

Success of Overseas Korean Policy Academic Conference themed around Global Hansang Economic Zone

Compatriots residing in Korea need to change perception about important role in establishing K-community



Professor Choi Yeon-gu of Konkuk University gives a presentation on the topic of “Establishing K-community and support policies.”

The Overseas Koreans Agency (Commissioner Lee Sang-duk) and the Korean Association for Policy Studies (Chairman Park Hyung-joon, professor at Sungkyunkwan University) jointly held the 2025 Spring Academic Conference on April 25.

Approximately 300 domestic policy experts and practitioners attended the academic conference, which aims to strengthen the academic foundation of overseas Korean policies and improve policy effectiveness.

The academic conference was held over two sessions under the themes of “Establishment and policy support for K-community” and “Establishment of global Hansang economic zone and pathways for utilizing overseas Korean talent.”

In the first session, professor Choi Yeon-gu of Konkuk University gave a presentation on the theme of “Establishment and Support Policy of K-community,” suggesting a policy direction for forming a community centered on “Koreanity,” diversity-based identity and open networks. Dr. Yoo Minee of the Migration Research & Training Centre pointed out policy blind spots in employment, residence and education, based on the “Results of the survey of overseas Koreans residing in Korea,” and suggested directions for policy improvement.

The OKA’s Policy Director Lee Ki-seong, Dr. Jeong So-yoon of

the Korea Institute of Public Administration and Dr. Lee Chang-won of the Migration Research & Training Centre had a lively debate on the policy feasibility of establishing a K-community. In particular, the discussants emphasized the need for a change in perception to realize that overseas Koreans residing in Korea can play a very important role in establishing a K-community. The debate discussed the acceptance of overseas Koreans by domestic Koreans and the problems of the government’s policies on overseas compatriots residing in Korea.

“There is still a discriminatory mindset among Koreans that views our compatriots as ‘black-haired foreigners,’” Director Lee Ki-seong said, expressing his opinion that overseas Koreans feel discrimination more seriously than ordinary Koreans and that this should be addressed comprehensively.

It was also pointed out that the government’s domestic compatriot policy is limited to the simple management of residency. Accordingly, the need for specialized support policies by the OKA for compatriots was also discussed.

The discussants said that compatriots are being discouraged through competition with foreigners and that the OKA should develop specialized support policies for compatriots that are differentiated from policies for foreigners.

There was also a discussion on the need for a paradigm shift in the OKA's domestic compatriot support policy. It was suggested that the policy paradigm should be shifted from management-centered to support-centered for overseas compatriots residing in Korea.

"The OKA is making various efforts to strengthen support for the stable settlement of overseas compatriots in Korea and to improve the acceptance of overseas compatriots by domestic Koreans," Lee said.

The director then introduced examples of overseas Korean organizations' community contribution activities and the improvement in their acceptance by domestic Koreans.

In January, the office held a blood donation event with the National Federation of Korean Chinese Compatriots to share life with the meaning of "brothers who have shared blood."

In February, the agency held a food sharing event with Koryo compatriots living in Korea at the Yeonsu-gu Senior Welfare Center. A food sharing event with Chinese compatriots also took place the following week. In addition, a survey on the status of overseas Koreans residing in Korea and measures to improve policies were discussed. It was also suggested that investments should be made in policy capacity to improve the domestic public's perception of overseas Koreans. The need for a more systematic survey by age and purpose was emphasized.

"We are planning to conduct a comprehensive information and statistics survey of compatriots residing in Korea next year," Lee said, adding that the number of multicultural families in Korea and overseas compatriots residing in Korea is similar at 1 million each, and that budget consultations are under way with the Ministry of Strategy and Finance for a survey on compatriots, much like the survey on information and statistics on multicultural families. He emphasized the need for an accurate survey.

The discussants pointed out that the budget of the OKA is 100 billion won, while the budget of the Science and Creativity Foundation, which is smaller in scale than the OKA, is 200 billion won. The argument that dividing the 100 billion-won budget of the OKA among the 7 million overseas compatriots would result in only 14,000 won per person, which would limit actual policy implementation, was also persuasive.

There was also an opinion that the OKA should focus on the role of coordinator of existing policies rather than an independent policy agent in the initial stage.

Professor Choi Yeon-gu drew attention by suggesting that the main role of the OKA should be to establish the concept of



Panelists engage in a lively debate over the policy feasibility of establishing a K-community.

Koreanity. Choi said that the concept of Koreanity has not yet been clearly defined, but it is in the process of being established less than two years after the establishment of the OKA, and that Koreanity should be approached as an open concept rather than a fixed one, with the OKA playing a major role in developing this idea.

There was also lively discussion on the future prospects of the K-community through solving the population problem and establishing a new identity for overseas Koreans. It was argued that solving the population problem would be made possible by establishing a new identity beyond the focus on territory and blood relations. Professor Myung Seung-hwan of Inha University's Department of Public Administration emphasized that securing a larger budget will occur naturally once the new identity direction is established.

In the second session, professor Lee Cheol-seung of Chosun University gave a presentation on the topic of "Policy approaches for building a Hansang economic zone," emphasizing, "In order to strengthen the global network of Korean businesses with community theories centered around the philosophy of harmony, the creation of a mutually beneficial ecosystem between overseas businesspeople and their home countries should be prioritized."

Professor Woo Kyung-seop of Inha University presented "Policy plans for utilizing overseas Korean talent," focusing on Joseon Korean Chinese who were naturalized in Manchuria, and emphasized the importance of crafting a policy for the inflow of talent tailored to each generation, occupation and type.

The panelists, including professor Lee Dan-bi of Seoul National University of Science and Technology, Dr. Kim Hwa-yeon of the Migration Research & Training Centre and professor Lee Jang-seop of Chonnam National University, unanimously agreed that "establishing a Hansang economic zone is an important policy to expand Korea's economic territory and build global competitiveness," and emphasized the need to expand the talent pool and build a linkage platform. 장