

PILnet 4th Pro Bono Roundtable (20 November 2014, Milan)

Discussion Summary

1. Introduction:

- Atanas Politov, PILnet Director for Europe, and Edwin Rekosh, PILnet President and CEO, welcomed participants and provided a brief recap of the 2014 European Pro Bono Forum which took place from 5-7 November in London. In brief – there were 425 participants (the largest ever number) from 39 countries, 3 plenary sessions, 16 workshops and 2 social events. Topics discussed: how to set up a pro bono practice in a law firm, how pro bono lawyers can support the rights of asylum seekers, pro bono for in-house counsel, and the role of law clinics in addressing unmet legal needs.

2. 9th European Pro Bono Forum, Rome

There are three key topics that the Milan Roundtable needs to work on in preparation for the Rome Forum in 2015: registration, fundraising and content for the Forum agenda.

a) Forum Registration

- We are aiming to have 300 participants at the Rome Forum
- Need to target large Italian firms, and not just those in Milan and Rome
- Companies like GE can play a role in influencing local firms to attend
- PILnet will rely on members of the RT for useful introductions and will focus on meeting people to raise awareness and build support for the Forum, but also to expand the pro bono network so that we can embed pro bono in the local culture and institutions in the longer term.
- Link to the Expo (May 1- Oct 31 2015): It might be possible for PILnet/the RT to hold a half day event as part of Expo to promote pro bono and the Forum. However we would have to pay a fee. Alternatively we could organize an event “next door” without paying a fee. The event could be like a “Roundtable +”, i.e. have some members of the roundtable speak and directly invite locals – generate interest, plant seeds and give feedback.
- Key questions to be addressed as we promote pro bono and the Forum:
 - What is pro bono and why is it needed, both as a service and the term itself – the pro bono definition will be useful in this regard;
 - Need to be clear and transparent about what pro bono is, and what it is not;
 - Explain that this process has happened independently in other countries – in Germany, Spain, etc. – they have all gone through the process of trying to place pro bono in their local context and culture.

b) Fundraising

- The Forum is an expensive event and PILnet relies on a mixture of registration fees, conference sponsorship and donations in-kind to cover the cost.
- The number of participants in Rome will not be as high as in London (425), which means we will have fewer registration fees to rely on, so securing sponsorship from law firms, companies, legal service providers, bar associations and other institutions will be crucial to the Forum’s success. We will rely on roundtable members to introduce us to potential sponsors within their networks.

c) The Forum Agenda

- Pro bono is very strong in Italy but it is just not labelled as such. There is a huge volunteer input into society so it is important that the Forum agenda (and in discussions and promotion before the conference) that we make the link between volunteering and pro bono.
- It is important that there should be a gender balance in speakers.

3. The Pro Bono Definition

- A great success was achieved by the Working Group, comprised of Stefano Macchi de Cellere (Jones Day), Giovanni Carotenuto (Orrick) and Veronica Pinotti (McDermott, Will & Emery) in creating and introducing the working definition of pro bono. It was emphasized that the definition was narrowly tailored to the Italian legal context, and as a result has a huge importance for the promotion of the 2015 Forum.
- The introduction of the pro bono definition was followed by the discussion on importance of it. A number of suggestions were made in relation to the content of the definition aiming to make it more transparent and clear.

4. Pro Bono Culture in Italy

- Collaborative culture profit—non profit is still limited in Italy. However, social responsibility can serve as the basis for the development of profit—non profit collaboration (as indicated in a study of the Bocconi University of Milan).
 - With around 310,000 non-profit organizations in Italy (according to official statistics), CSV is one of the leading pro bono powers in the region. The lawyers do not directly interact with individuals, they receive cases by referral. Even though the term “pro bono” is not used, they are doing exactly pro bono, and CSV’s functions are close to that of a clearinghouse. Need for assistance particularly on more complex projects that cannot be dealt internally (e.g., tax matters). Mandate from Expo 2015 to select 7,000 volunteers.
 - A number of law clinics have been established within Italy. The University of Turin runs law clinics for students, training future lawyers to provide advice to real clients.
 - Current project that needs pro bono lawyers: new migrants clinic in Turin to help them start their own business – need contractual and other commercial type problems – need help with:
 - A. preparation of students (training) – interviewing clients, legal ethics etc.
 - B. Practical casework (supervision) work with lawyers to draft a legal opinion
- If you or your firm would like to assist with this project please contact Ulrich.
- Avvocati Per Niente (Lawyers for nothing) cooperates with non for profit institutions (e.g., ACLI, Caritas), coordinating and distributing requests for assistance to affiliated lawyers (about 50 members). There are internal groups on discrimination, human rights, harassment, over-indebtedness, etc. Currently dealing with about 100 projects.

Other issues:

- A number of elections will take place in 2015 (Italian Bar Association in January, Equal Opportunities Committee in March), which might have an impact on the future development of Italian pro bono in general and on the 2015 Forum in particular.
- The new UK Collaborative Plan, an initiative of a number of international law firms with offices in London, setting an aspirational target of 25 pro bono hours per lawyer, per year, was mentioned as a potential activity for the roundtables in future. Even though this idea is premature for Italy, it can be used for future pro bono development. Some information on the Collaborative Plan is attached.
- Mike Napier, Pro Bono Envoy for the UK Attorney General, offered some advice for those helping with the planning and organizing of the Italian Forum in his speech during the closing session of the London Forum (see the text of the speech attached).

Next steps:

- Redraft the 4th paragraph of the Pro Bono Definition Paper, taking account of organizations that provide free legal assistance to individuals, claim legal aid but put this money back into the Association. The finalized document is to be approved and signed by the RT participants.
- Get introduced to and possibly meet with representatives of local law firms (in terms of possible sponsorship of 2015 Forum). Expand the pro bono network in order to embed pro bono in the local culture and institutions in the long run.
- Link to the Expo (May 1- October 31, 2015), holding an event as part of the Expo to promote pro bono and the Forum. As a cheap alternative, organize a “next door” event in the Form of a “Roundtable+”, having the RT members speak and directly invite local participants.

Next Roundtable: Wednesday 4 February 2015, 13.00-15.00 CET hosted by [Macchi di Cellere Gangemi](#) and featuring invited NGO’s.