

ACRC Korea Transparency Newsletter (Feb. 2024)

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Seek ACRC's Sinmungo for Better Livelihood of the People

- *Announcing major policy task of realizing the “protection of rights and interests and the establishment of a transparent society”*
- *“On-site protection of rights and interests,” such as a disadvantaged people-specific ombudsman and on-site ombudsman*
- *“Translate the voice of the people into policies” through connecting with civil complaints big data analysis and institutional improvements*
- *“Eradicate violations of livelihood of citizens and local corruption,” including by expanding the integrity assessment of local councils and promptly investigating pending corruption issues*

(February 19, 2024, ACRC)

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) will select and implement three policy tasks under the vision of “Protecting rights and interests and establishing a transparent society.”

In addition, in 2024, ACRC plans to take more active measures concerning citizens seeking Sinmungo*, public communication platforms, including “e-People” and “Clean Portal.”

* Sinmungo: a group of public communication platforms operated by ACRC, encompassing “e-People (civil complaints service, policy proposals, People’s Idea Box),” “Online administrative appeals,” and “Clean Portal (reporting corruption and public interest violations)”

1. (Onsite protection of rights and interests) Seeking Sinnungo will ensure that grievances of citizens are addressed.

ACRC operates a “disadvantaged people-specific ombudsman” to swiftly address urgent challenges faced by disadvantaged people. In order to address emergency relief civil complaints regarding housing and welfare, the Commission appoints personnel from each division to address them. In cases where urgent complaints are received, they will be handled as a top priority by the personnel immediately visiting the site or taking emergency measures.

ACRC actively operates an “onsite ombudsman” system, designed to visit isolated regions and meet with disadvantaged people in person to resolve their grievances.

“Onsite Outreach Service” serves as a channel for civil complaints, designed to provide consultations on civil complaints and resolving them on-site by visiting regions where people encounter difficulties in accessing administrative agencies in person. This service will be provided for 100 times or more in 2024.

In order to access the Administrative Appeals Request Form Autofill Service, people can visit the “Online Administrative Appeals” (www.simpan.go.kr) and click on the “EASY Administrative Appeals.”

Moreover, ACRC holds “onsite meetings for company grievances” once a month, inviting small firms and small business owners to listen to their grievances and actively address them.

The Commission will continue to promote the “establishment of a one-stop administrative appeals service” to ensure that citizens who have suffered from illegal or unreasonable administrative dispositions can easily seek relief for their rights through administrative appeals.

ACRC also resolves citizens' inconveniences when they find it difficult to determine which agencies they should file administrative appeals with by promoting the selection and integration of agencies among the 66 Special Administrative Appeals Agencies operated under their respective laws, which need to be incorporated into the Central Administrative Appeals Commission of ACRC.

In addition, it is planned to unify the administrative appeals submission channel and the receipt and handling system of each administrative appeals agency.

2. (Translate the voice of the people into policies) Seeking Sinmungo will lead to the transformation of inconvenient institutions.

ACRC analyzes civil complaints data (13 million cases per year), received through civil complaints systems, such as e-People, and publishes the topics in which people are interested in real-time. The results of the analysis are released and accessible on the website "Big Data on Complaints at a Glance (bigdata.epeople.go.kr)."

The Commission actively provides support by monitoring the voices of the people received through the "Presidential Office's Public Proposal" in real-time and translating them into policy improvements.

ACRC will actively discover candidate projects that could be translated into policies by monitoring 50,000 public proposals per year. The projects finally selected by the "Public Proposal Evaluation Committee" will be actively implemented in cooperation with competent authorities.

ACRC will also continue to promote legal and institutional improvements related to social issues, such as those in which citizens are interested, revitalizing the public economy, and building a fair society, through the analysis of civil complaints big data.

The Commission will improve operational methods for the national qualification exam system in order to provide fair opportunities to the young generation and actively promote institutional improvements for the management support for small business owners and self-employed workers. Additionally, ACRC plans to improve methods for disclosing legislative information, with the aim of enhancing transparency within local councils.

3. (Eradication of infringement on the livelihood of citizens and local corruption) Seeking Sinmungo will lead to the eradication of corruption cartels

ACRC investigates reports on anti-corruption practices, such as corruption and violations of public interest, in a fair manner and timely responds to corruption issues. In particular, the Commission plans to conduct fact-finding inspections concerning conventional corrupt practices, including private contracts in collusion with local elected officials and unreasonable payments to public officials, and social issues actively.

ACRC, in particular, actively provides support to enhance the integrity capacity within local councils. The commission conducts integrity assessments of 243 local councils to evaluate the integrity level of legislative activities and operation of councils and publicly release the results. Moreover, ACRC expands integrity education for local council members and public servants.

In addition, ACRC will inspect local laws and regulations, such as the by-laws of local governments, in order to fundamentally improve corruption-causing factors.

ACRC has inspected 150,000 local laws and regulations for three years, from 2022 to 2024. This year, the Commission focuses on the inspection of

regulations related to the operation of local councils and their personnel affairs, accounting, and business.

ACRC also inspects to ensure that there is no financial leakage within contracted agencies responsible for government work closely related to the livelihood of the people.

In particular, the Commission conducts inspections focused on agencies with an annual budget of at least 10 billion won and those in charge of disaster relief and facility safety in order to encourage transparency in the operation of agencies responsible for the life and safety of citizens.

ACRC Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan said, “In circumstances where people’s economic and social difficulties may grow due to the sluggish growth of the global economy, we will directly communicate with citizens on the spot and actively resolve their difficulties. We will be committed to ensuring Korea leaps forward to enter the global top 20 of advanced countries with integrity by fundamentally improving structural factors causing difficulties faced by citizens through institutional improvements and strictly responding to corruption and unfairness.”

Inheriting the “For-the-people Spirit” of Sinmungo and Strengthening the Communication with Citizens and the Protection of Rights and Interests of the People

- *Hosting a ceremony for the 12th National Rights Day, live-streamed on the YouTube Channel, “Vision of Rights”-*
- *Granting 36 government awards and 104 Chairperson’s awards to 8 institutions and 132 persons of merit-*

(February 27, 2024, ACRC)

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) granted 36 government awards and 104 Chairperson’s awards to 8 institutions and 132 persons of merit who contributed to spreading the culture of anti-corruption and integrity and promoting the rights and interests of the people, commemorating the 12th National Rights Day on February 27.

National Rights Day was designated on the day of receiving the official note from King Taejong ordering the establishment of Sinmungo, designed to listen to the voices of the people who suffered from unreasonable practices.

ACRC has been celebrating February 27 as National Rights Day since 2013, in order to reaffirm its commitment to the communication with the people and the protection of their rights and interests, inheriting the for-the-people spirit.

The ceremony comprised a “magic show” and a “sand art performance titled My Mind like a Clean Teddy Bear,” followed by the presentation of awards in 4 areas (prevention of corruption, civil complaints and ombudsman, improvement of rights and interests, and administrative appeals).

In addition, the ceremony was live-streamed on the official YouTube channel of ACRC, “Vision of Rights,” enabling any citizen to watch along with on-site participants.

In particular, the introduction of awardees and their major achievements was significantly expanded compared to the previous year, which made the event to be focused on awardees and awarded institutions, garnering remarkable attention from participants.

One of the major awardees, Park Jong Keun, the Ethical Management Director of Korea Siemens, received the Presidential award in the area of the prevention of corruption. Since October 2013, he has spearheaded the establishment of Korea's "Integrity and Ethics Compliance Program (K-CP)," to create a market with integrity based on benchmarking and mutual exchange with public institutions, state-owned enterprises, private companies, foreign institutes, and NGOs.

In the area of civil complaints and ombudsman, Song Chang Seok, a civil ombudsman in Dangjin, Chungnam, received the Presidential award. Ombudsman Song previously served as a civil auditory ombudsman of Seodaemun-gu, Seoul from 2011 to 2015. He promoted the introduction of the ombudsman of Pyeongtaek-si, Gyeonggi, and currently endeavors to ensure the spread and establishment of civil ombudsman, while serving as a grievance complaints coordinator.

In the area of improvement of rights and interests, Professor Chung Young Seok of Korea Maritime and Ocean University received the Presidential award. Professor Chung provide consultations on "measures to optimize the management of hiring foreign seafarers" and participated in the "Integrated Management of Foreign Workforce TF" under the Office of the Prime Minister, identifying problems in the management of foreign seafarers and suggesting improvement measures, thereby contributing to the protection of the rights and interests of foreign seafarers.

In the area of administrative appeals, Assistant Director Yoon Yu Mi of Incheon Office of Education received the Prime Minister's award. Working at

the Office of Education, Assistant Director Yoon has handled 198 administrative appeals and contributed to the protection of the rights and interests of petitioners, including the development of administrative appeals system, by actively endeavoring to protect the rights and interests of the people.

Among the institutions that received awards, Gyeongsangbuk-do Development Corporation received the Presidential award. The head the Corporation took the initiative to actively engage in the integrity policies and introduced a “standing auditor system” to enhance the expertise of the auditing system. Additionally, the head endeavored to prevent corruption and promote a comprehensive integrity level by establishing an internal control system, including the “formulation of guidelines for preventing conflict of interest.”

The Korea Radioactive Waste Agency received the Prime Minister’s award, contributing to preventing corruption within the public office and creating a public service environment with integrity, by demonstrating a commitment to anti-corruption, integrity, and ethical management to eradicate the abuse of power and spread a culture of integrity, under the leadership of the head of Agency.

Boseong-gun, Jeollanam-do also received the Prime Minister’s award, which achieved transparent management, receiving the 1st rank of comprehensive integrity level for the first time among its district in the Comprehensive Integrity Assessment conducted by ACRC by enhancing integrity capacity through various initiatives aimed at establishing the foundation for integrity policy implementation, strengthening the prevention of corruption, and ensuring integrity becomes part of everyday life.

ACRC Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan said, “We express our gratitude to awardees for their contributions to protecting the rights and interests of citizens and ensuring a fair society. ACRC will spearhead in protecting the rights and interests of citizens and creating a fair and transparent society.”

ACRC to Provide Specialized Education to Prevent Hiring Irregularities in the Public Sector

- *Education on fair hiring processes, etc. to be conducted for officers charged with tasks of hiring and audit in 1,412 public service-related organizations*
- *Hiring irregularities to be cut off at the source through fostering expertise of recruiting officers*

(21. Feb. 2024, ACRC)

The Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Cheol Whan) plans to conduct ‘Specialized Education for Fair Hiring’ (hereinafter ‘specialized education’) with the aim of enhancing the expertise of recruiting and audit officers to prevent hiring irregularities in the public sector. Specialized education constitutes ▲introduction of the latest laws and guidance on fair hiring such as the Fair Hiring Procedure Act, ▲things to note in each stage of hiring, including posting hiring advertisement, organizing hiring examination committee, and determining successful applicants, ▲major cases of identified hiring irregularities.

To root out hiring irregularities in the public sector, not only is the follow-up action such as detection and punishment of irregularities important, but so is the preventative measure to nip hiring irregularities in the bud. The ACRC has been operating specialized education for the prevention of hiring irregularities since last year.

Last year, a total of 5,066 officers completed specialized education, and 90 percent of the respondents who took the survey upon completion of education said ‘the education is helpful for their performance of duties’, indicating the usefulness of the specialized education for the advancement of their expertise in recruitment and audit tasks.

This year, the ACRC also plans to operate specialized education for recruiting

and audit officers in 1,412 public service-related organizations nationwide. Along with the in-person education programs provided every month by the Hiring Irregularities Integrated Reporting Center, the specialized education is also provided online at <https://lms.acrc.go.kr> operated by the Anti-Corruption Training Institute, so those who want to take the education courses can do so all year round.

ACRC Secretary General and Vice-Chairperson Chung Seung Yun said, “A culture of fair hiring will be established in society through customized education specialized for officers responsible for recruitment in public service-related organizations. ACRC will actively support public institutions in strengthening their recruiting expertise so that the young generation in their 20s and 30s will not face unfairness caused by hiring irregularities upon their first steps toward careers.”

Launch of ACRC 2030 Advisory Group, “Translating the Voice of the Youth into ACRC Policies”

- Personally engage in the field of policies regarding the protection of rights and interests and the prevention of corruption to deliver the voice of young people -

(February 22, 2024, ACRC)

The “1st ACRC 2030 Advisory Group” was launched, designed to represent the voice of the youth and provide original ideas on policies for young people in the course of implementing policies of the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan) regarding the protection of rights and interests and the prevention of corruption.

The “ACRC 2030 Advisory Group“ will carry out activities, including their participation in and monitoring of major ACRC policies regarding the resolution of citizens’ grievances, prevention of corruption, administrative appeals, and institutional improvements. Additionally, the Group will engage in policy discussions and proposals to collect the opinions of the youth. These activities commenced with the “launching ceremony and orientation” held for two days starting from February 22.

During the two-day orientation, ACRC discussed the direction of operating the Group and provided education on major policies to enhance its capacity.

The members of the “ACRC 2030 Advisory Group” were selected through open recruitment via the “Youth DB” with a competition ratio of 10 to 1.

The Group consists of 20 members in their 20s and 30s with various career backgrounds, including university students, practitioners from the education and

social welfare sectors, and company employees, with a youth aide, Choi Hyun Seok, as the head of the Group.

The head of the Group, Mr. Choi, said, “The 2030 Advisory Group will be committed to actively reflecting the voice of youth in policies regarding the protection of rights and interests and the prevention of corruption.”

ACRC Chairperson Ryu Chul Whan requested the newly launched “ACRC 2030 Advisory Group” by saying, “We kindly ask you to examine ACRC policies through the lens of youth, identifying blind spots yet discovered, and actively raise your voices.”

Public Interest Disclosures on Narcotics Crimes to be Eligible for up to 5 Million Won in Rewards

- *17 laws including the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Prevention of Illegal Trafficking in Narcotics, etc. to be added to the list of laws the violation of which is subject to public interest disclosure*
- *personal identity of a public interest whistleblower who reports concealment of proceeds of narcotics crimes, etc. to be thoroughly protected*

(21. Feb. 2024, ACRC)

From now on, whistleblowers can receive protection and rewards under the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act for reporting concealment of narcotics criminal proceeds.

Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC, Chairperson Ryu Cheol Whan) announced that the revision bill on the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act, which aims to add 17 laws including the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Prevention of Illegal Trafficking in Narcotics, etc. to the list of laws violations of which fall under the scope of acts detrimental to the public interest subject to public interest disclosure, passed at the National Assembly's plenary session on March 1.

* acts detrimental to the public interest mean any of the following acts detrimental to the health and safety of the people, the environment, the interests of consumers, fair competition, and public interest equivalent thereto: any act subject to the penalty provisions or administrative measures for the cancellation or suspension of approval or permission, etc. under the Acts prescribed in the attached Table of the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act.

When the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act was enacted in 2011, only the acts that violate 180 laws stipulated in the Act were prescribed as acts subject to the public interest whistleblowing disclosure.

Since then, ACRC has continued to add laws directly linked to the public livelihood and requiring protection and rewards for whistleblowers to the list of laws subject to the public interest whistleblower disclosure, and currently there are 474 laws on the list.

Amid rising needs for facilitating reports on narcotics crimes while reinforcing whistleblower protection and rewards due to recent incidents involving narcotics, the revision bill on the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act was passed at the National Assembly on March 1, adding 17 laws including the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Prevention of Illegal Trafficking in Narcotics, etc. to the list of laws subject to public interest whistleblowing disclosure.

From now on, if a person files a report on acts violating the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Prevention of Illegal Trafficking in Narcotics, etc. such as concealing proceeds of narcotics crimes, the person will be protected and rewarded as a public interest whistleblower.

The personal information of a whistleblower will not be disclosed without consent, and protective measures against disadvantageous measures or life/physical threats, etc. by reason of having filed a whistleblowing disclosure will be provided by the ACRC. Where a criminal act of a whistleblower is found in connection with a whistleblowing disclosure, the whistleblower may face reduced punishment or be exempt from the relevant punishment.

In addition, where a whistleblowing disclosure brings remarkable property benefits to a public institution, prevents its loss, or promotes the public interest, the whistleblower may be granted up to 500 million won in monetary awards.

ACRC Secretary General and Vice Chairperson Chung Seung Yun said, “I expect that the scope of protection for a whistleblower will be expanded through the revision to the Public Interest Whistleblower Protection Act, thereby facilitating the detection of acts detrimental to the public interest, including narcotics crimes.”