

## German Pro Bono Initiatives

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Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw's Frankfurt office has recently concluded a successful settlement for Trade Plus Aid® (see [www.tradeplusaid.com](http://www.tradeplusaid.com)), an English charity that aims, through the promotion of ethical trade, to alleviate poverty and assist disadvantaged communities throughout Africa and Asia to become self-sufficient. Funds were being raised by the charity's founder, Charlotte di Vita MBE, and her trading company, Charlotte di Vita Limited, via the sale of a range of enamelled teapots in certain European countries. Unfortunately, the distributor of the teapots became insolvent and royalties were not being released to the charity. Associates Marco Wilhelm and Malte Richter, supervised by partner John Faylor, succeeded in negotiating a settlement with one of Germany's top insolvency administrators, to the charity's delight.

Charlotte di Vita writes: "how did you guys get to be so amazing?! You've achieved the impossible for us and I'm really eternally grateful, as will be Matthew who runs our Nutritional Outreach Programmes in the squatter camps of South Africa. We really didn't have any hope of a settlement before you helped us. Thank you so so much... You are definitely the best lawyers in Germany. Outstanding result, outlandish service and impeccable delivery! No doubt in our minds, you definitely win our 2006 hero awards."



Charlotte di Vita with teapot

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German pro bono work has recently been the subject of two meetings organised by Dechert LLP and White & Case LLP in Munich and Frankfurt respectively and attended by many international law firms including Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw (represented by Frankfurt partner John Faylor, Frankfurt associate Malte Richter and UK pro bono partner Julie Dickins).

The meetings have explored issues such as the legality of performing pro bono work in Germany and the need for pro bono assistance. Clients who cannot afford legal advice are usually entitled to state aid, and firms acknowledged the importance of not taking work away from lawyers who normally help legally aided clients. Indeed in some circumstances it is not permissible to charge less than the minimum statutory fees.

However, it appears that smaller public interest and other non-governmental organizations may be in need of pro bono assistance, and that there may also be a need for specialist advice in some areas. These and related issues will be discussed at further meetings being planned for later this year. Further details can be obtained from Julie Dickins, [jdickins@mayerbrownrowe.com](mailto:jdickins@mayerbrownrowe.com).