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## **European Patent Office**

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# **Survey on psychosocial risks carried out for the Trade Union of the EPO**

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**Questionnaire 2022 - 5th edition**

**March - May 2022**

# Executive Summary

## *a. A questionnaire survey...*

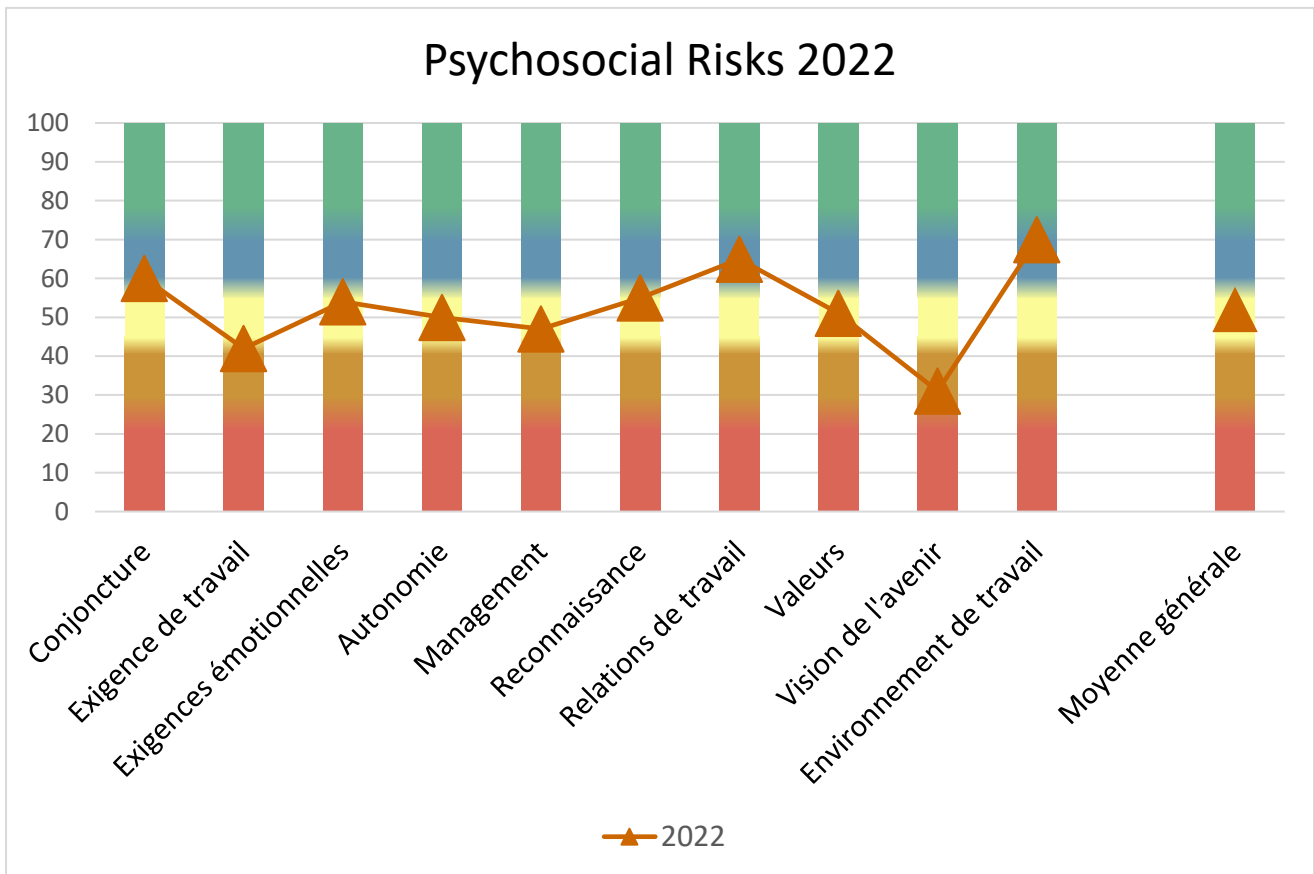
... whose responses were collected from 30 March 2022 to 09 May 2022 included. Of the 6 545 staff members of the Office, 2 915 were approached and 1766 participated. The participation rate is therefore 60.6% of those approached and 27% of EPO staff.

The questions are almost identical to those of the 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2020 iterations.

## *b. The analysis of the results was organised along three dimensions...*

## b. Psychosocial risks at the EPO: a delicate balance between human support and pressure by the system

The levels of psychosocial risks were measured using the [Gollac indicators](#), according to a graduated response scale.



The **deteriorated factors** are **Work Demands** (especially in terms of Quantity of Work) and **Vision of the Future** (especially in the dimension of Job-related Anxiety).

Even if the **Management** factor is not deteriorated overall, it is, on the other hand, strongly deteriorated in its dimension of *trust in the General Management*, as well as for the assessment of the *Management System*.

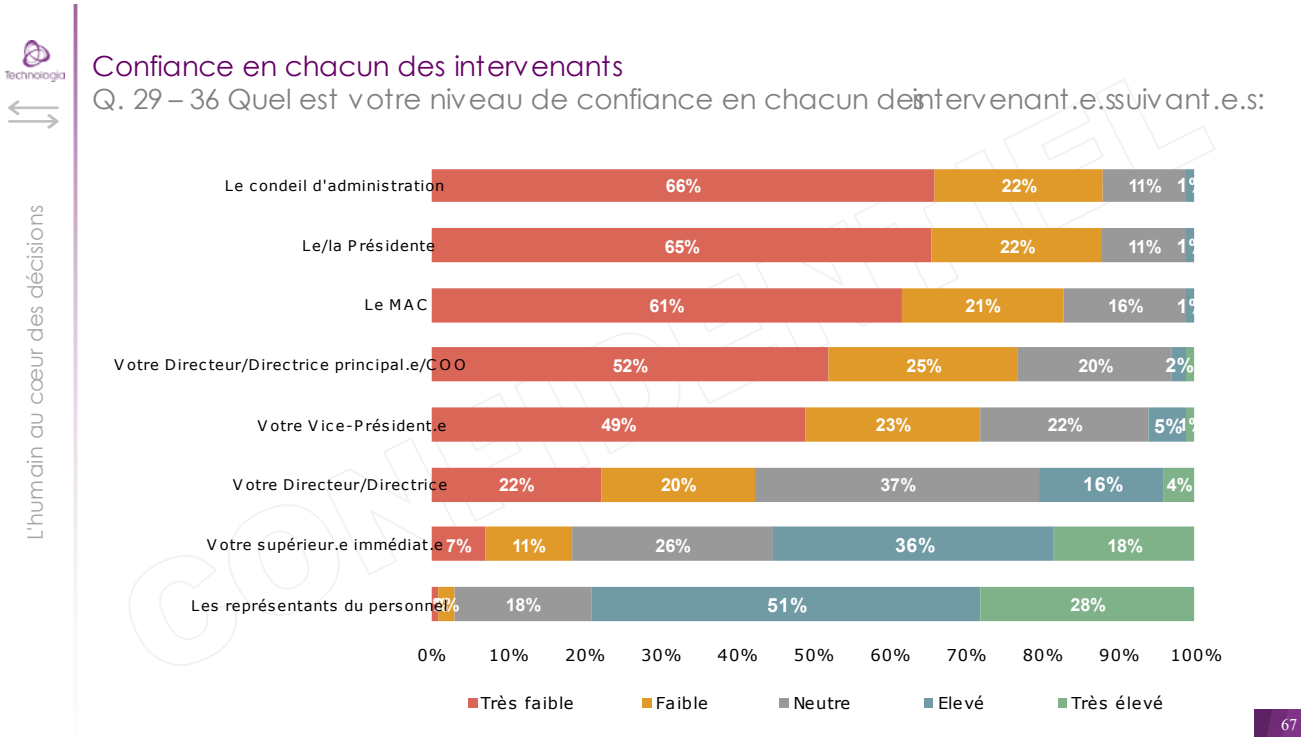
The **most favourable factors** are the **Working Environment** and **Labour Relations**, and for the latter particularly from the point of view of the action of staff representatives.

### a. Differences by population profile

**DG** - This trend applies to DG1, quite is logically, since it is dominant among the respondent population, while the other DGs are in a more favourable situation, especially the DG of the Boards of Appeal (ex-DG3).

**Job Group** - The detailed analysis by *Job Group* also reveals disparities. Groups 1 & 2 experience a more deteriorated situation, particularly from the point of view of management (both the people and the system).

DG1 is the branch where confidence in management is lowest. Respondents with the profile of *managers 1 and 2* are the most negative towards top management.



89% of staff at level N consider that their manager at level N+1 is bound by the decision of the manager at level N+2. The result is consistent within the hierarchy, showing that the EPO operates according to a strict pyramidal structure. As an exemplary consequence, reorganisations are perceived as useless by 86%, unwanted by 92% and detrimental for their careers by 87%.

### c. Evolution over the years: an ever-present degradation

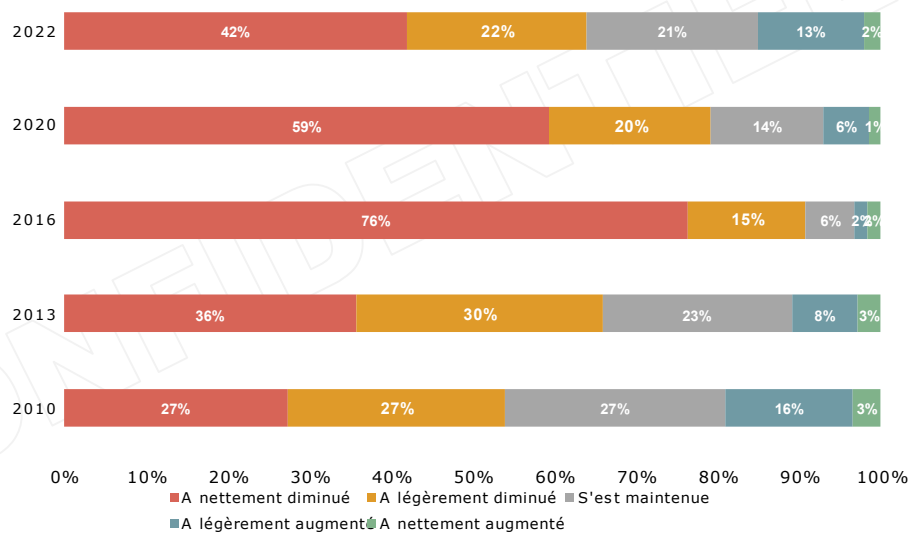
After 5 iterations, an overall trend emerges: from 2010 to 2013, then from 2013 to 2016, the situation has worsened. In 2020 and 2022, the respondents consider the situation to be even worse than the previous time (2020 worse than 2016, and 2022 worse than 2020).

- For Quality, Pride of belonging... **the share of negative opinions has been decreasing since 2016, but it is still the majority** (42% + 22% still think that the place of quality is decreasing / 58% do not feel proud to belong to the Office today)



L'humain au cœur des décisions

Q. 39 Depuis les trois dernières années, la place de la qualité au regard des objectifs quantitatifs :



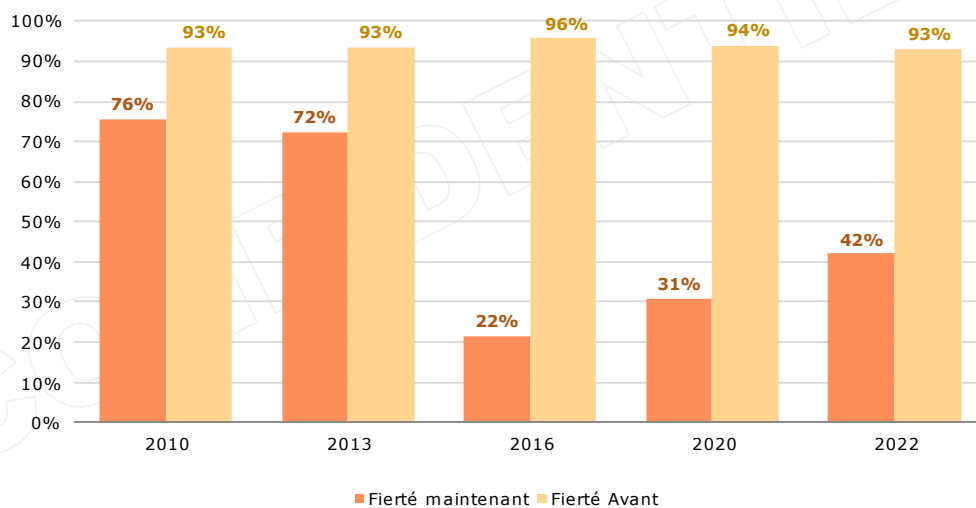
58



L'humain au cœur des décisions

#### Fierté d'appartenance à l'OEB 2010– 2013 – 2016 – 2020 – 2022

Q. 174 Auparavant, étiez-vous / Q. 175 Aujourd'hui, êtes-vous fier d'appartenir à l'Office Européen des Brevets ?



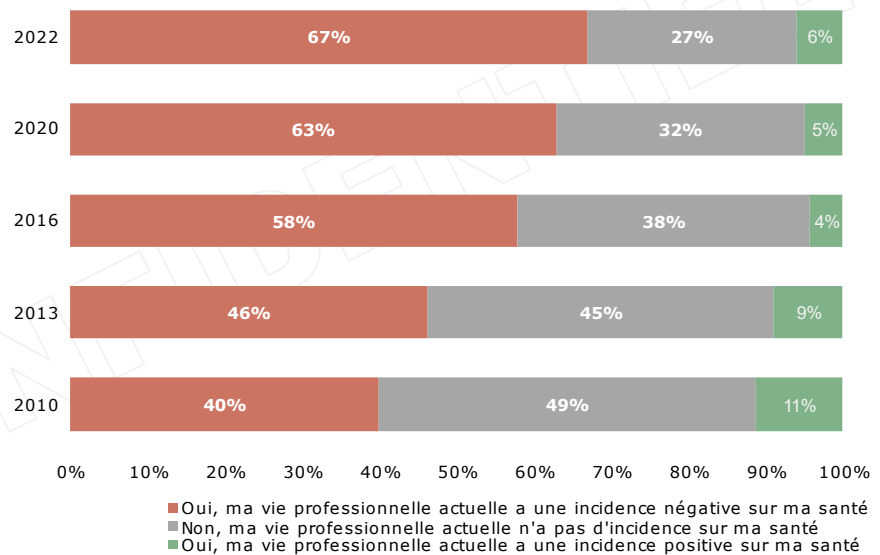
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- However, in terms of impact, **health is perceived for an increasing number of people as being degraded by the work**, with a **deterioration in working conditions that shows a year 2022 worse than 2020 for 56% of respondents**. In 2022, this deterioration is still driven by *workload* and *objectives*.



L'humain au cœur des décisions

Q. 159 Pensez-vous que votre vie professionnelle actuelle a une incidence sur votre santé ?

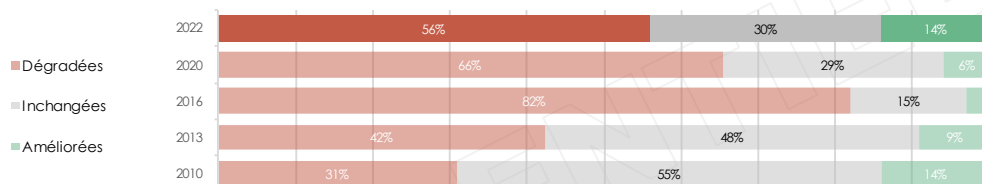


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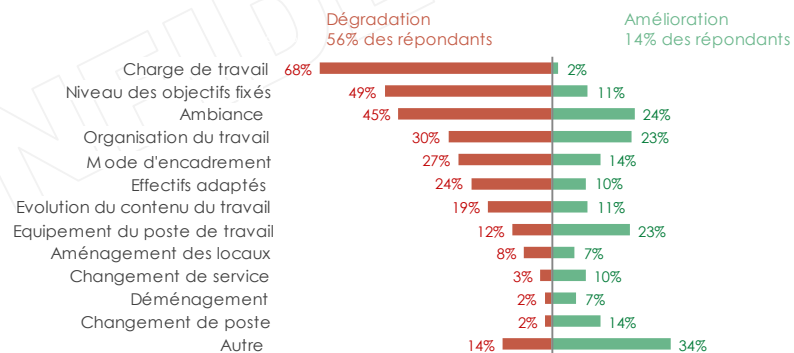


L'humain au cœur des décisions

Evolution des conditions de travail au cours des 12 derniers mois (2019-2022)  
Raisons de l'évolution des conditions de travail 2022



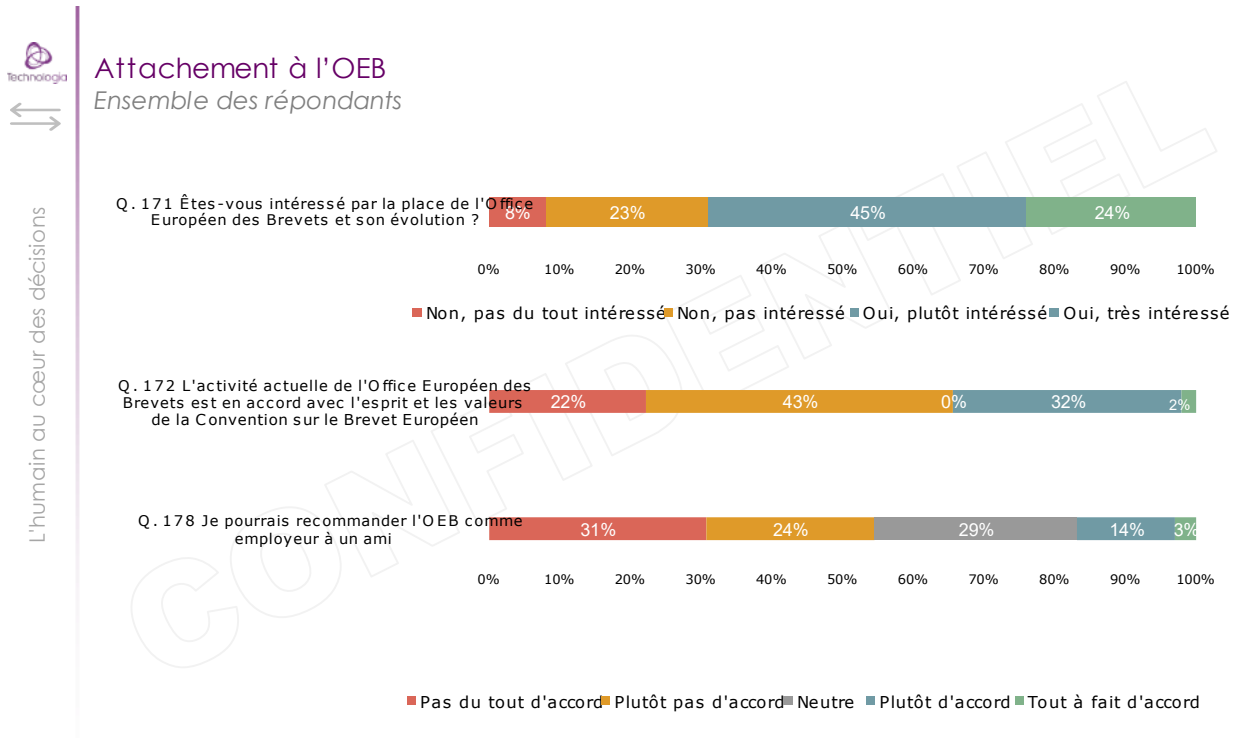
En raison de...



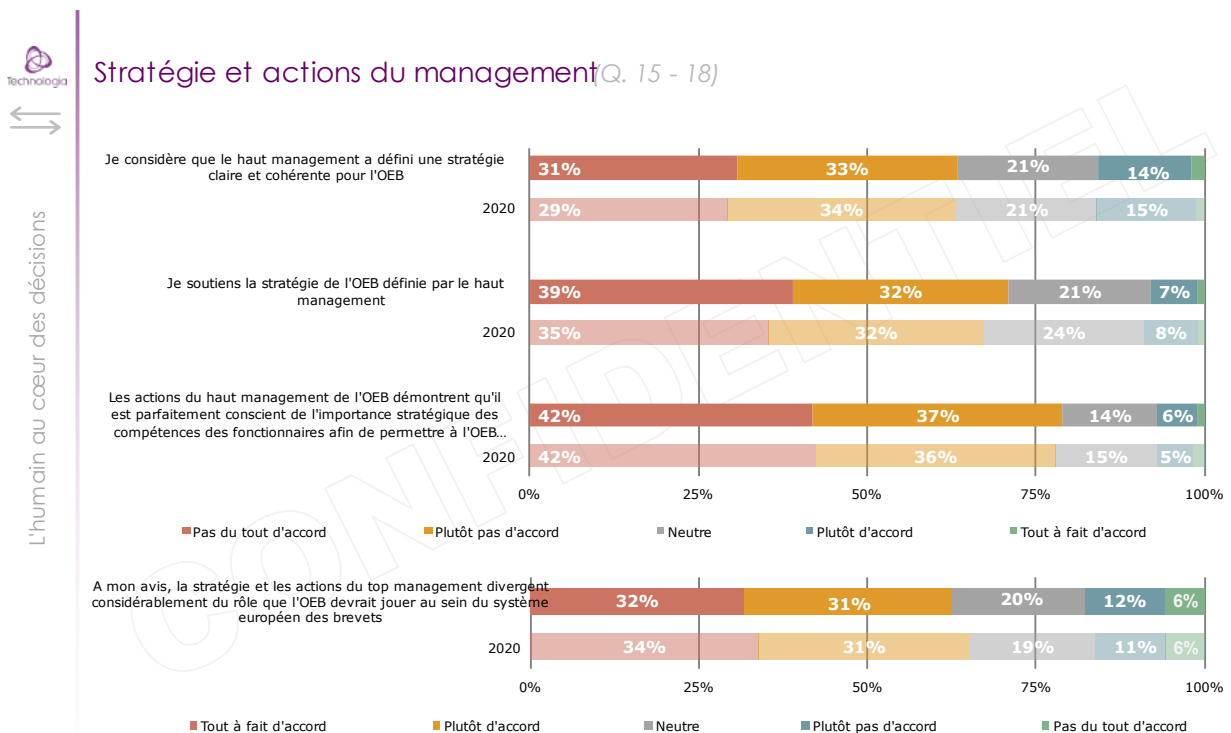
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## d. From daily work to strategy: employees concerned... and doubting

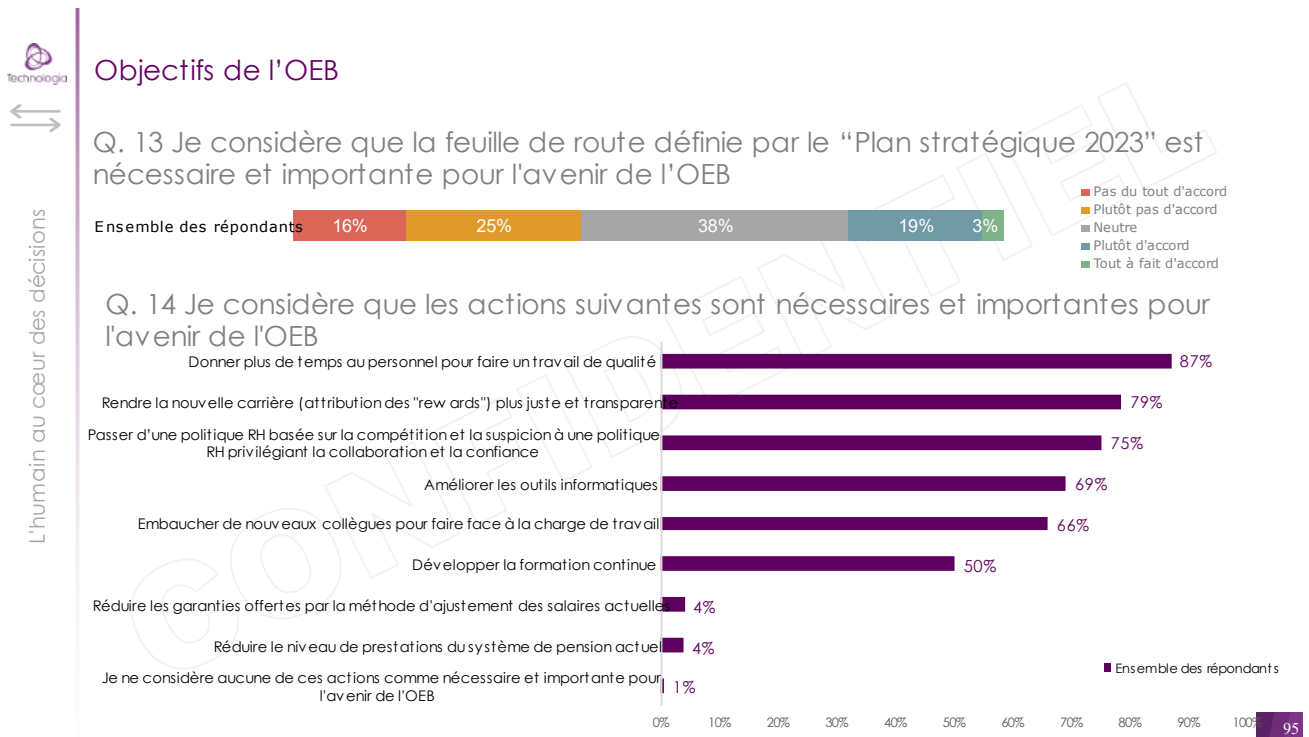
The employees say they are interested in the Office's missions... but have a mixed opinion on the respect of the values carried by the European Patent Convention.



As a result, there is a high level of rejection, much doubt and little support for the office's strategy



Only 22% of respondents agree with the "Strategic Plan 2023". Employees are clear: *time for quality and a management policy based on mutual support* are cited as the best factors for success.

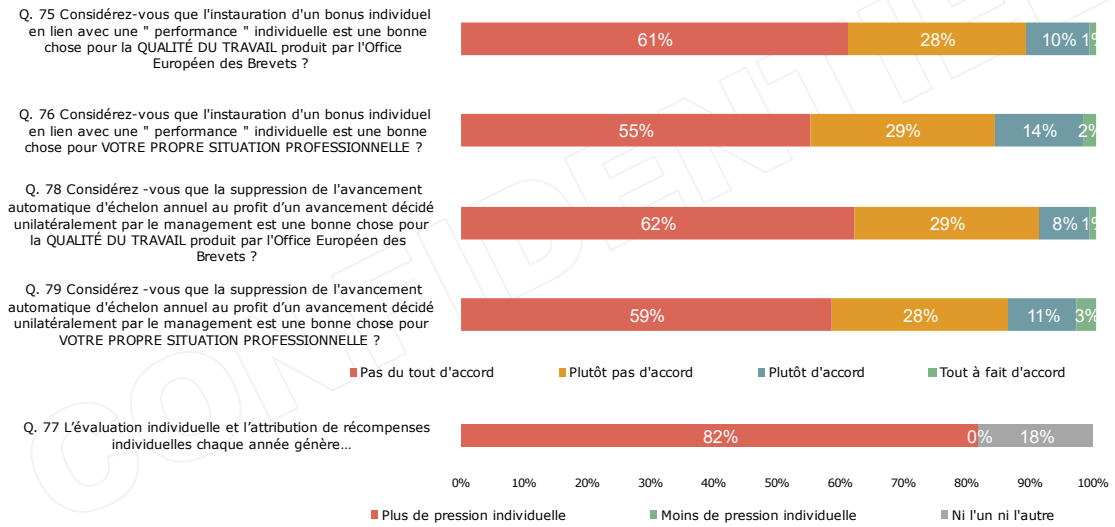


Unsurprisingly, the assessment of top management's orientations is even more negative with regard to the 'New Career System' implemented in 2015. More specifically: the professional situation of staff is negatively affected by the performance-related bonus (for 84%) and the abolition of the automatic step (for 87%)





## Les avis sur la formule «Nouvelle carrière» mis en œuvre en 2015 Ensemble des répondants



## Conclusion

The directions chosen in recent years are causing a deterioration of trust and a worrying state of health at work.

**In the light of this analysis, based on an assessment from the field, how should the Office react? On what basis does management agree with this analysis? What actions will management integrate into SP 2028?**