



Study to support the evaluation of the EU Strategic Framework on health and safety at work 2014-2020

OPC Report
Task 5 Report

Ipsos
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Directorate-General for Employment Social Affairs and Inclusion
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Task 5: OPC report

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RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This report presents the findings of the open public consultation (OPC) on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 (hereinafter referred to as the EU Strategic Framework). The report begins with an executive summary, providing an overview of the key findings. This is followed by a detailed review of findings, structured objective by objective.

Executive Summary

- 355 people responded to the OPC on the EU Strategic Framework. Respondents were from 26 EU Member States and seven non-EU countries. Hungary (17%), Belgium (10%), Germany (10%), and Spain (9%) were the countries with the highest numbers of respondents. Two stakeholder groups accounted for 46% of all respondents: companies/business organisations (23%) and EU citizens (23%).
- About six in ten OPC respondents (64%) strongly agreed or agreed that, overall, workplace safety and health in their country/the EU had improved since 2014. This figure was higher (83%) for respondents representing employers and employers' associations and lower (49%) for respondents representing workers' associations.
- A majority of respondents felt that the EU Strategic Framework contributed "to a great extent" (15%) or "somewhat" (54%) to improved health and safety at work *at EU level*. Slightly fewer felt that the Strategic Framework contributed "to a great extent" (9%) or "somewhat" (54%) to improved health and safety at work *at national level*. Less than half of the respondents indicated that the Framework contributed "to a great extent" (6%) or "somewhat" (43%) to improved health and safety at *regional level*, and "to a great extent" (8%) or "somewhat" (43%) to improved health and safety at *workplace level*.
- In terms of actions taken since 2014 by key actors to ensure high-level protection of workers' health and safety, respondents were most positive about the actions taken by national or regional authorities, by worker's organisations (trade unions, etc.) at national level and by the European Commission, with almost half of the respondents (49%) agreeing that these institutions had taken sufficient action. Slightly fewer respondents agreed that the European Parliament and Council (44%) and employers (43%) had taken sufficient action. Least action was perceived to have been taken by employers' organisations at EU level, with 32% of respondents agreeing that action undertaken by them since 2014 was sufficient to protect workers' health and safety.
- Addressing issues such as the ageing of the workforce and emerging new risks was considered the highest priority in the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020. Ninety percent of respondents stated that this was very important or important.
- Opinions on the progress of the actions under the seven strategic objectives in the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 were divided. For each strategic objective, half or less than half of respondents (varying between 53% for the first strategic objective and 24% for fourth strategic objective) agreed that good progress had been made against each action, that they led to tangible results, were relevant to the actual priorities in the area of occupational safety and health (OSH) and that the appropriate stakeholders had been involved in their development. In most cases, more respondents agreed than disagreed that progress had been made in these areas (with most of the remainder neither agreeing nor disagreeing).
- When comparing responses on each of the seven strategic objectives, respondents were most positive about the progress of the first (review national OSH strategies) and

second (facilitate compliance with OSH legislation). Respondents appeared to find objective five (addressing the ageing of the workforce, emerging new risks and work-related and occupational diseases) most relevant, followed by objective one, two and six (improve data collection). Objectives one, two and five were perceived to have produced the most tangible results.

- Respondents reported least progress and least evidence of tangible results under objectives four (simplify legislation) and seven (better coordinate EU and international efforts to address OSH). It is notable that these two objectives were also perceived to be the least relevant.
- Concerning the first strategic objective, which tasked Member States to review their national OSH strategies in light of the new EU Strategic Framework, approximately half of OPC respondents (53%) said good progress had been made, while 20% disagreed. The same proportion (53%) agreed that the actions under the first strategic objective were relevant to the actual priorities in the area of OSH, while 39% agreed that these actions involved the appropriate stakeholders and 41% agreed that they led to tangible results.
- Around one third of respondents felt that employers (35%), workers' organisations (33%), OSH professionals (33%), and employers' organisations (31%), were involved "too little" in the design of the EU Strategic Framework.
- Respondents mentioned the following as key barriers to fulfilling the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework: limited human and financial resources (41%), lack of interest by employers (35%), and lack of awareness/understanding of OSH among key stakeholders (34%).
- A majority of respondents (68%) supported an updated or adapted Strategic Framework, while 11% felt that a successor should remain largely the same as the 2014-2020 Framework. A very small number of respondents (<1%) supported discarding the EU Strategic Framework, while 14% believed the Framework's current model needed to be fundamentally altered.
- According to respondents, the two most important OSH challenges that need to be addressed in the next seven years are psychosocial risks and increased working from home.
- OPC respondents identified the following as key priorities for the next EU Strategic Framework:
 - "Effective application of OSH legislation";
 - "Development and dissemination of OSH guidance, good practices and other awareness raising activities" and
 - "Promoting cooperation and coordination of OSH policies across policy areas, such as health, education, environment, chemicals etc."

1. Introduction

The European Commission has committed to ensuring the right of EU workers to a high level of health and safety protection at work and to a working environment adapted to their professional needs. Both enables them to prolong their working life. The current EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work ended in 2020 and a new one is expected to be adopted in 2021.

The objective of the open public consultation (OPC) is twofold: the information and opinions collected will be used to take stock of the current EU Strategic Framework; at the same time it will also provide input to prepare and improve the new EU Strategic Framework for the period 2021-2027.

The European Commission (DG EMPL) launched the OPC by means of EU Survey on 7 December 2020. The consultation was published on the Commission's Public Consultation website¹ and was open until 1 March 2021 to anyone interested. Contributions were particularly sought from:

1. National or regional public authorities active in the area of occupational safety and health (OSH);
2. Employers and employers' organisations;
3. Workers and workers' organisations;
4. Other EU institutions or bodies and
5. Organisations and citizens with an interest or expertise in the area of occupational safety and health.

The OPC combined a mix of closed questions (where respondents choose from a pre-determined selection of answers) and open questions (where they are free to write any response they choose). Participants were given a 500 character limit for all questions except questions 23 and 26². In these cases, 2,500 character responses were allowed. Responses to this OPC were analysed using MS Excel. Where relevant, thematic grouping was applied to free-text responses to determine approximate frequencies. This involved a degree of interpretation.

A separate Excel file from Hungarian Enterprise Europe Network members with 43 responses to the survey was received in the spam folder of the OPC functional mailbox and only noticed later. Since these contributions were received before closing of the OPC, they were manually integrated into the overall dataset for questions to which these respondents replied.

¹ The OPC was published on the following website: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12673-EU-Strategic-Framework-on-Health-and-Safety-at-Work-2021-2027-/public-consultation>

² Question 23 asked respondents if they could suggest practical solutions to address all or some of the key OSH challenges in the next seven years. Question 26 asked respondents what main issues should be covered in the successor to the current EU OSH Strategic Framework, covering the next seven years.

The consultation questionnaire was structured into three sections:

- Section I enquired about respondents' general views on occupational safety and health;
- Section II sought their views on the previous EU Strategic Framework; and
- Section III collected respondents' opinions and views on the future EU Strategic Framework.

2. Who contributed?

The OPC received a total of 355 responses from 26 EU Member States and seven non-EU countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, the United States, the United Kingdom, North Macedonia, Norway and Turkey). Most respondents were from Hungary (17%)³, followed by Belgium (10%), Germany (10%) and Spain (8%), as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Respondent's country of origin

Country	#	%	Country	#	%
Austria	8	2%	Latvia	0	0%
Belgium	34	10%	Lithuania	6	2%
Bulgaria	4	1%	Luxembourg	7	2%
Croatia	3	1%	Malta	1	0.3%
Cyprus	2	1%	Netherlands	9	3%
Czechia	2	1%	Poland	12	3%
Denmark	6	2%	Portugal	16	5%
Estonia	2	1%	Romania	5	1%
Finland	11	3%	Slovakia	7	2%
France	19	5%	Slovenia	5	1%
Germany	34	10%	Spain	30	8%
Greece	13	4%	Sweden	7	2%
Hungary	59	17%	Other	14	4%
Ireland	11	3%			
Italy	28	8%	Total	355	100%

Source: Public consultation

The largest groups of respondents were EU citizens (23%) and companies/business organisations (23%). Other represented groups included business associations (13%), trade unions (12%) and public authorities (11%).

Table 2. Respondent's category

Type	#	%
Academic/research institution	11	3%
Business association	45	13%
Company/business organisation	81	23%
Consumer organisation	0	0%
Environmental organisation	0	0%

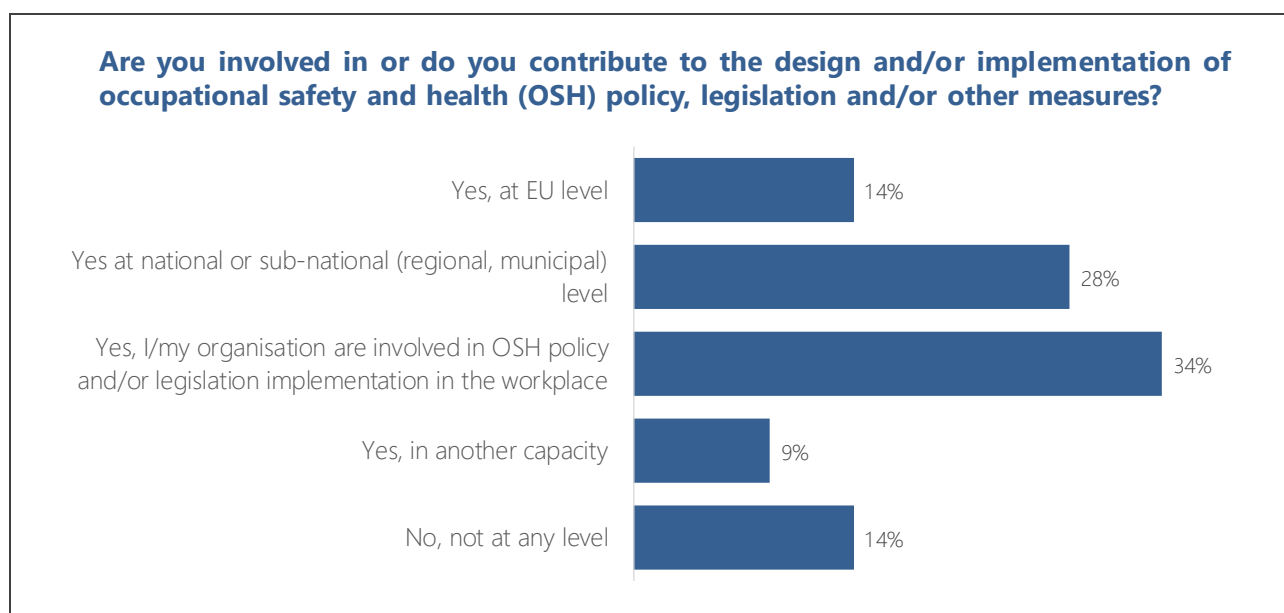
³ Most of the Hungarian respondents were part of the Enterprise Europe Network, see last paragraph page 8.

Type	#	%
EU citizen	83	23%
Non-EU citizen	2	0.5%
Non-governmental organisation (NGO)	20	5%
Public authority	40	11%
Trade union	42	12%
Other	31	9%

Source: Public consultation

Eighty six percent (86%) of respondents claimed to be involved in or have contributed to the design and/or implementation of OSH policy, legislation and/or other measures at some level (EU, national/sub-national, in the workplace or in another capacity), with 14% not being involved at any level. A little over one third of respondents (34%) described themselves as being involved in OSH policy and/or legislation implementation in the workplace. Over one quarter (28%) of respondents were involved at the national or sub-national (regional or municipal) level, while 14% of respondents were involved at EU-level. 9% were involved in another capacity.

Figure 1: Involvement in the design and/or implementation of OSH policy



All respondents (n=350)

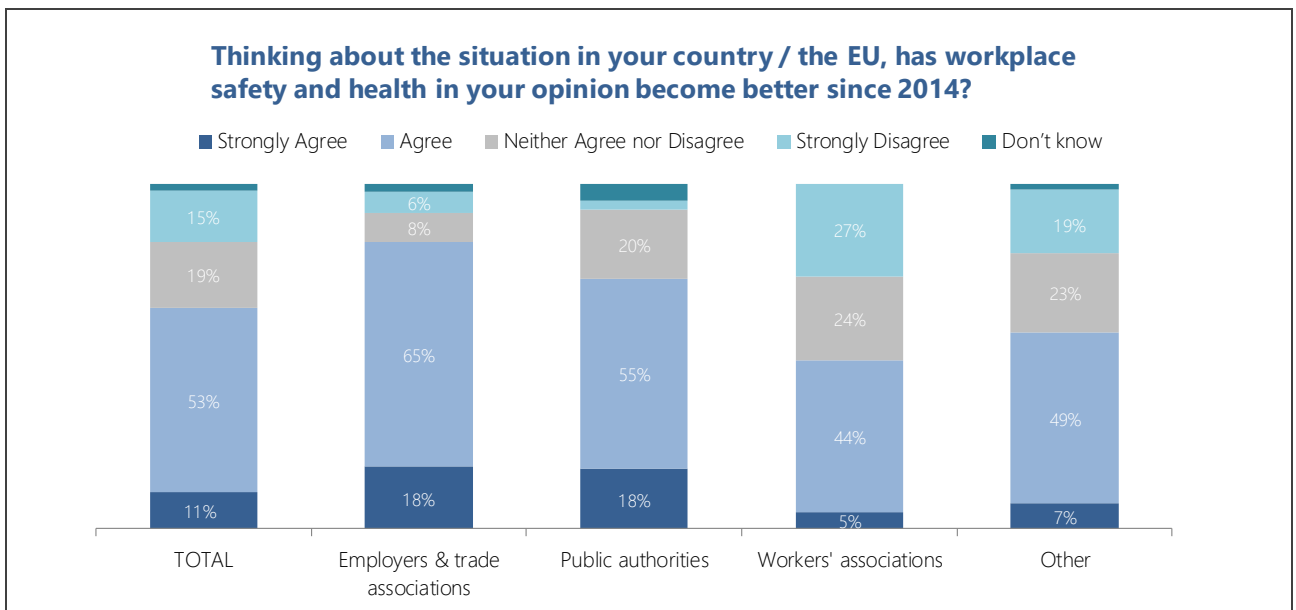
Source: Public Consultation

Over half of respondents (54%) described themselves as somewhat familiar with the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020, while 29% stated that they were very familiar with the Framework. Seventeen percent of respondents stated that they were *not* familiar (or only to a very limited degree). Questions related to opinions and views on the future EU Strategic Framework (see Section 5 below) were only asked to those who indicated that they were at least somewhat familiar with the Framework.

3. General views on occupational safety and health

Respondents to the OPC were first asked a general question enquiring whether they felt workplace safety and health in their country or the EU has improved since 2014. As can be seen in Figure 2, the majority agreed (53%) or strongly agreed (11%) that the situation has become better. On the other hand, 15% strongly disagreed. Compared to the total, respondents representing employers or employers' associations more often felt that workplace safety and health in their country or the EU has improved since 2014 (83% agreed), whereas those representing workers' associations were less likely to hold this opinion (48% agreed⁴).

Figure 2: Views on development of workplace safety and health in own country/the EU, by type of respondent



Figures below 5% not displayed.

All respondents (n=352)

Source: Public Consultation

Respondents were asked in an open text question to further elucidate on their responses. In total 266 respondents provided additional details.

Of those who agreed that the situation in their country/the EU had improved since 2014, some noted that the regulatory framework and legislation at EU level were of a high standard, and identified the transposition of EU OSH legislation at national level as a driver to improved OSH in their country. In particular, the importance of the Framework Directive and its individual and related Directives was highlighted. Specific improvements that were mentioned included the legislation around chemicals and carcinogens (particularly achievements in terms of occupational exposure limits), increased awareness and acknowledgment of psychosocial risks, and improvements in accident statistics in certain Member States. Clearer legislation and stricter enforcement in some Member States was found to aid compliance.

Those who strongly disagreed that workplace safety and health in their country or the EU has improved since 2014 often specified that the numbers in the national accident data had either worsened or not sufficiently improved. The same group also regularly reported implementation

⁴ 48% and not 49% due to rounding.

as a barrier. Some stated that no action at all had been taken at national level, while others felt that the legislation was in place but had not yet been fully implemented. Additionally, respondents noted that risks, such as mental health issues, psychosocial risks, and increased harassment in the workplace, had not been dealt with sufficiently. Several respondents also highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the 2008 financial crisis as factors leading to the erosion of earlier progress in this field.

As noted in Figure 3 below, opinions were divided on the extent to which different actors have taken sufficient action to ensure high level of protection of workers' health and safety since 2014. Almost half (49%) of respondents agreed that national/regional authorities, workers' organisations and the European Commission have taken sufficient action to ensure a high level of protection of workers. More than four in ten (44%) of respondents felt that the European Parliament and the Council have taken sufficient action. Employers' organisations at EU level were least often considered to have taken sufficient action, with 31% of respondents agreeing this was the case.

Figure 3: Views on level of action taken by key actors



Figures below 5% not displayed.⁵

All respondents (n=341-347)⁶

Source: Public Consultation

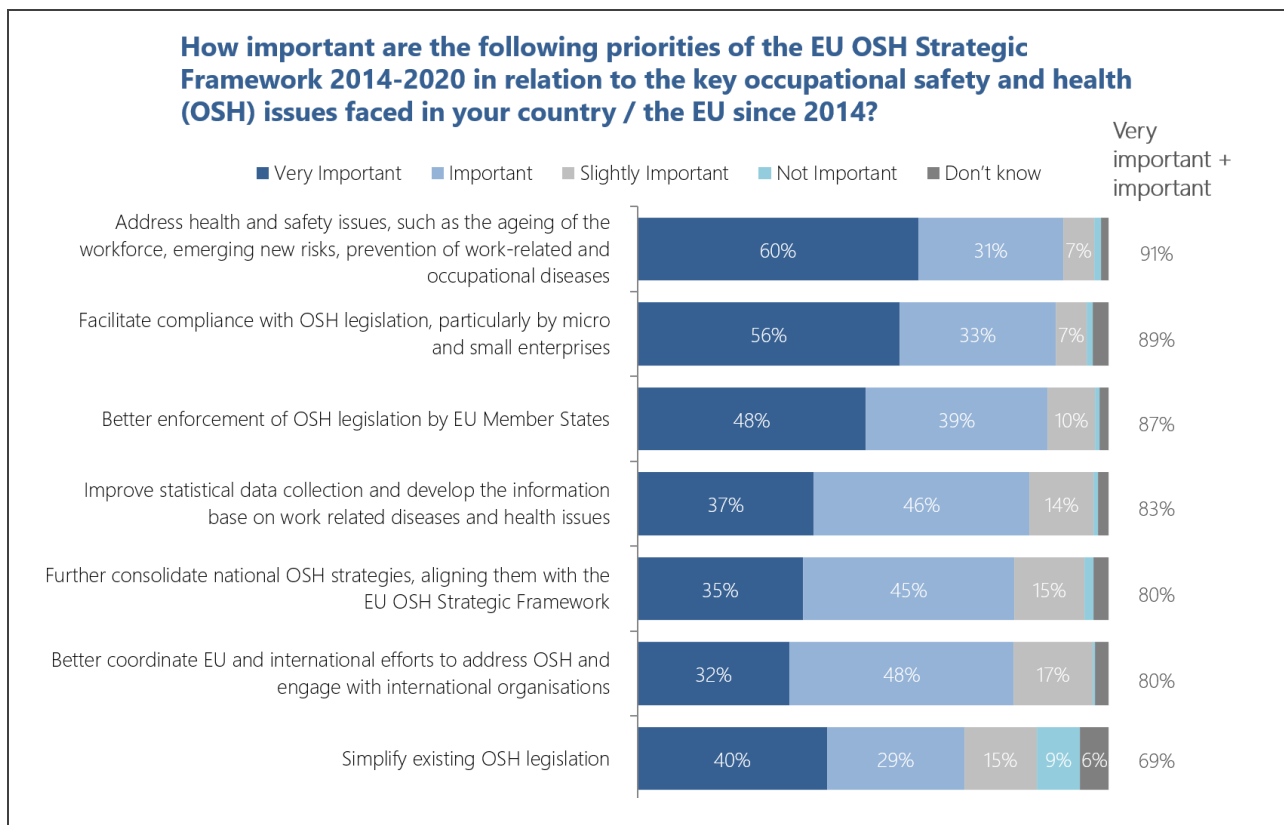
Respondents were also asked for their views on the most important priorities of the EU Strategic Framework in relation to the key OSH issues faced in their country / the EU since 2014. As noted in Figure 4 below, there was broad support for all of the current priorities. In particular, 91% of respondents expressed support for addressing health and safety issues such as the ageing of the workforce and new and emerging risks (with 60% describing this as very important and 31% as important). The facilitation of compliance with OSH legislation, better enforcement of OSH by EU Member States, the improvement of statistical data collection and the development of the information base on work related diseases and health

⁵ As percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, they may not always add up to 100%.

⁶ Answering each of the question items/sub questions in a grid question like this was not obligatory, implying that the number of respondents could vary between the different question items/sub questions. Hence, for this and similar grid questions, the number of respondents is shown as a range.

issues were also perceived to be important or very important by more than 80% of respondents.

Figure 4: Importance attached to priorities of the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020



Figures below 5% not displayed.⁷

All respondents (n=345-351)

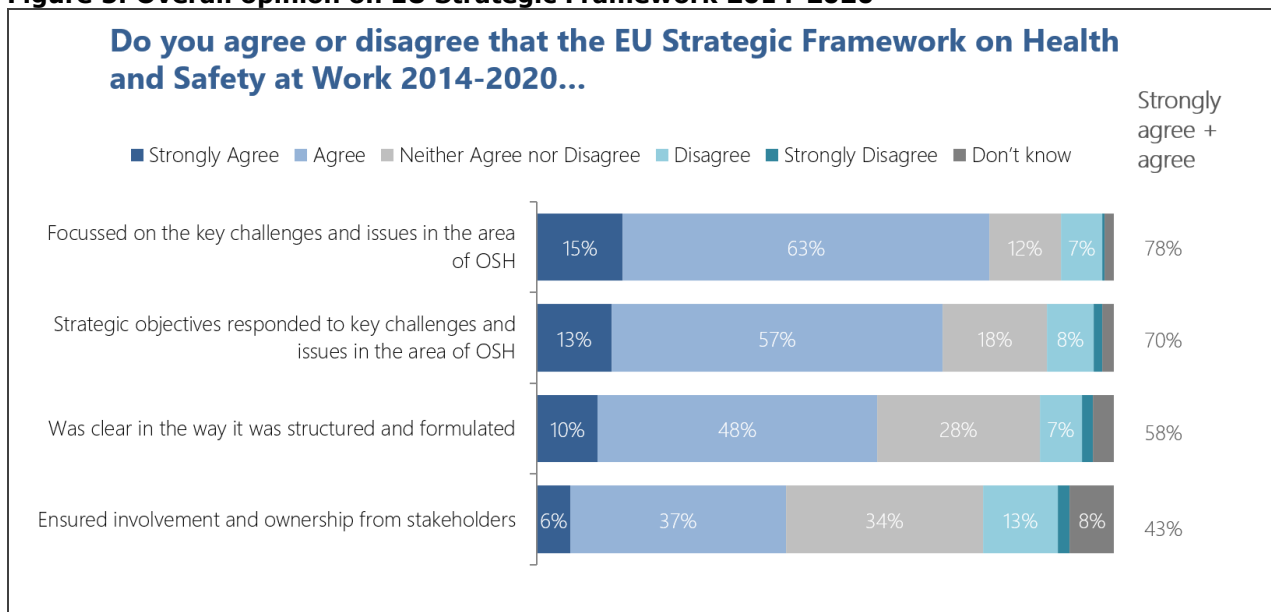
Source: Public Consultation

⁷ As percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, they may not always add up to 100%.

4. Views on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020

As can be seen in Figure 5, approximately three quarters of respondents (78%) agreed that the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 focussed on the key challenges and issues in the area of OSH. More than two thirds (70%) agreed that the strategic objectives in the Framework responded to the key challenges and issues in the area of OSH. Fewer agreed that the EU Strategic Framework was clear in the way it was structured and formulated (58% agreed) and ensured involvement and ownership from stakeholders (43% agreed).

Figure 5: Overall opinion on EU Strategic Framework 2014-2020

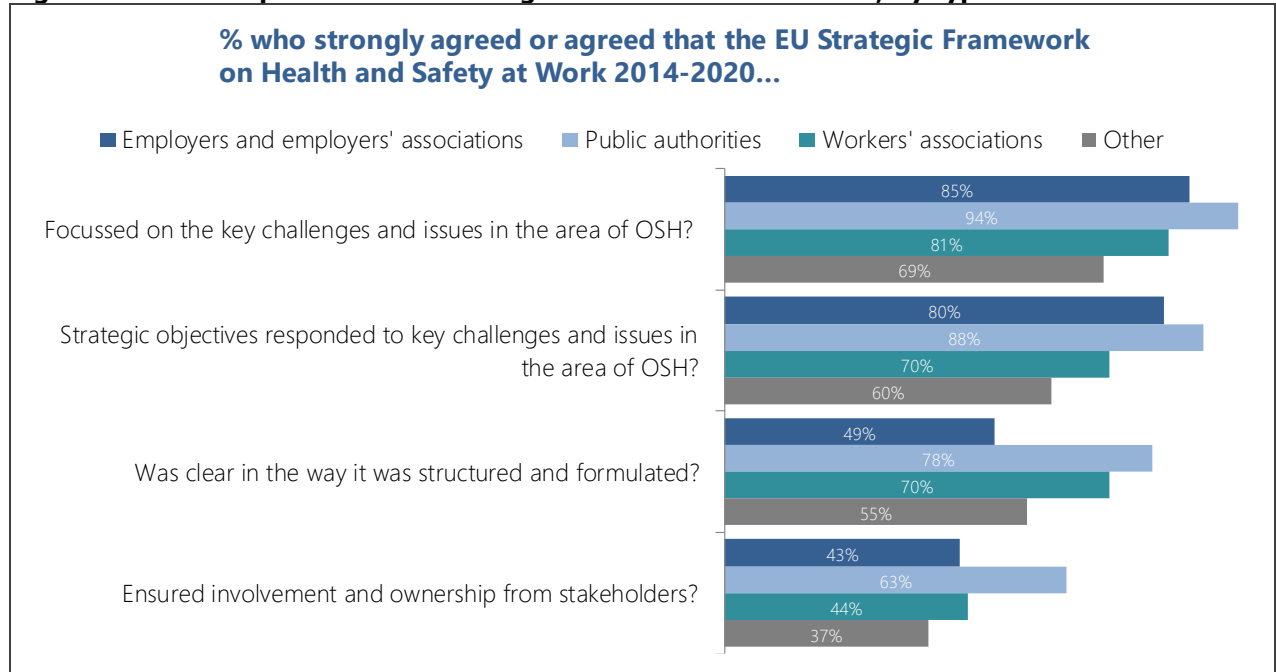


Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=246-249)

Source: Public Consultation

When comparing different respondent groups (see Figure 6), it can be observed that employers and employers' associations were relatively less likely to agree that the EU Strategic Framework was clearly formulated and structured (49% agreed, compared to 78% of public authorities and 70% of workers' associations). Public authorities were more likely to agree that the EU Strategic Framework ensured involvement and ownership from stakeholders, compared to both workers' associations and employers / employers' associations (respectively 63%, 44% and 43% agreed). It appears that there is broad agreement across all groups that the EU Strategic Framework focussed on the key challenges and issues in the area of OSH.

Figure 6: Overall opinion on EU Strategic Framework 2014-2020, by type of stakeholder



Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=246-249)

Source: Public Consultation

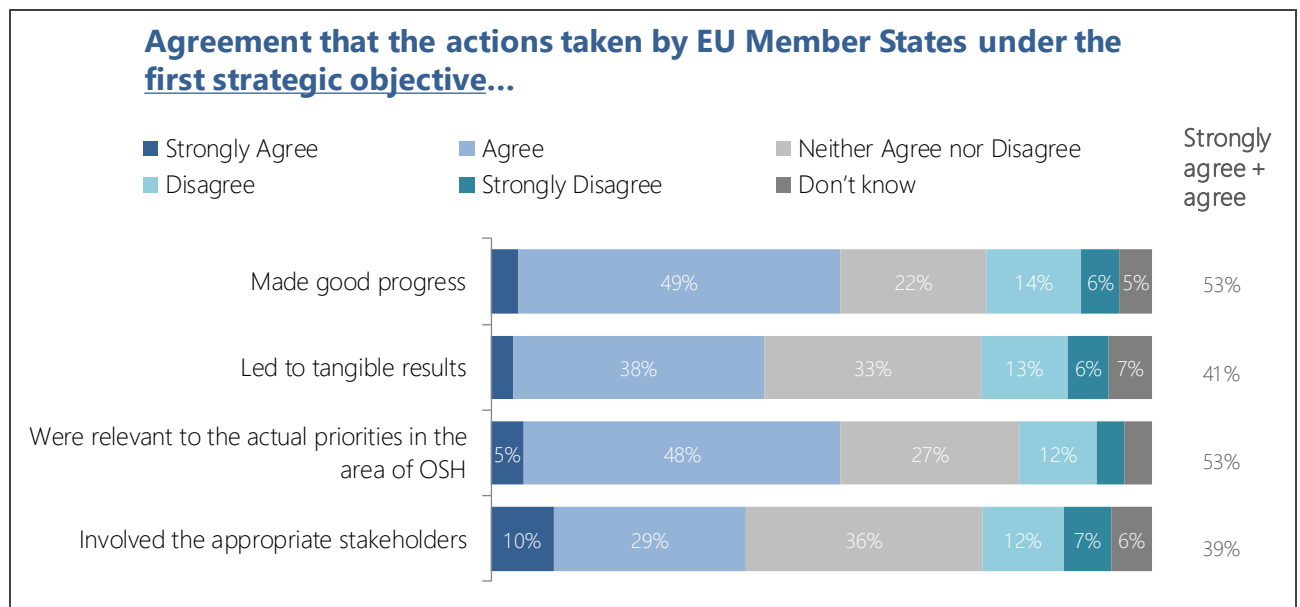
OPC respondents who described themselves as (somewhat or very) familiar with the EU Strategic Framework were asked about the seven strategic objectives defined in the Framework⁸ and if the actions described under these objectives made good progress, led to tangible results, were relevant to the actual priorities in the area of OSH and involved the appropriate stakeholders.

⁸ Link to the EU OSH Strategic Framework 2014-2020: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0332>

Concerning the **first strategic objective**, which tasks Member States to review their national OSH strategies in light of the new EU Strategic Framework, over half of OPC respondents agreed or strongly agreed that good progress had been made against the specific actions (53%) and that these actions were relevant to the actual priorities in the area of OSH (53%). Forty one percent agreed or strongly agreed that the actions under the first strategic objective led to tangible results and 39% agreed or strongly agreed that the appropriate stakeholders had been involved.

Figure 7: Opinions on progress under the first strategic objective – Further consolidate national strategies

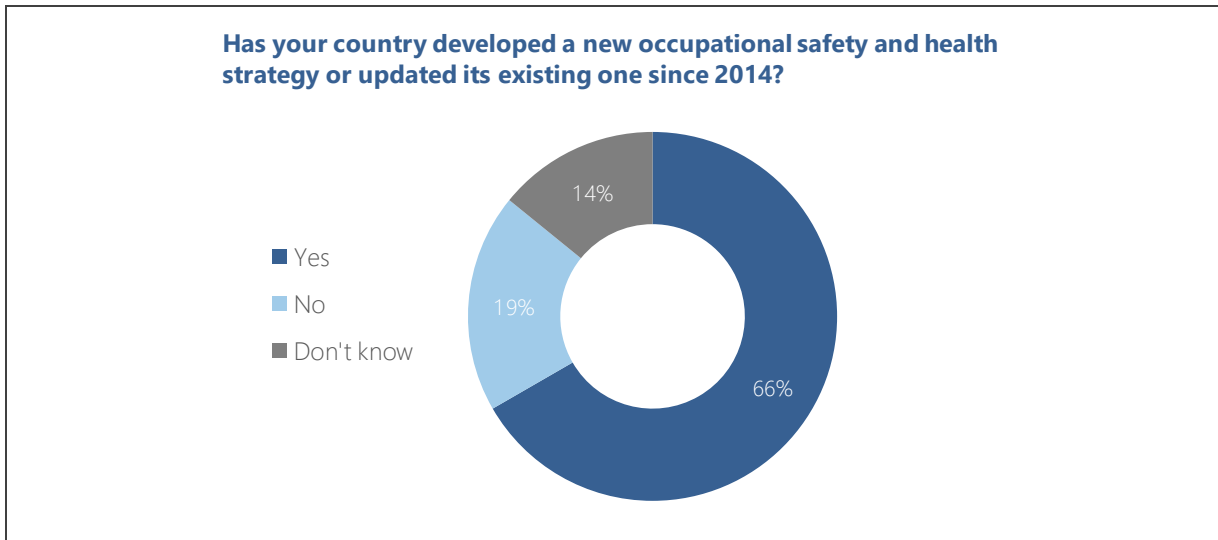
Q7a. Under its first strategic objective the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 called on Member States to review their national occupational safety and health (OSH) strategies in light of the new EU Strategic Framework. The Commission and EU-OSHA were tasked with establishing a database of covering all national OSH strategies, and facilitating the exchange of good practices. ([Link to FW](#)). In your opinion and based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that actions taken by Member States:



Figures below 5% not displayed.
 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=240-244)
Source: Public Consultation

Two thirds of respondents (66%) noted that their country had developed a new occupational safety and health strategy or updated its existing one since 2014, while 19% indicated that their country had not done so.

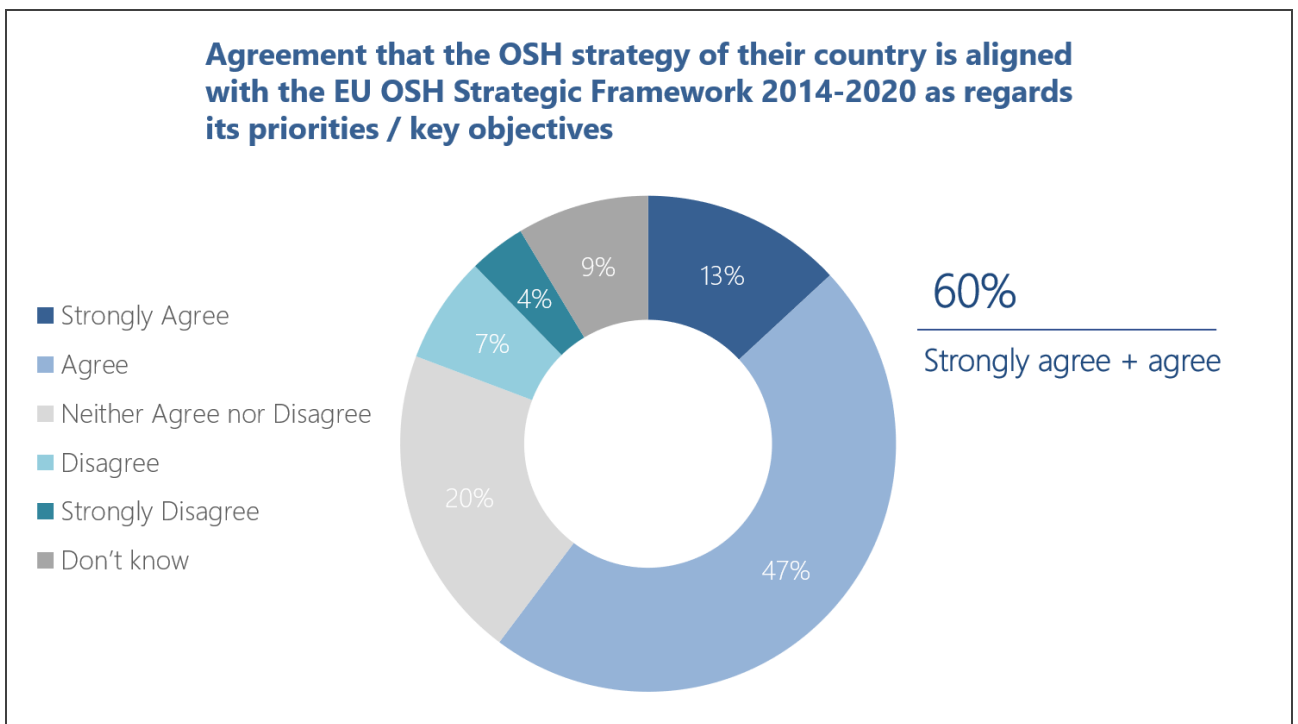
Figure 8: Development of a new OSH strategy in their own country



Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=244)
Source: Public Consultation

Six in ten OPC respondents (60%) agreed that their national OSH strategy is aligned with the priorities/key objectives of the EU Strategic Framework 2014-2020. Approximately one in ten (11%) disagreed with this statement.

Figure 9: Views on alignment of their country’s OSH strategy with EU Strategic Framework

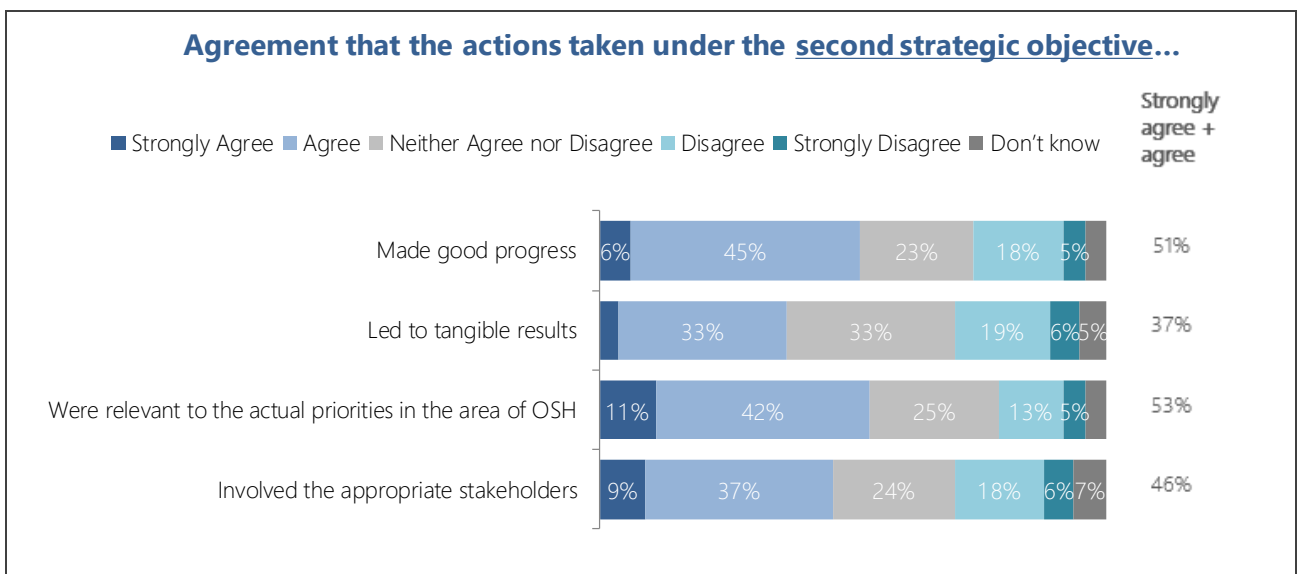


Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=244)
Source: Public Consultation

Regarding the EU Strategic Framework’s **second objective**, which is meant to facilitate compliance with OSH legislation, more than half of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the related actions were relevant (53%) and made good progress (51%). Fewer respondents believed these actions involved the appropriate stakeholders (46%) or led to tangible results (37%).

Figure 10: Opinions on progress under the second strategic objective – Facilitate compliance with OSH legislation

Q8. Under its second strategic objective the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 called on Member States to provide support on implementing IT-based tools to facilitate compliance with OSH legislation. The Commission, in collaboration with EU-OSHA and/or other actors, was tasked with developing guidance, promoting the exchange of good practices, and carrying out awareness raising activities. ([Link](#) to FW). Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...



Figures below 5% not displayed.⁹

Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=244)

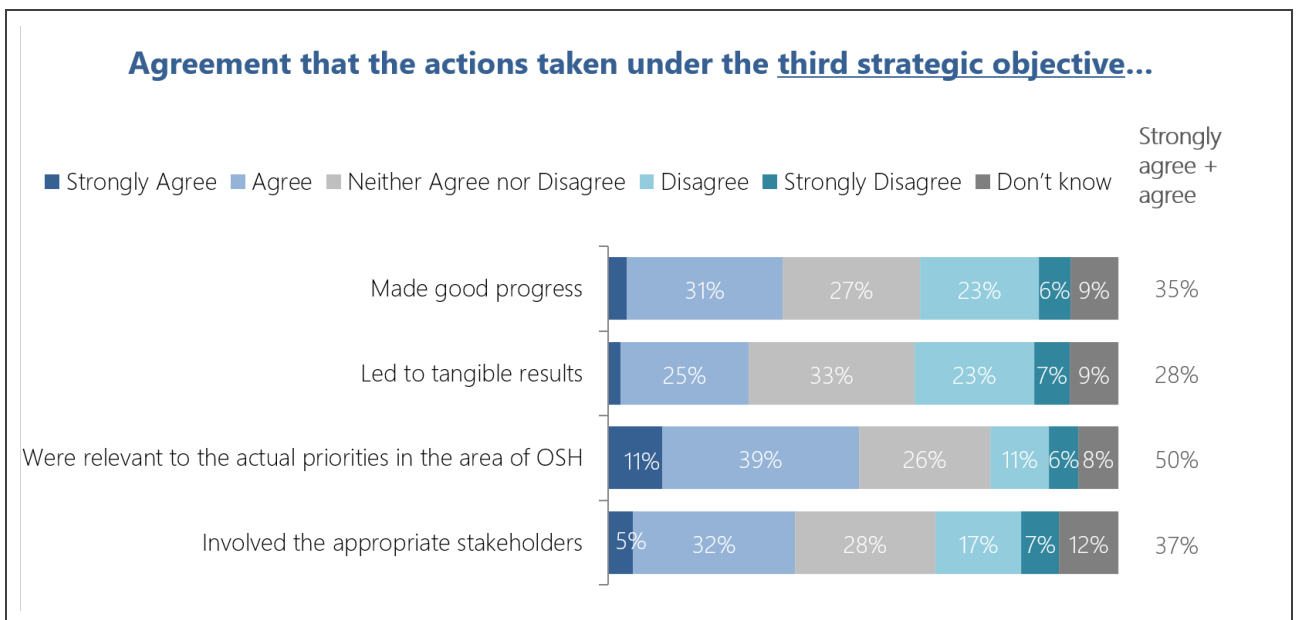
Source: Public Consultation

⁹ As percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, they may not always add up to 100%.

The third strategic objective of the EU Strategic Framework calls for better enforcement of OSH legislation by Member States. Similarly to the first and second strategic objective (see above), half (50%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the actions under the third strategic objective were relevant to the actual priorities in the area of OSH. A smaller proportion agreed or strongly agreed that the actions under the third strategic objective involved the appropriate stakeholders (37%), had made good progress (35%) or had led to tangible results (28%).

Figure 11: Opinions on progress under the third strategic objective – Better enforcement of OSH legislation

Q9. The Framework’s third strategic objective called for better enforcement of OSH legislation by Member States. Key actions included: mapping labour inspectorates’ resources and evaluating their capacities to enforce occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation, evaluating the programme of exchange/training of labour inspectors, and assessing the effectiveness of monitoring compliance. ([Link](#) to FW). Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...



Figures below 5% not displayed.¹⁰

Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=243-245)

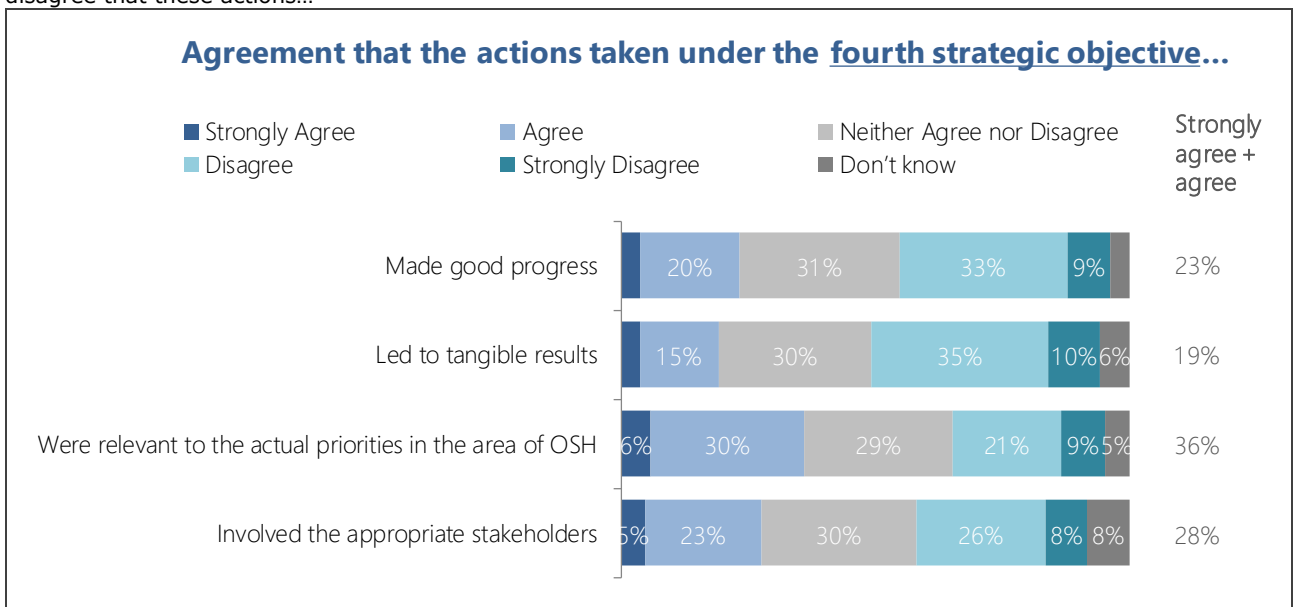
Source: Public Consultation

¹⁰ As percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, they may not always add up to 100%.

The fourth objective of the EU Strategic Framework refers to the simplification of legislation at both EU and national level, in order to reduce unnecessary burden, and to encourage the promotion of good practice. Over one third (36%) of respondents felt that the related actions were relevant to the actual priorities in the area of OSH and 28% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the actions involved the appropriate stakeholders. Approximately one quarter of respondents (23%) felt that the actions taken under the fourth strategic objective had made good progress, and almost one fifth (19%) thought that they had led to tangible results.

Figure 12: Opinions on progress under the fourth strategic objective – Simplification of legislation

Q10. Under its fourth strategic objective the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 refers to the simplification of legislation at both EU and national level, in order to reduce unnecessary burden, and to encourage the promotion of good practice. ([Link](#) to FW). Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...



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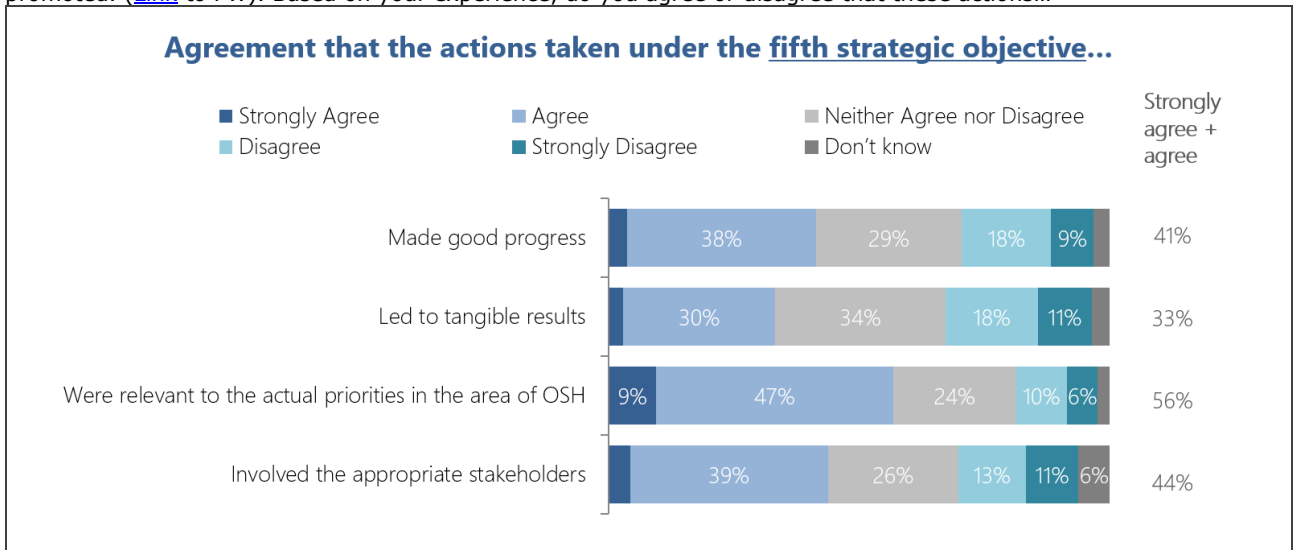
Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=243-247)

Source: Public Consultation

The fifth strategic objective of the EU Strategic Framework encompasses actions to address the ageing of the workforce, emerging new risks, and the prevention of work-related and occupational diseases. A majority of respondents (56%) agreed that these actions were relevant. Furthermore, 44% of OPC respondents agreed that the actions involved the appropriate stakeholders, 41% agreed that they had made good progress and 33% agreed that they had led to tangible results.

Figure 13: Opinions on progress under the fifth strategic objective – address the ageing of the workforce, emerging new risks, and work-related and occupational diseases

Q11. Under its fifth strategic objective, to address the ageing of the workforce, emerging new risks, and work-related and occupational diseases, the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 called for support in the dissemination of findings from the European Risk Observatory, and good practices to support older and other specific groups of workers, as well as mental health issues at work, were to be identified and promoted. ([Link to FW](#)). Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...

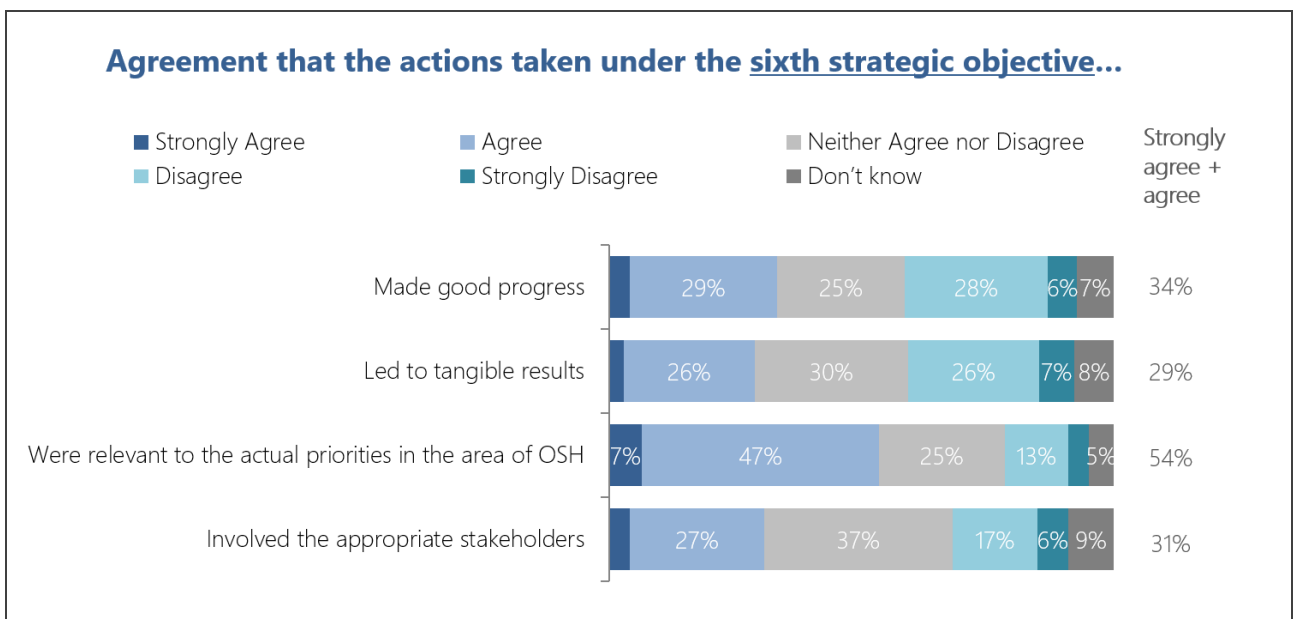


Figures below 5% not displayed.
 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=238-247)
Source: Public Consultation

The sixth objective of the EU Strategic Framework relates to the need to improve statistical data collection and develop the information base on OSH, by assessing and improving the availability and comparability of data on accidents at work and on occupational diseases at EU level. More than half of respondents (54%) agreed that the related actions were relevant, while 34% agreed these actions made good progress, 31% agreed they involved the appropriate stakeholders and 29% agreed that they had led to tangible results.

Figure 14: Opinions on progress under the sixth strategic objective – Improve statistical data collection

Q12. Under its sixth strategic objective the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 outlined the need to improve the available data and information, inter alia by assessing and improving the availability and comparability of data on accidents at work, and on occupational diseases at EU level. ([Link](#) to FW). Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...

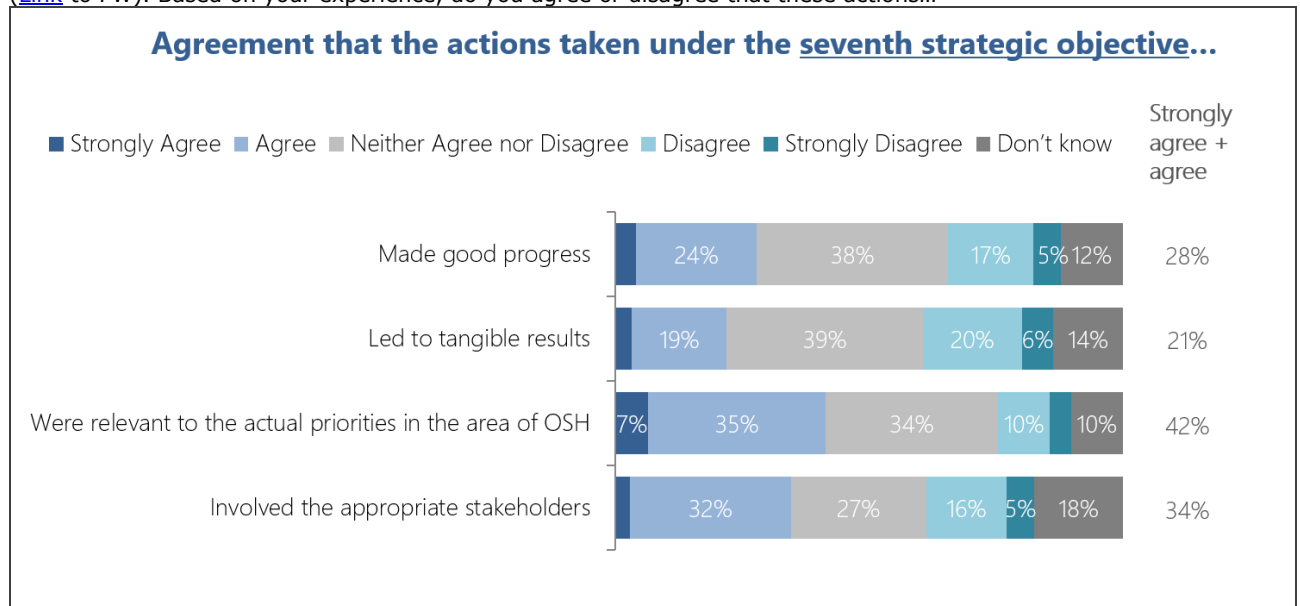


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 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=244-246)
Source: Public Consultation

Under its **seventh strategic objective**, the EU Strategic Framework identifies actions to better coordinate EU and international efforts, to promote OSH in the world and to strengthen support to candidate countries and international cooperation. About four in ten respondents (42%) indicated these actions were relevant, while 35% agreed that they involved the appropriate stakeholders, 28% agreed that they had made good progress, and 22% agreed that they had led to tangible results.

Figure 15: Opinions on progress under the seventh strategic objective – Better coordinate EU and international efforts

Q13. Under its seventh strategic objective, the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 identified several actions to better coordinate EU and international efforts and to promote occupational safety and health (OSH) in the world and to strengthen support to candidate countries and international cooperation. ([Link to FW](#)). Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...



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 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=240-244)
Source: Public Consultation

Comparisons of stakeholder perceptions across the seven strategic objectives

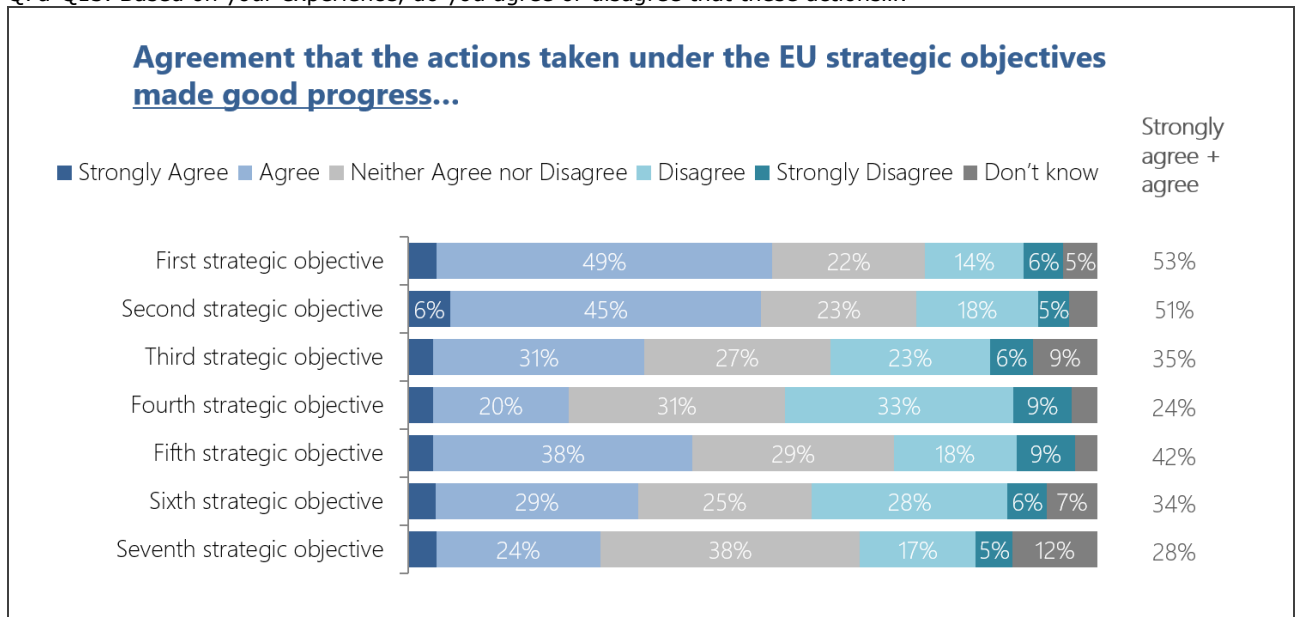
In the section below stakeholder perceptions are compared across the seven strategic objectives. To reiterate, these objectives are (see for a more detailed description above):

- Objective 1: Further consolidate national strategies
- Objective 2: Facilitate compliance with OSH legislation
- Objective 3: Better enforcement of OSH legislation
- Objective 4: Simplification of legislation
- Objective 5: Address the ageing of the workforce, emerging new risks, and work-related and occupational diseases
- Objective 6: Improve the available data and information
- Objective 7: Better coordinate EU and international efforts

Figure 16 compares stakeholder perceptions of progress across all of the strategic objectives. The perception of progress is strongest for objectives one and two, while fewer stakeholders agree that progress has been made under objectives four and seven.

Figure 16: Opinions on progress across strategic objective

Q7a-Q13. Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...:



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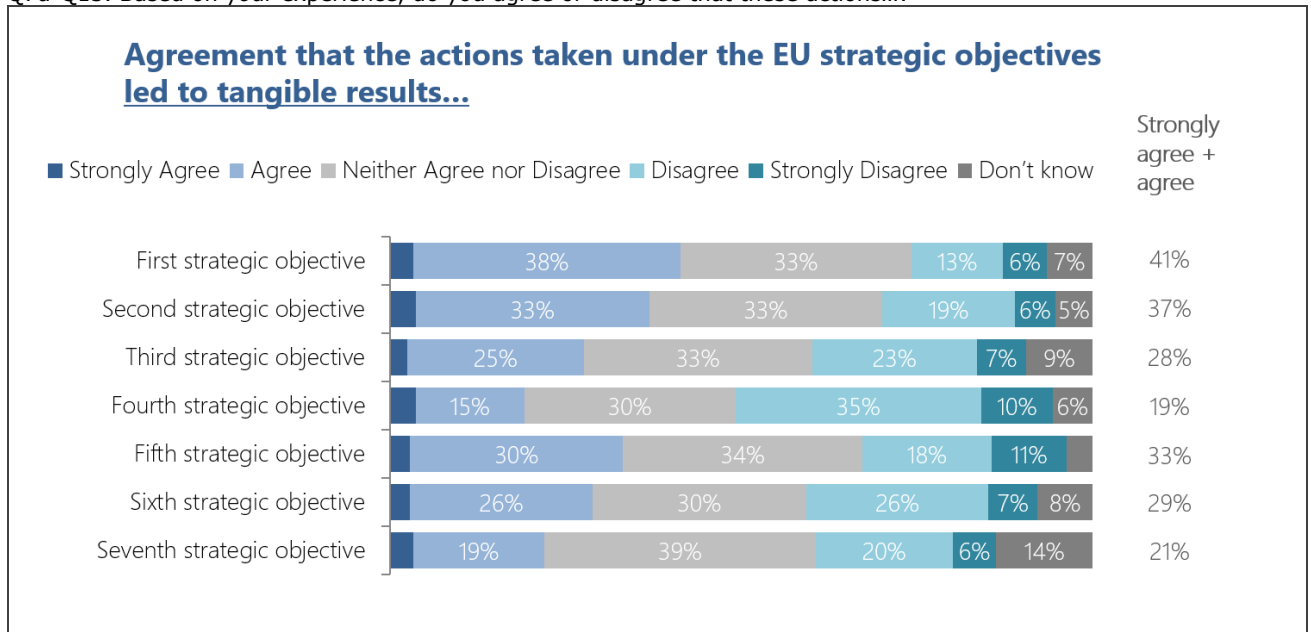
Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=244-247)

Source: Public Consultation

Respondents' opinions on which objectives led to tangible results reflect their views on whether good progress has been made (see Figure 17). Respondents were most positive about the results of the first and second strategic objectives (41% and 37% respectively agreed that these led to tangible results) and most negative about the results of the fourth and seventh strategic objectives (19% and 22% respectively agreed that these led to tangible results).

Figure 17: Opinions on results across strategic objective

Q7a-Q13. Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...:



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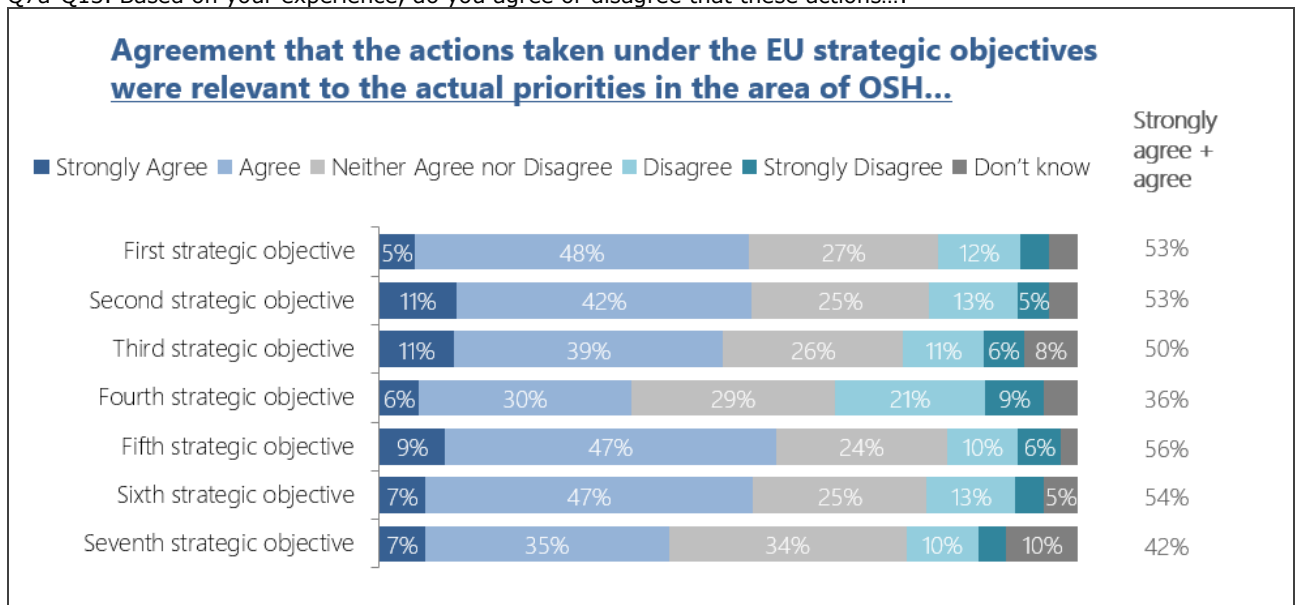
Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=241-246)

Source: Public Consultation

With regard to relevance, a somewhat different picture emerged. Respondents most often agreed that the fifth strategic objective is relevant to the actual priorities in the area of OSH (56%), followed by the sixth (54%) first (53%) and second (53%) strategic objective. Agreement about relevance was lowest for the fourth strategic objective (36%).

Figure 18: Opinions on relevance across strategic objective

Q7a-Q13. Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...:



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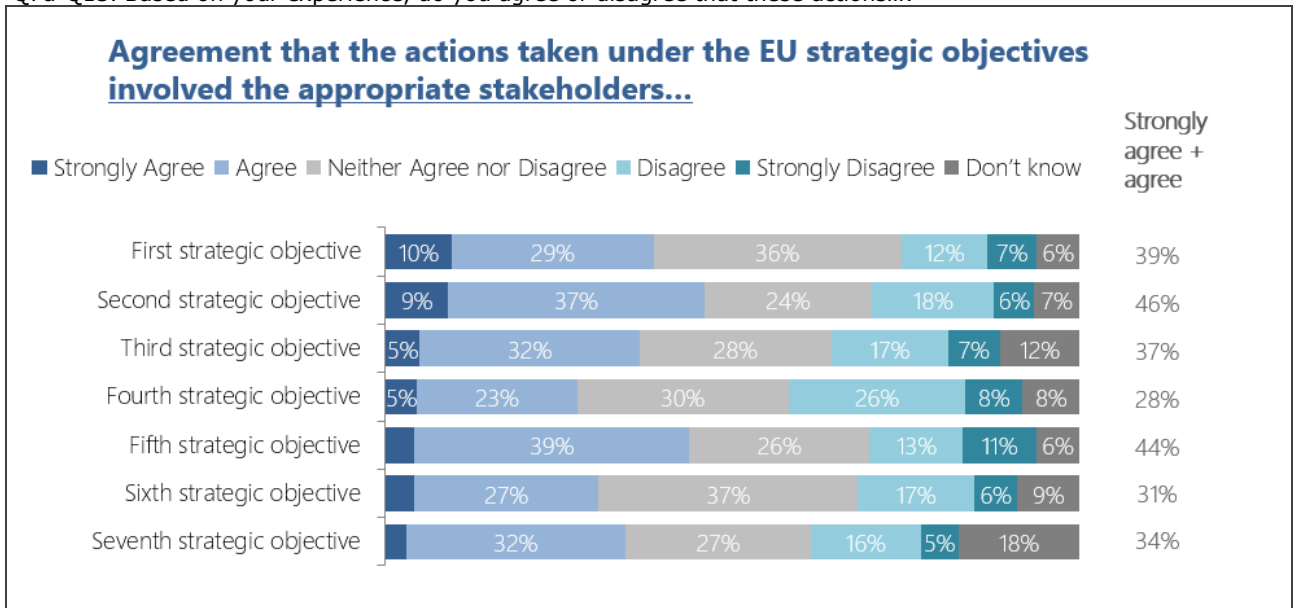
Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=240-247)

Source: Public Consultation

Agreement that the actions taken under the EU strategic objectives involved the appropriate stakeholders was highest with regard to the second strategic objective (46%), followed by the fifth strategic objective (44%). Agreement was lowest for the fourth (28%) and sixth (31%) strategic objectives.

Figure 19: Opinions on stakeholder involvement across strategic objective

Q7a-Q13. Based on your experience, do you agree or disagree that these actions...:



Figures below 5% not displayed.¹¹

Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=238-244)

Source: Public Consultation

Impacts on specific groups of workers

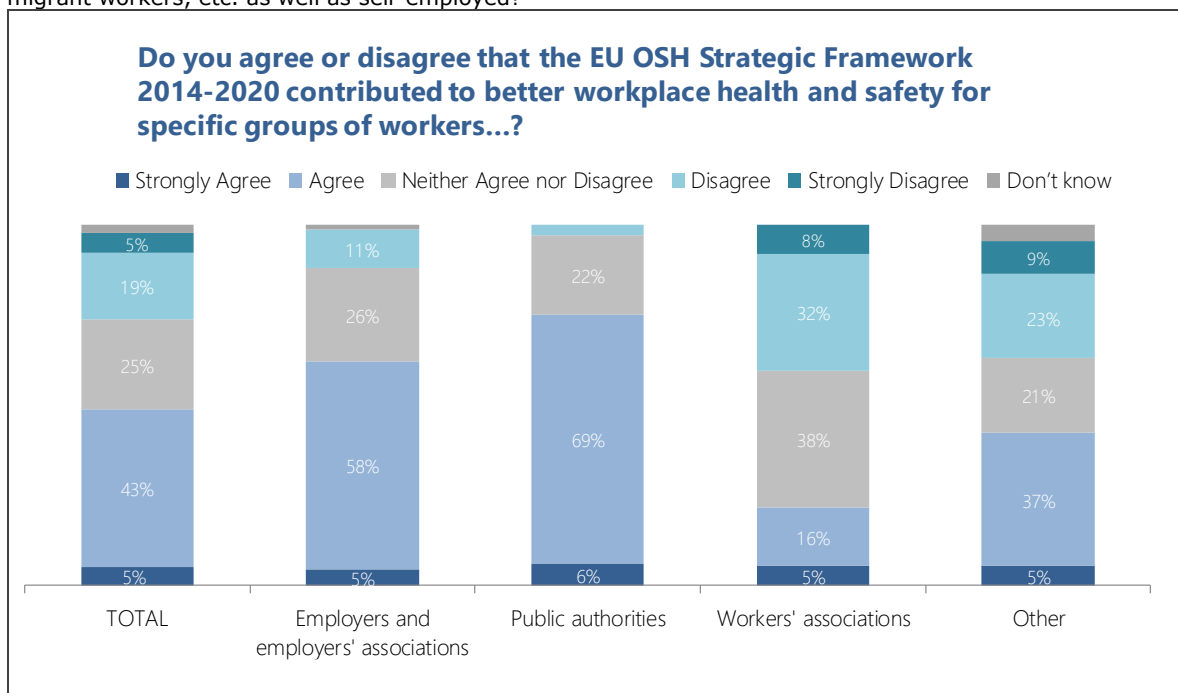
Respondents were asked whether they agreed that the EU Strategic Framework has contributed to better workplace safety and health for specific groups of workers who may be identified as potentially facing specific risk factors, such as women, older workers, workers with disabilities, seasonal workers, migrant workers and the self-employed. As noted in Figure 20 below, opinions on this were divided. While in total 43% of respondents agreed that the EU Strategic Framework contributed to better OSH for these specific groups, 24% disagreed. One quarter (25%) of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

When looking at different respondent categories it can be observed that, compared to the average, respondents representing public authorities were more likely to agree that the EU Strategic Framework contributed to better OSH for specific groups of workers (75% agreed or strongly agreed). Respondents representing workers' associations were less likely to agree that the EU Strategic Framework contributed to better OSH for specific groups of workers (21% agreed or strongly agreed).

¹¹ As percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, they may not always add up to 100%.

Figure 20: Contribution of the EU Strategic Framework to better OSH for specific groups of workers, by type of respondent

Q14a. Do you agree or disagree that the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 contributed to better work place health and safety for specific groups of workers who may be identified as potentially facing specific risk factors, such as women, older workers, workers with disabilities, seasonal workers, migrant workers, etc. as well as self-employed?



Figures below 5% not displayed.
 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=246)
Source: Public Consultation

One hundred and thirty eight (138) people responded to the open question requesting further information on the specific groups potentially at risk and/or risks faced. Respondents who agreed that the EU Strategic Framework contributed to better workplace safety and health for specific groups of workers specified that groups such as women, young people or people working with carcinogenic substances had received targeted attention. However, it was also frequently highlighted by these respondents that more needed to be done, especially because of the emergence of new risks due to COVID-19 and the increase in working from home. Furthermore, respondents raised the issue that some groups, such as platform workers and seasonal workers, had not benefited from improvements in OSH regulation and that more attention should be given to these groups. The need to include a gender dimension in OSH regulation and legislation was also mentioned by various respondents.

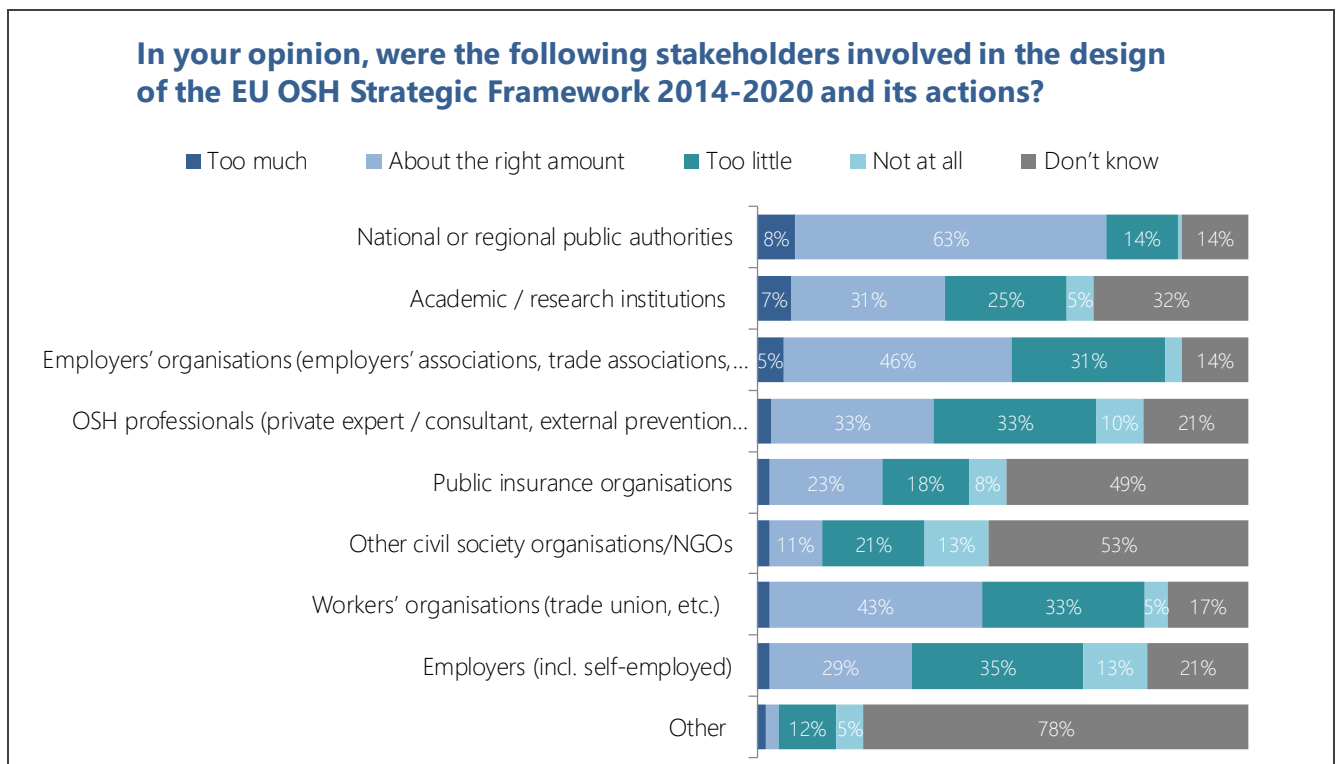
Some respondents who disagreed that the EU Strategic Framework had contributed to an improvement in OSH for specific groups of workers identified as a barrier the different approaches of EU Member States, leading to inconsistencies. A few pointed to a lack of clear responsibilities' division between the EU and national authorities as the root of the problem.

A small group of respondents (less than 10) questioned the need for emphasis on specific groups of workers. These respondents believed that the EU Strategic Framework should take an all-inclusive approach.

Contribution of stakeholders to the design and implementation of the Framework

As noted in Figure 21, more than six in ten respondents (63%) felt that national and regional public authorities were involved “about the right amount” in the design of the EU Strategic Framework. Almost half of respondents felt that employers’ organisations (46%) and workers’ organisations (43%) were involved “about the right amount”. On the other hand, about one third of respondents reported that employers (35%), workers’ organisations (33%), OSH professionals (also 33%), and employers’ organisations (31%) were involved “too little”.

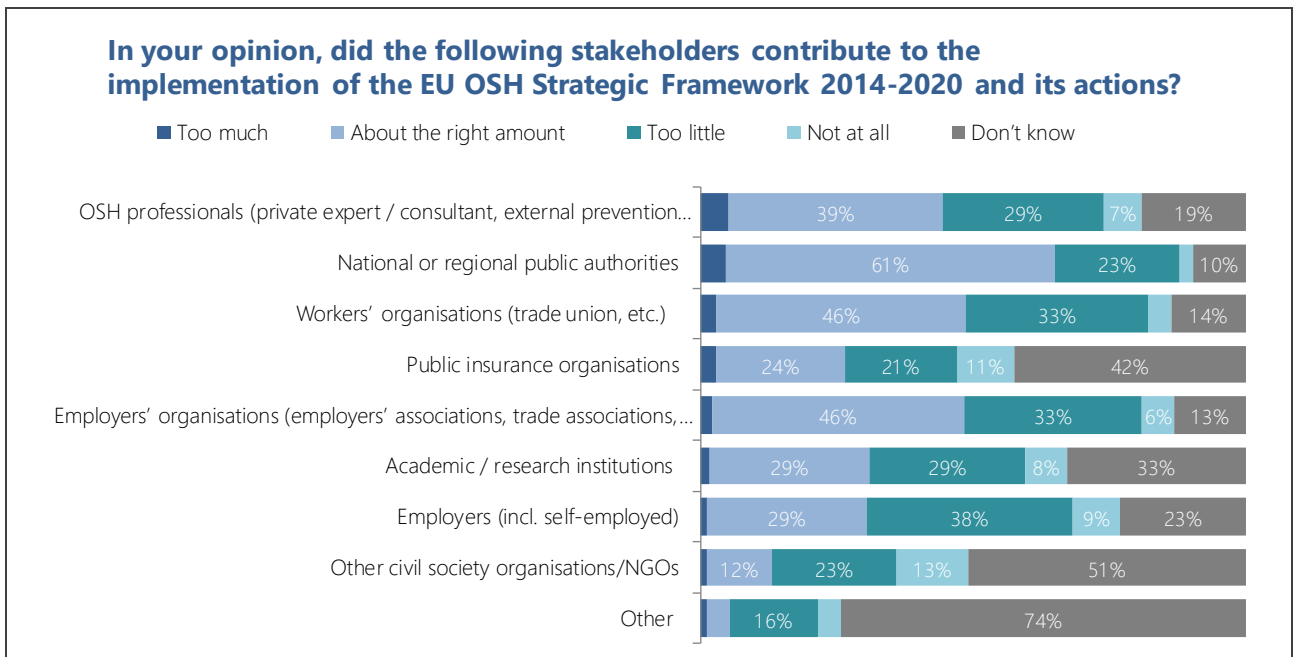
Figure 21: Contribution of stakeholders to the design of the Framework



Figures below 5% not displayed.
 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=239-242)
Source: Public Consultation

A similar picture arises when looking at the *implementation* of the EU Strategic Framework. As can be seen in Figure 22, approximately six in ten respondents (61%) felt that national and regional authorities had contributed “about the right amount” to the implementation of the EU Strategic Framework. About one in four respondents (38%) felt that employers (including the self-employed) had contributed too little to the implementation of the EU Strategic Framework, and a third (33%) felt the same about employers’ organisations and workers’ organisations.

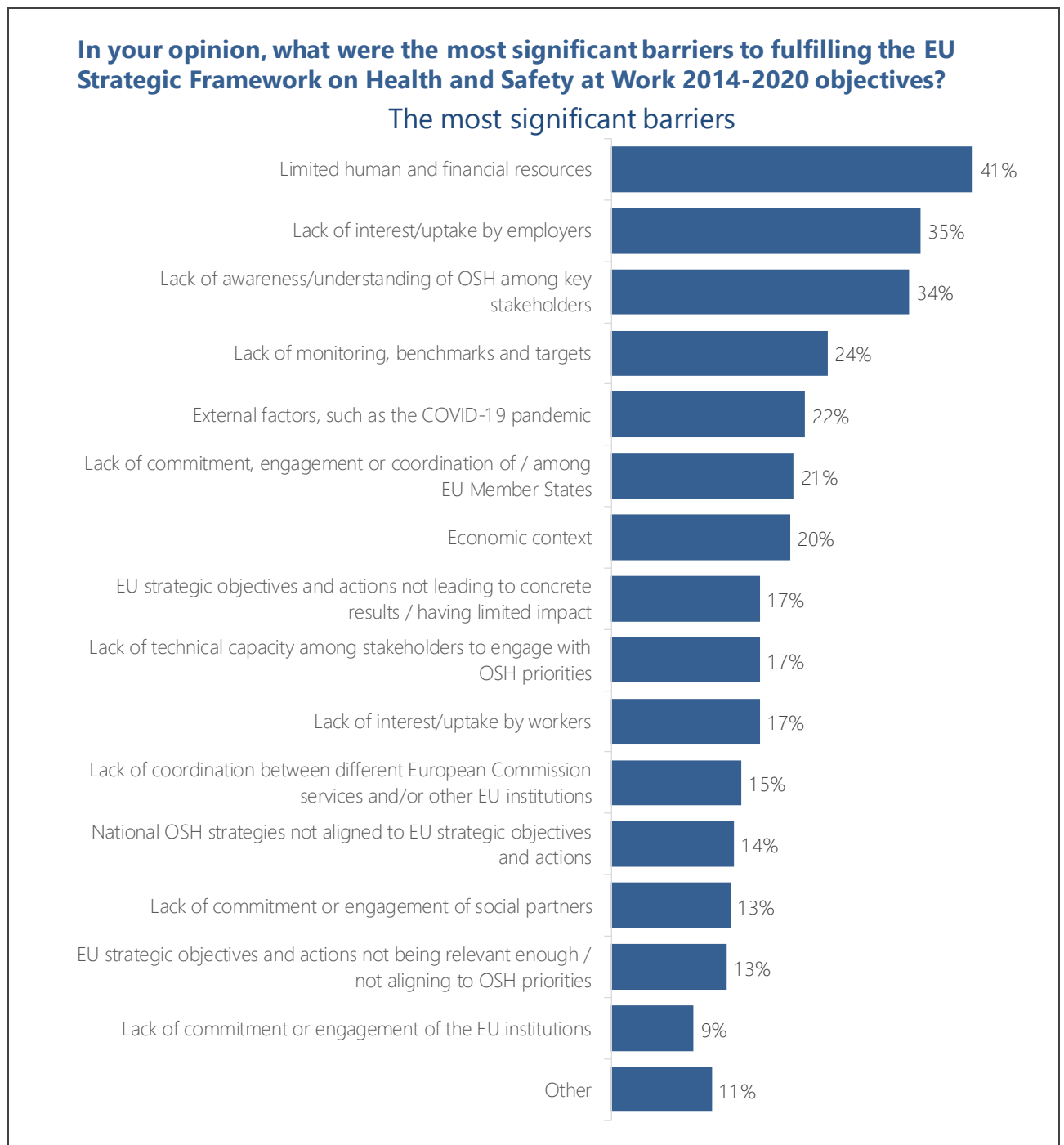
Figure 22: Contribution of stakeholders to the implementation of the Framework



Figures below 5% not displayed.
 Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=236-238)
Source: Public Consultation

Figure 23 provides an overview of respondents' views on barriers to meeting/fulfilling the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework. Respondents cited limited human and financial resources (41%), lack of interest/uptake by employers (35%), lack of awareness/understanding of OSH among key stakeholders (34%), a presumed lack of monitoring, benchmarks and targets (24%), and external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (22%) as the five most significant barriers to fulfilling the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework.

Figure 23: Barriers to fulfil the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework



Those somewhat or very familiar with the Framework (n=238)

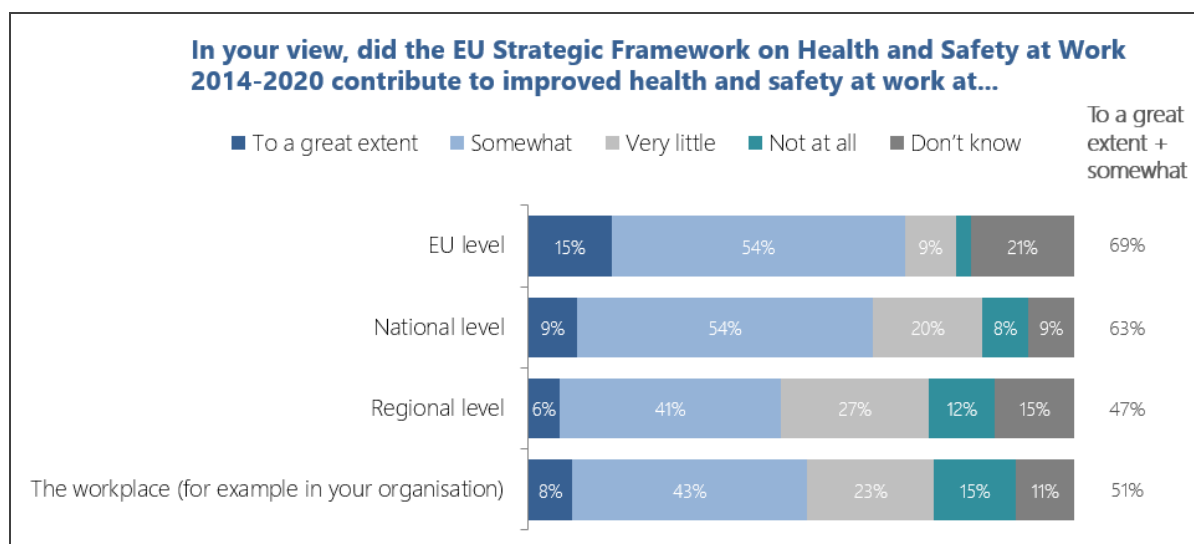
Source: Public Consultation

5. Overall opinions and views on the future EU Strategic Framework

The last section of the OPC asked for overall opinions on the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 and thoughts on priorities for the future EU Strategic Framework.

Respondents' overall opinion on the impact of the EU Strategic Framework 2014-2020 varied depending on the policy level at which it was expected to contribute. Almost seven out of ten respondents (69%) felt that the Framework contributed "to a great extent" or "somewhat" to improved health and safety at work *at EU level*. For the *national* and *regional* levels, the comparable figures were 63% and 47%, respectively. Approximately half (51%) of respondents felt that the EU Strategic Framework contributed "to a great extent" or "somewhat" to improved health and safety at work *in the workplace*.

Figure 24: Contribution of the Framework to better OSH at various levels



Figures below 5% not displayed.¹²
All respondents (n=335-341)

Source: Public Consultation

Two hundred and eleven (211) respondents provided a more detailed (open text) explanation as to why they believed the EU Strategic Framework had (or had not) contributed to improved health and safety at work. The EU Strategic Framework was thought to have played an important role in providing guidance and acting as a starting point for further action at national level or by other actors. In particular, positive developments in the number of Occupational Exposure Limits was noted by several respondents as having led to improved safety and health in the workplace.

Those respondents who felt that the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework had not been met, provided a number of explanations for this. Some cited insufficient implementation of the Framework in some Member States as a key issue, leading to large differences between Member States in the level of OSH protection. Reasons given for this included a lack of guidance and support in implementation, as well as differences in the applicability of EU legislation among Member States. Other respondents mentioned that clear measures or processes to check the extent of progress on implementation were missing. A lack of

¹² As percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, they may not always add up to 100%.

involvement and interest by key actors (such as social partners, public authorities, or employers) was also cited. Several respondents raised the point that there had not been enough communication and information about the EU Strategic Framework, resulting in a lack of awareness at the workplace level about its existence.

Furthermore, some respondents felt the EU Strategic Framework’s priorities and objectives are out of date, due to rapid changes in the world of work. The need to include a gender-dimension was also highlighted by a number of respondents.

OPC respondents expressed clear support for a new EU Strategic Framework for the next seven years that will be adapted to future challenges. A majority of respondents (68%) supported an updated or adapted Strategic Framework, while 11% felt that a successor should remain largely the same as the 2014-2020 iteration. Fourteen percent (14%) believed the Framework’s current model needs to be fundamentally altered and one respondent felt the EU Strategic Framework needs to be discarded.

OPC respondents were asked to select key challenges which are common across the EU and require further OSH policy action. As can be seen in Figure 25, the most common challenge selected was psychosocial risks (51% of respondents) followed by increased working from home/teleworking, ergonomic risks and MSDs (Musculoskeletal Disorders) and OSH risks emerging from ICT/digitalisation.

Figure 25: Views on challenges for the future that require OSH policy action



All respondents (n=349)

Source: Public Consultation

Respondents were also given the opportunity to describe any additional challenges to those mentioned above. Thirty one respondents provided responses, with the most commonly cited being the continued challenge of exposure to chemicals (in particular carcinogens), the challenge of ensuring compliance with OSH legislation by SMEs, and harmonising OSH protection in different Member States.

Other challenges mentioned were:

- the need for a holistic approach to deal with issues such as digitalisation;
- the need to expand beyond a focus solely on risks; and
- the need to ensure that all workers (including atypical workers) are covered by OSH legislation.

Respondents were asked by means of an open text question to provide suggestions for practical solutions to address all or some of these key challenges. Of the 193 respondents who answered this question, several thought that continuing and encouraging social dialogue was important, especially at the national level.

Other proposed solutions were:

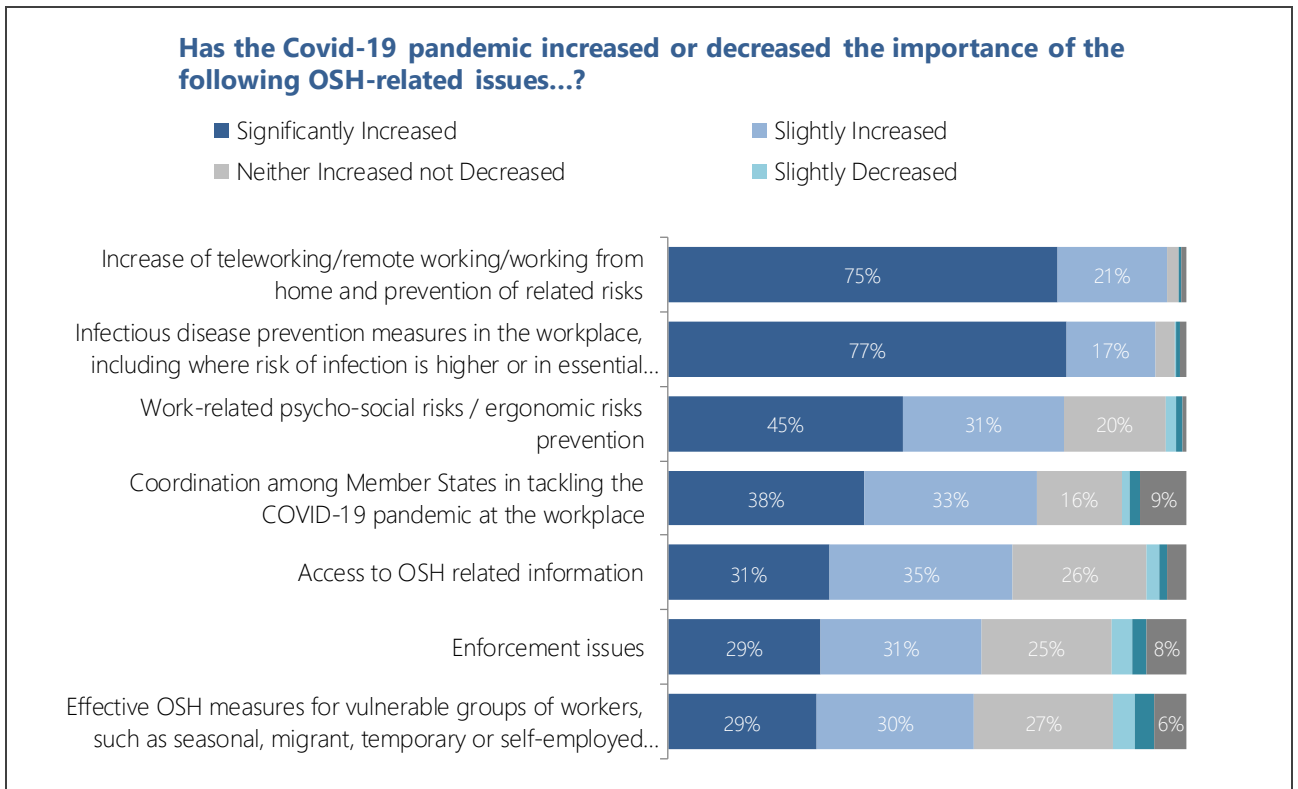
- ensuring that the legislative framework is adapted to include musculoskeletal disorders (for example by issuing a new directive for this) as well as psychosocial risks and teleworking;
- expanding the scope of OSH legislation to include platform workers and the self-employed;
- deploying a gender-based approach to OSH;
- including reprotoxic substances under the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive;
- establishing a common procedure to define occupational diseases; and
- clarifying synergies between OSH legislation and REACH.

A further suggestion mentioned by several respondents was to strengthen enforcement, including setting up a control mechanism to ensure implementation of OSH legislation at Member State level, increasing resources for labour inspectorates and improving training opportunities for labour inspectors and also for workers.

A number of respondents expressed their wish for more practical guidance, increased sharing of best practices, and for the establishment of networks among various actors such as industry, research, and policy makers. Improved collaboration with various actors (such as different entities in the Commission, as well as the equivalent at national level) to ensure a holistic approach to risks and challenges, was also suggested as important to improve OSH in the future. Having an action plan for future pandemics or similar crises was also suggested by a number of respondents.

When asked if the COVID-19 pandemic increased or decreased the importance of a number of OSH-related issues, 96% of respondents stated that OSH-related issues around teleworking/remote working and the prevention of related risks have become more important, and 76% stated the same for work-related psychosocial risks/ergonomic risk prevention (see Figure 26 below). A large majority of respondents (94%) also felt that infectious disease prevention measures in the workplace have gained in importance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

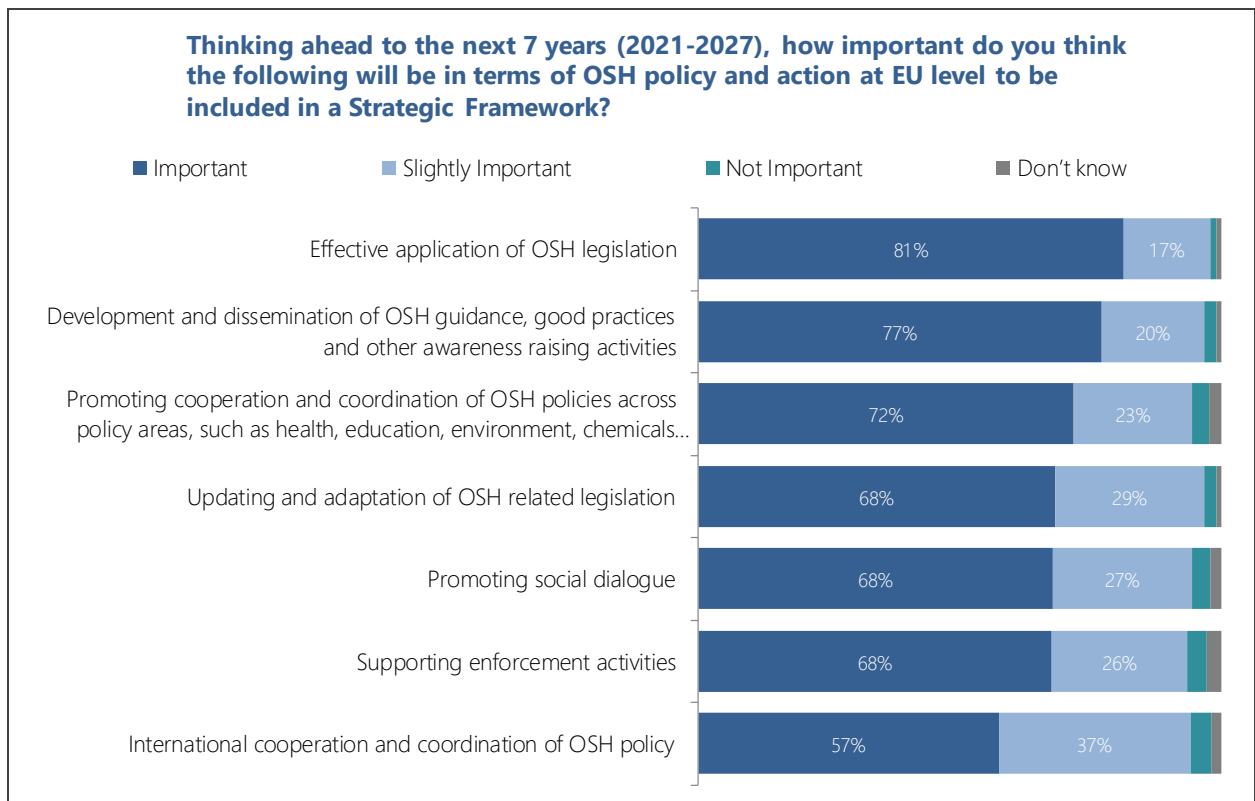
Figure 26: Views on impact of Covid-19 on OSH-related issues



Figures below 5% not displayed.
 All respondents (n=336-341)
Source: Public Consultation

Figure 27 shows the views of OPC respondents on the relative importance of including various priorities into future OSH policy and action at EU level. “Effective application of OSH legislation” and “Development and dissemination of OSH guidance, good practices and other awareness raising activities” were considered to be the highest priorities, with 81% and 77% of respondents viewing these as important, respectively. Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) stated that it was important to include “Promoting cooperation and coordination of OSH policies across policy areas, such as health, education, environment, chemicals etc.” in a new EU Strategic Framework.

Figure 27: Views on key priorities for new EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027



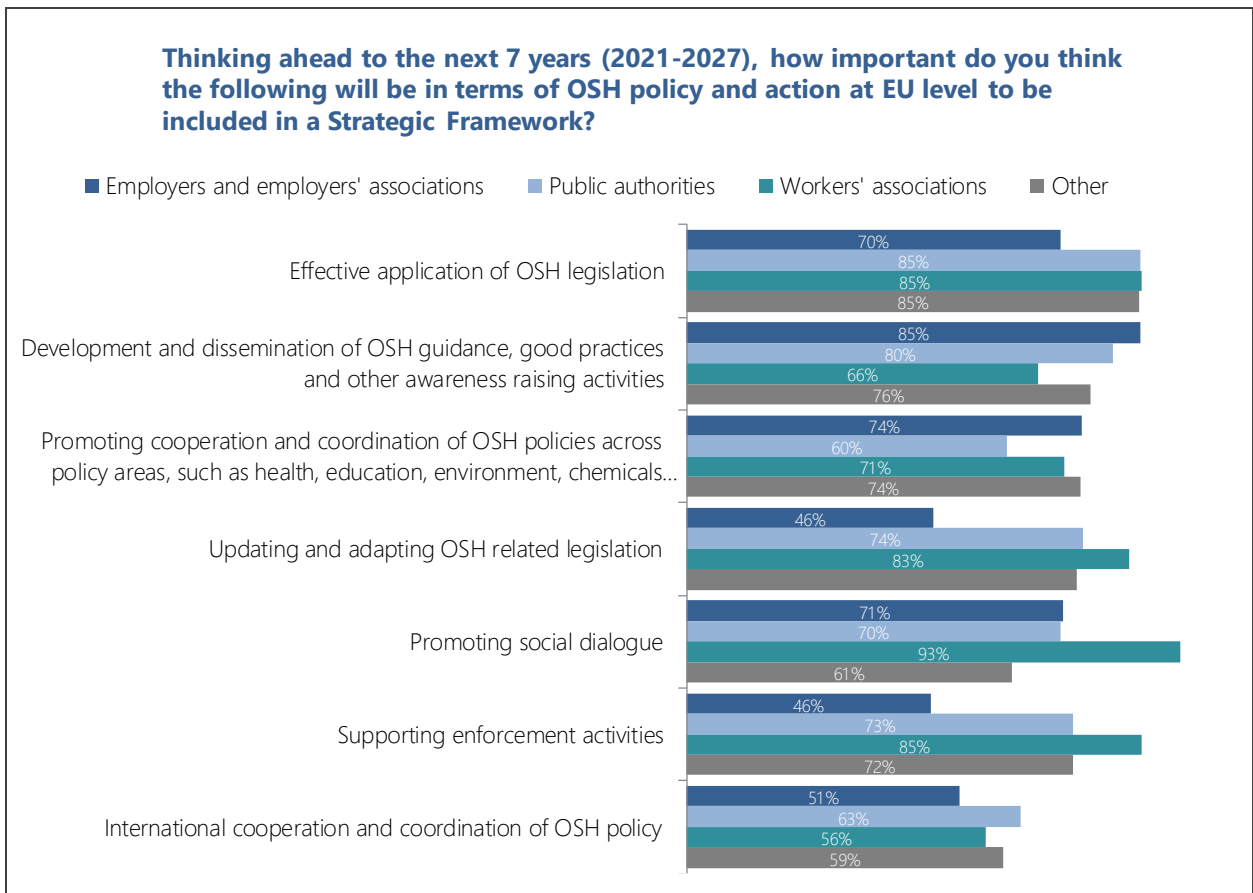
Figures below 5% not displayed.

All respondents (n=342-346)

Source: Public Consultation

When considering responses by respondent category (see Figure 28), it can be noted that respondents representing employers are more likely to view the development and dissemination of OSH guidance, good practices and other awareness raising activities as priorities for the next seven years. Employers are less likely to prioritise updating and adapting OSH related legislation or supporting enforcement activities. Respondents representing workers' organisations, on the other hand, are more likely to view promoting social dialogue and supporting enforcement activities as priorities for the next seven years.

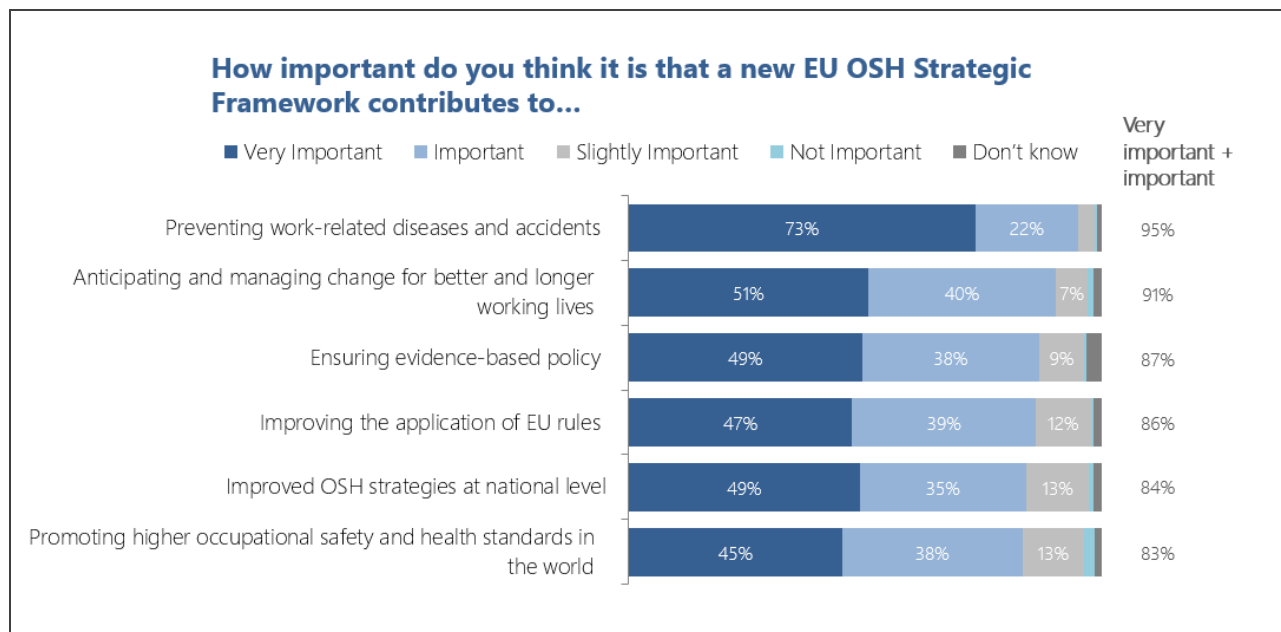
Figure 28: Views on key priorities for new EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027, by respondent category



Figures below 5% not displayed.
 All respondents (n=342-346)
Source: Public Consultation

Regarding the broader challenges a new EU Strategic Framework should address (Figure 29), almost all respondents (95%) stated that preventing work-related diseases and accidents is very important or important. Much importance was also attached to anticipating and managing change for better and longer working lives, with 91% of respondents viewing this element as important.

Figure 29: Importance of the new EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work addressing specific challenges



Figures below 5% not displayed.
All respondents (n=342-346)

Source: Public Consultation

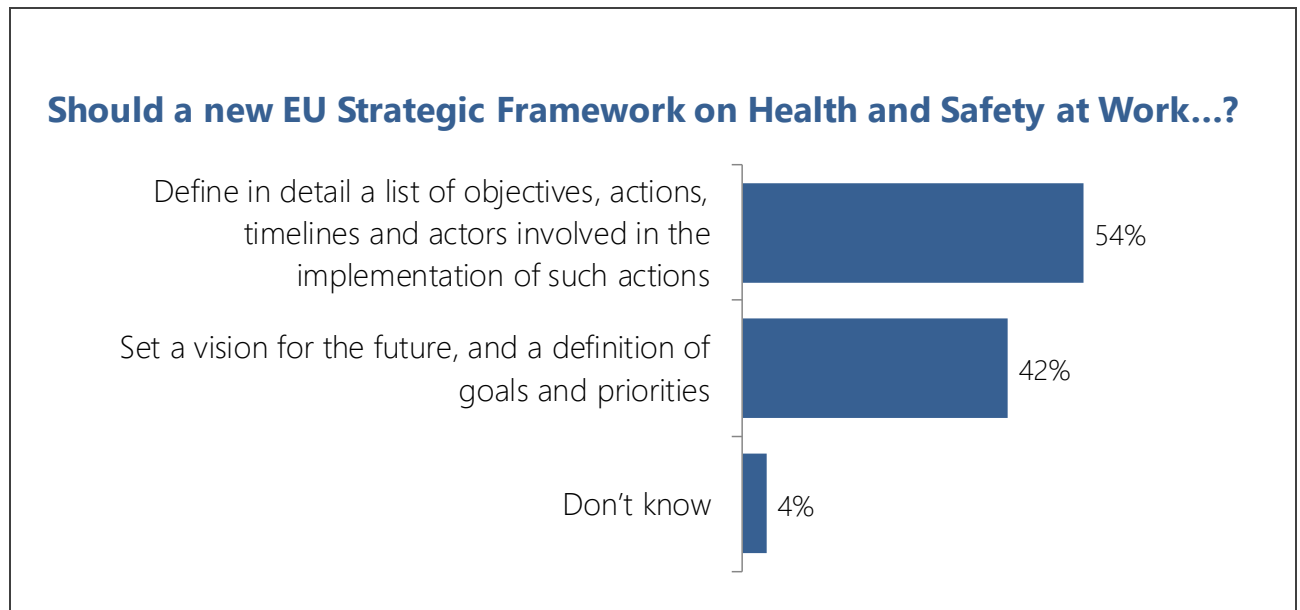
Two hundred and two (202) respondents provided additional details on the main issues they thought should be included in the successor to the current EU OSH Strategic Framework (covering the 2021-2027 period):

- A significant number referred to the need to prevent work-related diseases and adopt best practice in this area, as well as to prevent/manage musculoskeletal disorders and psychosocial risks.
- A continued focus on handling chemicals and carcinogens was also repeatedly mentioned.
- Working from home, digitalisation, addressing demographic change, the inclusion of all workers (especially migrant workers and the self employed) in OSH legislation, strengthening social dialogue and the involvement of social partners were also identified as future priorities.

Issues related to implementation and compliance (especially in SMEs) and enforcement were mentioned by several respondents as important to include in the successor to the current EU OSH Strategic Framework, alongside the importance of provisions to ensure better training and capacity building related to OSH. The challenges and issues resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic were also felt by a number of stakeholders as warranting to be included in a future EU Strategic Framework.

Finally, respondents to the OPC expressed their views on what form a future EU Strategic Framework should take. As noted in Figure 30, the majority of respondents (54%) expressed a preference for an EU Strategic Framework defining in detail a list of objectives, actions, timelines and actors involved in the implementation of such actions, while 42% thought a new Framework should only set a vision for the future and define goals and priorities.

Figure 30: Broad views on what a future Strategic Framework should look like



All respondents (n=292)

Source: Public Consultation

OPC respondents were invited to share any final remarks on the topic of the public consultation. Eighty people availed themselves of this opportunity, with most responses focused on further underlining challenges, solutions and priority areas for the 2021-2027 Strategic Framework. The main issues highlighted in response to the final question are as follows:

- Greater protection for healthcare professionals;
- Increased protection against cancer and carcinogenic substances;
- The need to clarify the interface between REACH and OSH;
- Support for a harmonised approach to OSH, including integration with other EU policy areas (such as the Green Deal, EU Cancer Plan, and Horizon Europe) and ratification of ILO conventions;
- Support for a Risk Management Options (RMO) approach to OSH;
- The need to continuously monitor the implementation of a future Strategic Framework and identify indicators to measure effectiveness;
- The need for additional legislation on specific issues, such as occupational diseases and psychosocial risks; and
- The need to include social partners more in the design, implementation and enforcement of OSH requirements.

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