro Bono Week, especially in a joint event for NGOs and lawyers on 12 June 2024 in Amsterdam. Keep your eye on our agenda!



UPCOMING EVENTS 2024 - Save the Dates!

More to come

25 April: Online meeting "Climate and Pro Bono"

14 May: Lunch lecture "Online Hate Speech against Women & the Digital Services Act"

10-14 June - European Pro Bono Week in the Netherlands

12 June - Round Table Partner Firms


12 June - Joint event NGOs and pro bono lawyers

TBD: "Climate and Pro Bono" - in-person meeting

TBD: Workshop on SLAPPs

21 November - NL Pro Bono Day & Round Table Partner Firms

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