



Regional  
Observatory  
of the Transition Process

# Attitudes of employees of mines and mining-related companies towards the changes in their professional activity and career



Rzeczpospolita  
Polska



Regionalne  
Obserwatorium  
Procesu Transformacji

Unia Europejska  
Europejski Fundusz  
Rozwoju Regionalnego



# Trade Union of Miners in Poland

Prepared on the basis  
of a survey report  
by the research  
team of the Trade Union  
of Miners in Poland

**Brochure preparation:**

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From June 2022 to February 2023 the research team of the Trade Union of Miners in Poland conducted a study on the “Attitudes of employees of mines and mining-related companies towards the changes in their professional activity and career”.

The study was carried out as part of the project entitled “Regional Observatory of the Transition Process” co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship for 2014-2020 and implemented under Measure 1.4 Support for the innovation ecosystem, whose leader is the Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship.

The study was carried out and a report prepared by a research team consisting of Bożena Gawryluk Eng, Joanna Górczyńska MA, Dorota Wiktorowska MA under the direction of Marcin Tomecki Ph.D. Dominika Błasiak Ph.D. was responsible for substantive consultation on behalf of the Marshall Office of the Silesian Voivodeship.

Main research aim:

**To diagnose of knowledge and to learn about the plans, opinions and attitudes of people employed at mines and mining-related companies concerning the changes in their work activities over the course of the energy transition.**

In the study, a qualitative method was used in the form of individual in-depth interviews and in-depth telephone interviews. The research tool was a partially standardized interview questionnaire (differentiated for each group of respondents).

Interviews were conducted with two groups of respondents:

- ▶ Employees of mining-related companies (72 interviews),
- ▶ Mine employees (38 interviews).

All respondents are associated with mines and mining-related companies based in the Silesian Voivodeship.

## INTRODUCTION

There are currently ongoing and planned activities in Silesia related to the energy transition, which involves moving from an economy based on traditional fossil fuels toward a sustainable, low-carbon, circular economy.

This means a gradual and staggered phasing out of hard coal mines. The repercussions of this will affect not only the mines themselves and their employees, but also many firms associated with the mining industry, as each mine is supported by a number of firms providing products and services.

One should assume that the transition activities may lead to various consequences affecting not only companies, but also employees of mines and mining-related companies. Over the coming years in Silesia, tens of thousands of jobs may be lost. In their place new ones will be created, requiring a different personnel preparation. The consequences for employees may be various: the necessity to change/adapt competences, the necessity to change the place of work or search for new employment on their own.

These changes will require a systematic and thoughtful involvement of various institutions, as well as providing support to the employees by trade unions during the difficult period of adaptation to changes that are a consequence of the energy transition.

The Trade Union of Miners in Poland, as an organization involved in employee matters, decided to conduct a study, which would diagnose how the employees of mines and mining-related companies approach these changes and how they plan to deal with them.

Interviews with respondents were carried out from August to December of 2022, that is, during the specific conditions of the energy crisis caused by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. This fact created uncertainty among the employees as to the previously delineated plan contained in the Social Agreement<sup>1</sup> and undoubtedly influenced the answers given.

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<sup>1</sup> Social Agreement on the transition of the hard coal mining sector and selected transition processes in the Silesian Voivodship signed 21 of may 2021 between the government side, the trade union side and mining municipalities, <https://www.gov.pl/web/aktywa-panstwowe/umowa-spoleczna>

## PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

- current state

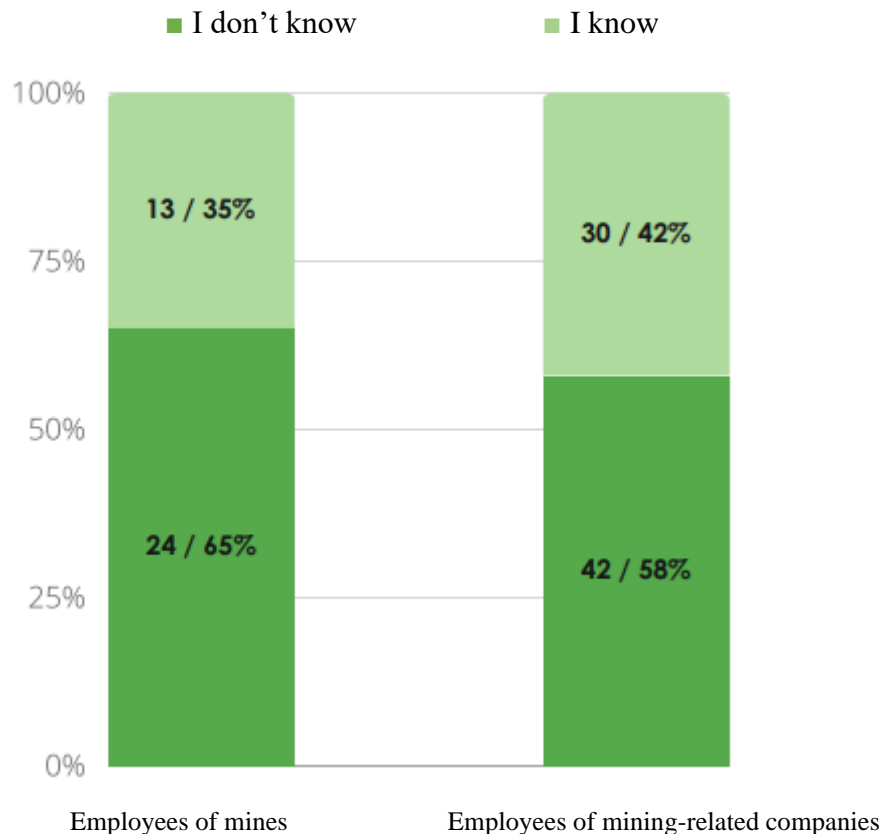
### KNOWLEDGE OF THE CAUSES OF THE TRANSITION

First, the research team checked if employees of mines and mining-related companies have knowledge of the causes of the energy transition of the Silesian Voivodeship. This knowledge seems to be important for the acceptance of the changes to come.

From the respondents' answers, it appears that the **majority of people** both the employees of mines as well as mining-related companies **know of the causes of the transition**, however there is a significant percentage of people, to whom these causes are unknown.

The distribution of responses (N and %) is presented in the chart:

**Do you know why the energy transition of the Silesian region was planned?**



Data analysis also led to the conclusion that the level of education reflects to the level of knowledge of the causes of the transition – the higher the respondents' education, the more complete the knowledge of the subject.

The study also found that the higher the age of employees, the greater the level of knowledge of the causes of the energy transition.

Additionally, a diagnosis of respondents' known causes for the implementation of the energy transition process has also been made in the study.

**Based on the responses of employees of mining-related companies and mines who declared their knowledge of the causes of the energy transition, the following conclusions can be made:**

- ▶ **The main reason for implementing the energy transition process is the implementation of the European Union's climate policy, which has been endorsed by the Polish government.**
- ▶ **The motives for implementing the energy transition process are protection of the wider environment, the transition to so-called green energy sources, the transition of industry, the negative attitude to coal as an energy resource.**

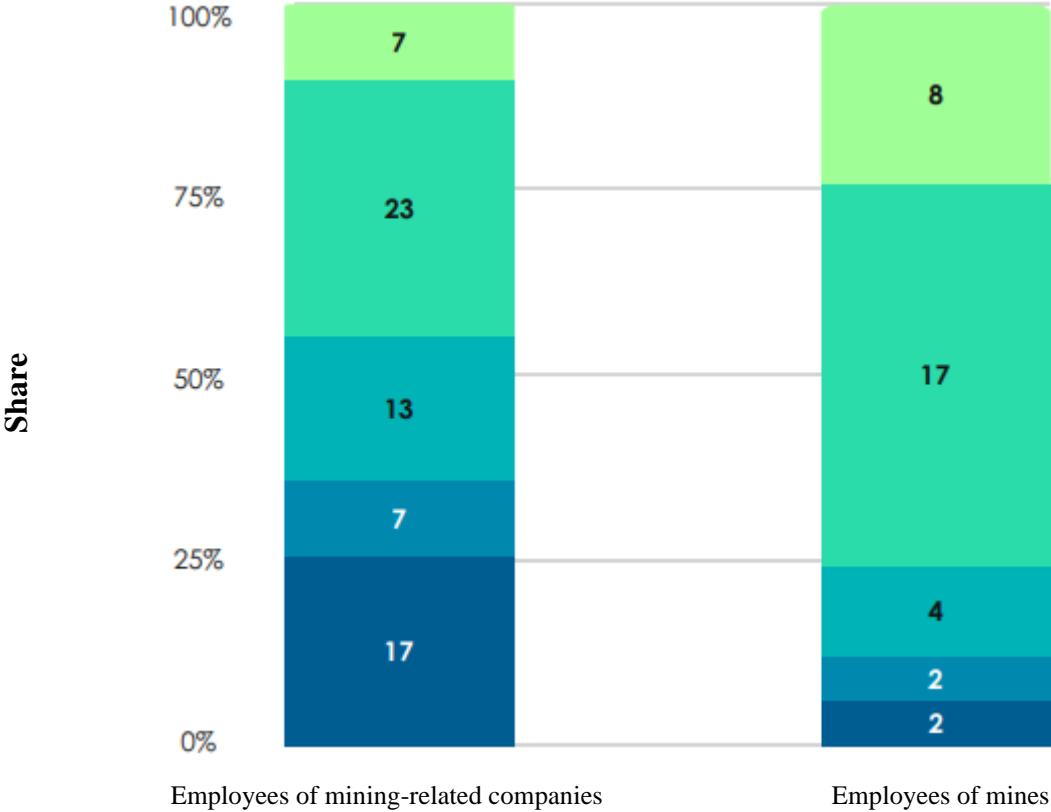
## **THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSITION ON THE FUNCTIONING OF WORKPLACES**

In the next part of the study the focus was on gaining the opinions of employees in regards **to the impact of changes in the place of work**, resulting from the energy transition, impacting **their future professional situation**.

The survey further focused on finding out the employees' views on the impact of the changes in the workplace caused by the energy transition, on their future work situation. The survey shows that employees of mines declare a higher level of awareness of the impact of the energy transition on their work situation in their current workplace, than employees of mining-related companies. **In the responses of 75% of mine employees there are "definitely know" and "rather know" responses. Such indications were recorded by 45% of employees of mining-related companies.**

Employees' responses can be traced in the chart:

**Do you know how these changes will affect your work situation in your current workplace?**



- I definitely know
- rather I know
- rather I don't know
- I definitely don't know
- I was not interested in it

The survey also shows that the higher the age of the employees, the higher the level of knowledge about the impact of the transition on their work situation.

**Respondents (from both groups) see two ways of planning their professional future:**

- ▶ the need of improving qualifications or change of place of employment (alternatively, transfer to another mine in the case of mine employees),

- ▶ no need to improve qualification and undertake additional professional development activities.

The first attitude can be observed among employees who are aware of the potential need to upgrade their qualifications and change their place of employment due to the transition resulting from the energy transition process in Silesia. In the vast majority of cases, these are employees who, due to the long period of time remaining before they acquire pension rights, anticipate the need to take some action.

On the other hand, the second attitude can be observed among employees who believe that the energy transition will not determine the need to take additional actions in the professional sphere, which respondents argued, for example: the planned retirement, the specificity of their competences, the nature of their work or the uncertainty related to the transition process.

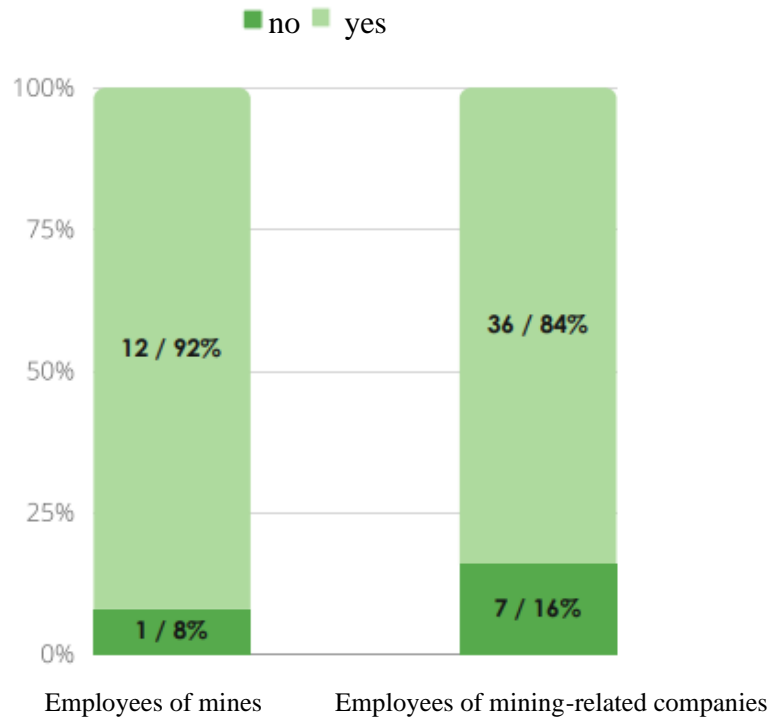
### **THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSITION ON EMPLOYEES' PERSONAL PLANS**

Respondents' opinions on the impact of changes in professional activity on their **living situation** were collected.

For both the employees of mining related companies and the employees of mines, **the vast majority of respondents anticipate a strong impact of career changes on other areas of their lives** (respectively: 84% and 92%).

The situation is illustrated by the chart:





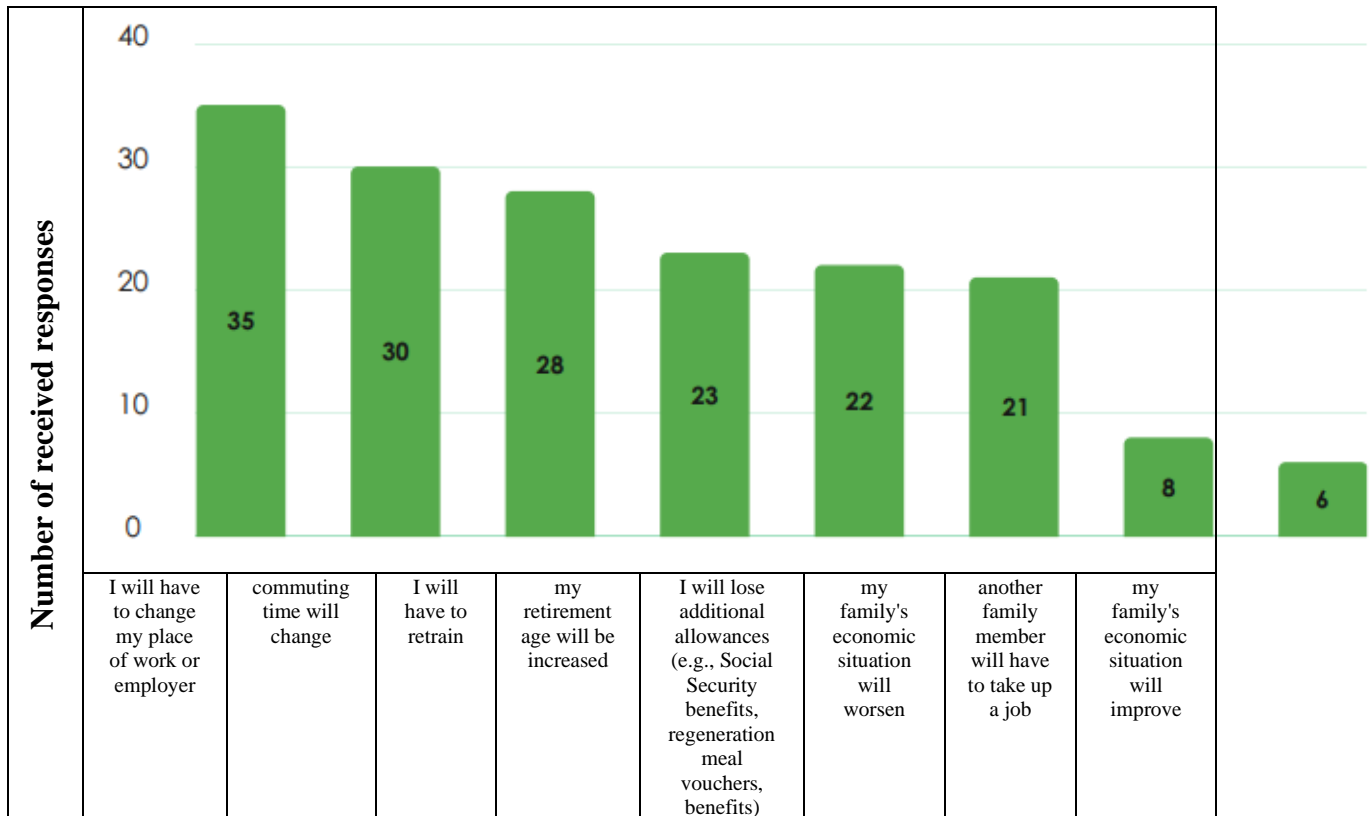
Respondents stated that the most common **consequences of the changes** would be:

- need for a change in the place of work or employer,
- change concerning commuting time,
- need for retraining.

Positive impact of energy transition on living situation seen by few respondents.

Respondents' predictions of the consequences of the changes can be illustrated as follows:

## How these changes will affect your living situation?



### Impact on the living situation

### PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

#### - future

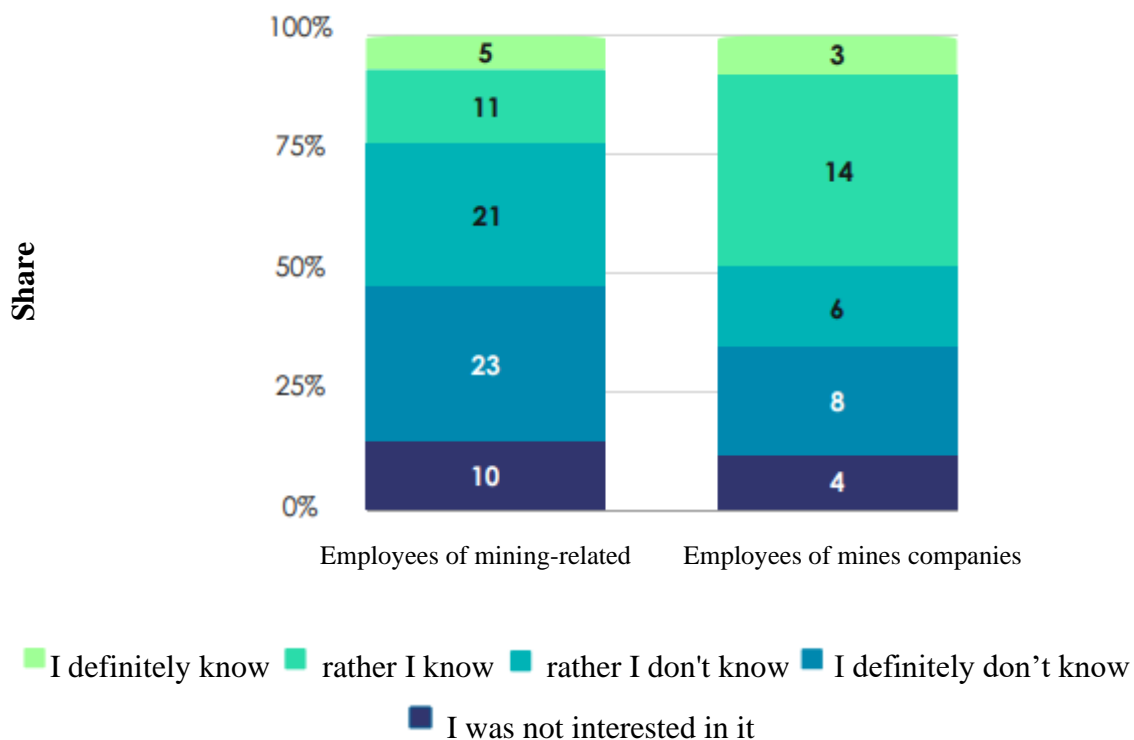
The research team has also carried out an **analysis of the knowledge of employees** of mines and mining-related companies **regarding the future**. The focus of interest was the level of information about employers' plans, as well as their own plans regarding future careers and potential changes

## FUTURE FUNCTIONING OF WORKPLACES

The analyses showed **that mine workers declared to be more informed about the employers' plans**. Responses of "definitely know" and "rather know" about the actions planned by employers in their workplace in relation to the energy transition process were given by more than 48% of mine employees. Among employees of mining-related companies, less than 23% of respondents indicated such answers.

The distribution of responses is as follows:

**Do you know what activities the employer has planned at the workplace in regard to the energy transition process?**



It can be concluded that the knowledge of respondents - employees of mining related companies, on the plans of employers is limited and refers mainly to activities aimed at entering new markets. Respondents did not refer in their statements to the timeframe of planned activities.

Mine employees have knowledge of plans related to mine closures. However, this knowledge is accompanied by uncertainty as to whether these assumptions will be fully realised.

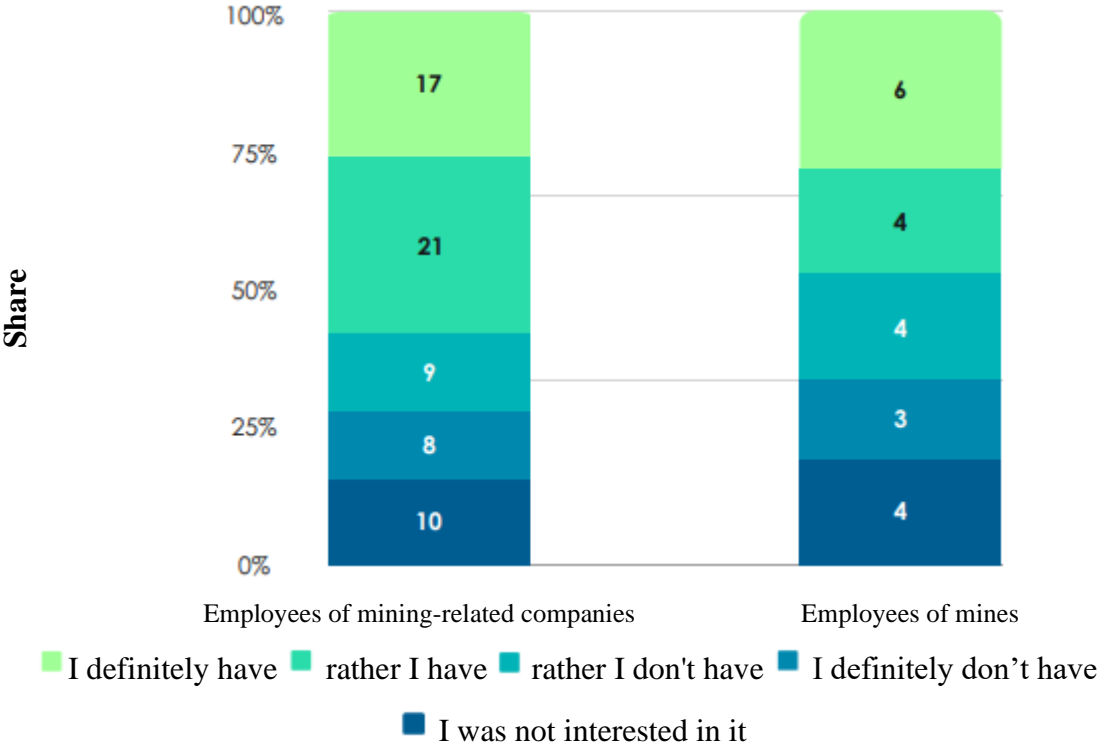
The highest level of information among employees of mining related companies and mines about the actions planned by employers in relation to the energy transition process was recorded in the 65+ age category. On the other hand, the groups of respondents declaring the lowest level of awareness of these plans are employees with ages between 18 and 35.

**EMPLOYEES' PLANS TOWARDS CHANGES**

According to the study, the majority of interviewed employees of mining-related companies have plans for their professional future. In comparison, the percentage is slightly lower among surveyed mine employees.

The view of the plans of both of the groups' employees is as follows:

**Do you have any personal plans for your future career?**



Based on the collected responses a conclusion was drawn that the employees of mining-related companies and mines declaring to have personal plans regarding the

professional field, intend to continue to work for their current employer, alternatively at a new workplace (transfer to another mine in the case of mine employees). A part of the questioned employees considers improving their own professional skills, and in some cases even the possibility of starting a business.

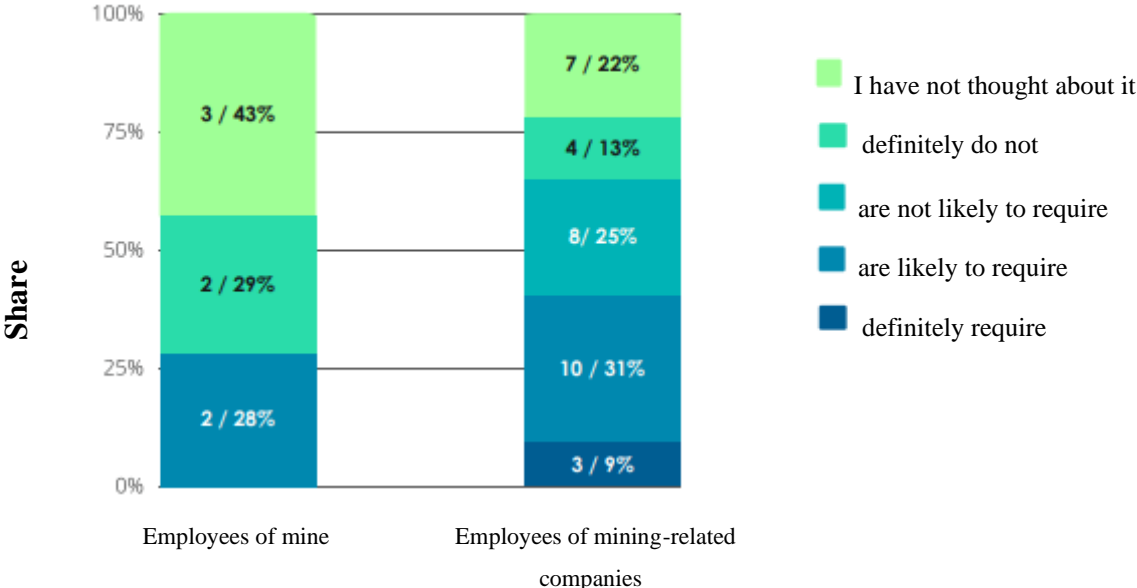
An analysis of the collected data revealed that in all age groups there were individuals who had some professional plans. Most determined were respondents whose age is between 18 and 25 years, as well as those who have reached retirement age. It is interesting to note that the other age categories, i.e. 26-65, included people who have never thought about their professional future and have no plans in this respect.

**THE NEED TO TAKE ACTION IN REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROFESSIONAL PLANS**

The performed study has also allowed to determine whether the implementation of the plans adopted by the employees, requires additional actions to be taken.

Employees of mines, to a far greater extent than employees of mining related companies, consider that the fulfilment of their career plans requires them to take additional measures, and this can be illustrated as follows:

**Do these plans require you to take any action?**

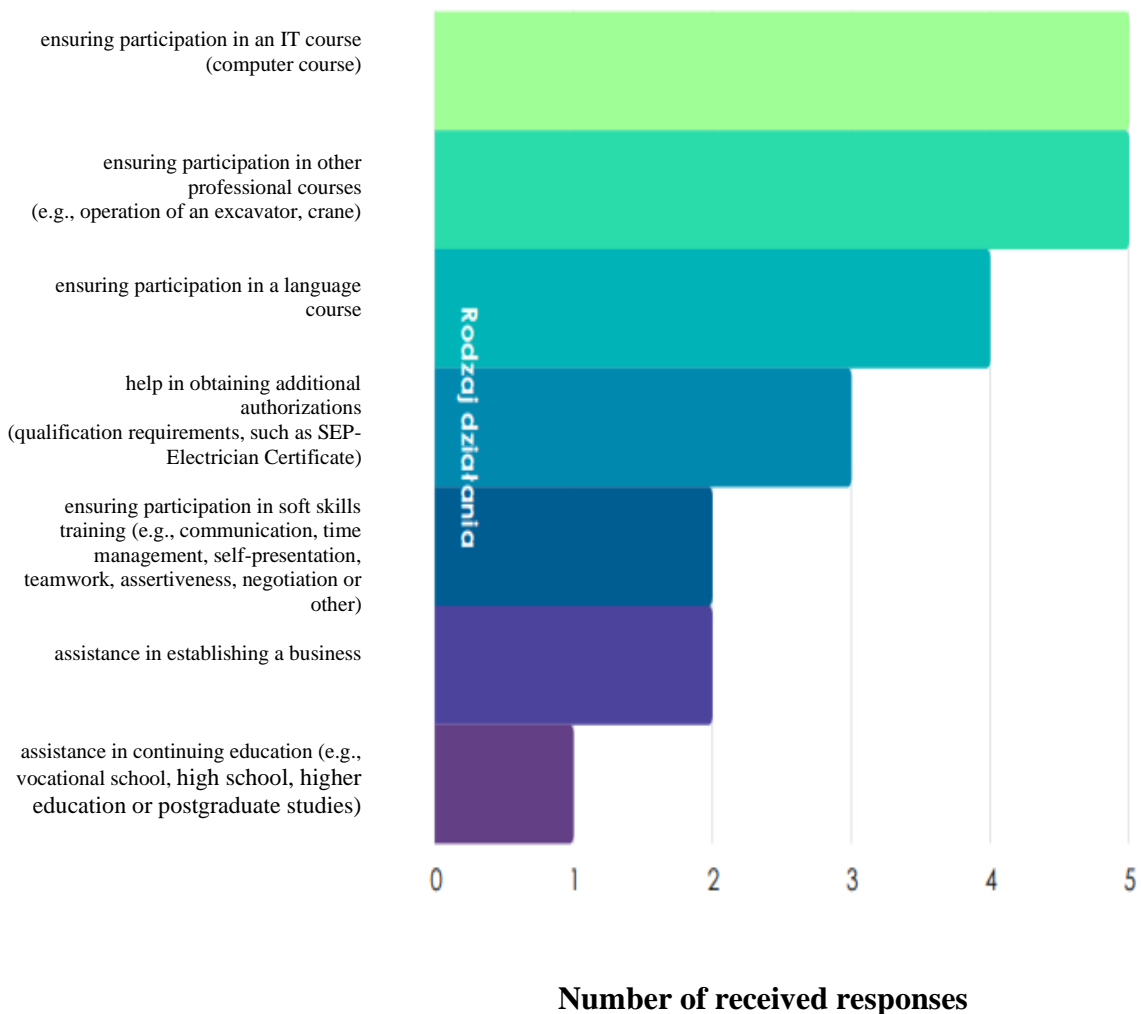


Amongst few of the responses, employees of mining-related companies and mines identified specific actions necessary to achieve their adopted professional plans.

Employees **most often pointed to the need of participation in an IT course** (computer course) **and professional courses** (e.g., operation of an excavator, crane). The other respondents had no idea what specific actions they were expecting or did not specify their expectations.

The results can be presented as follows:

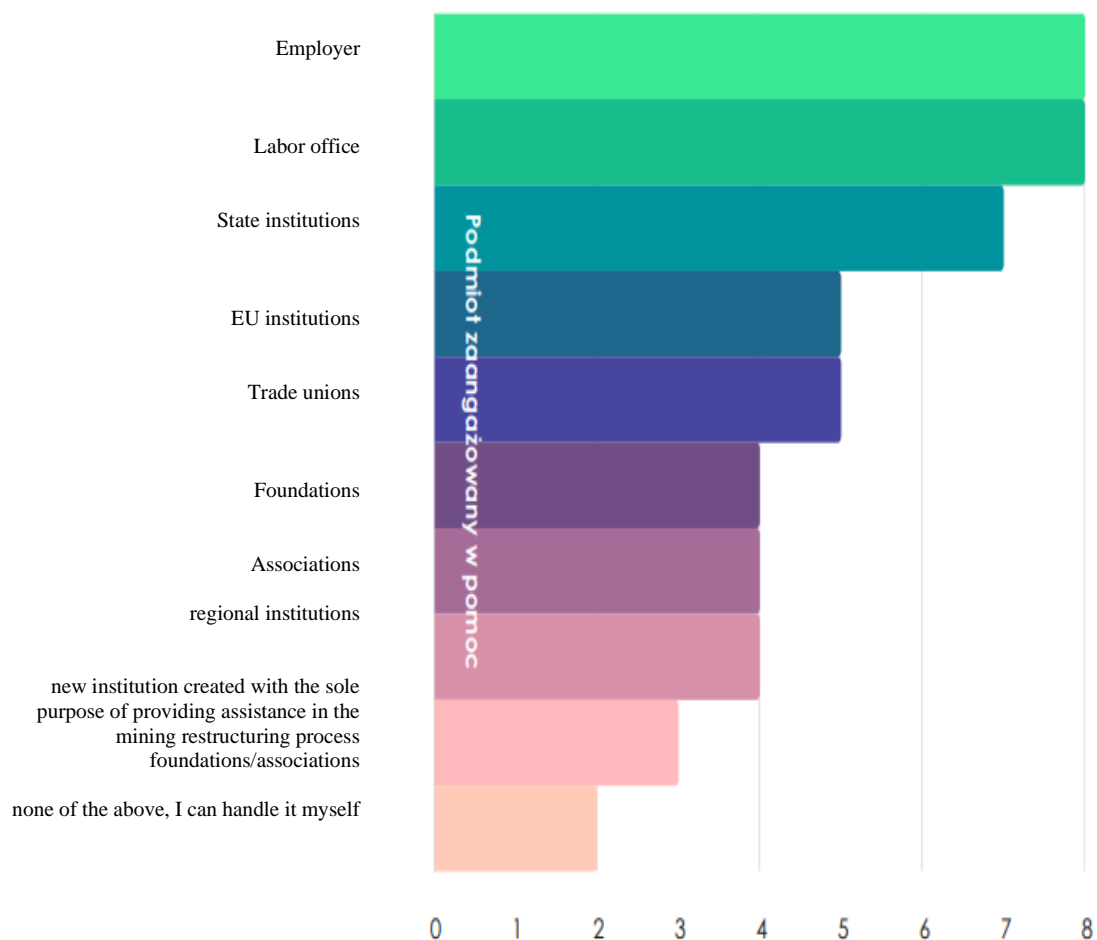
### What specific measures do you have in mind?



## INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTING THE EMPLOYEES' EFFORTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL PLANS

In the study, respondents were asked to answer the question of **what institutions should support employees' activities**. Among the entities to be involved in providing support to the employees of mining-related companies and mines in realization of their professional plans **respondents most often specified the employer, labor office and state institutions**. The distribution of responses can be pictured as follows:

### Who should assist you or take care of arranging these activities?



Podmiot zaangażowany w pomoc – the entity involved in assistance

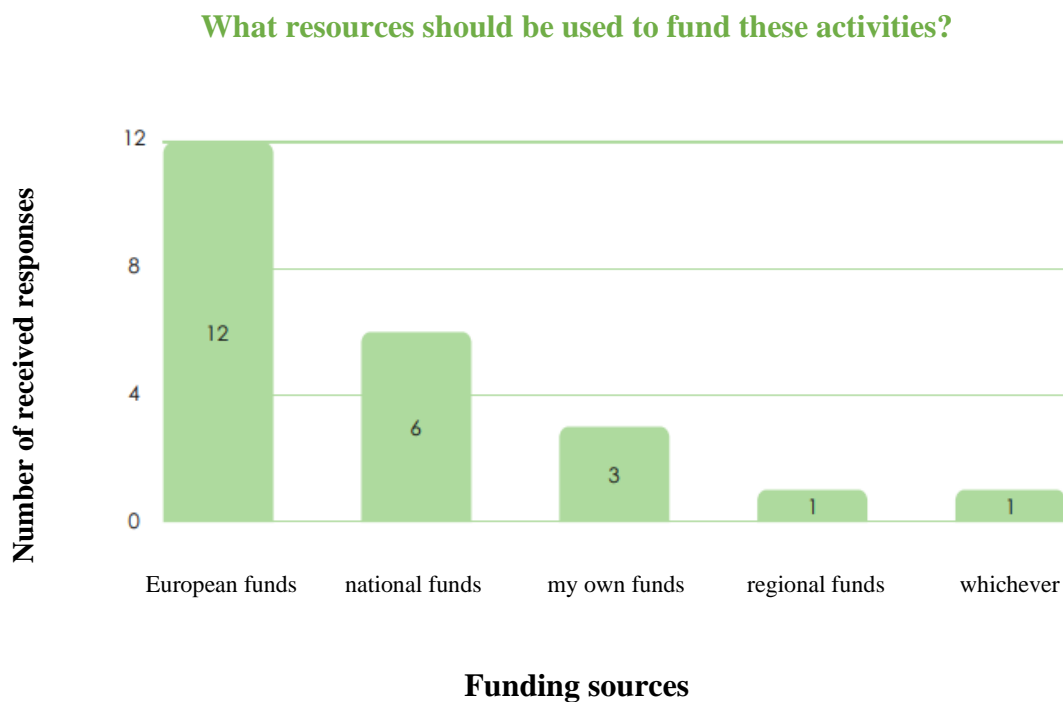
**Number of received responses**

## FUNDING OF ACTIVITIES AIMED AT IMPLEMENTING EMPLOYEES' PROFESSIONAL PLANS

In the study, respondents were asked to answer the question of **who should fund these** employee **activities**.

Respondents **most frequently indicated European funds, followed by national funds**, as a source of financing for activities aimed at realising their own professional plans. Respondents believe that the **responsibility for organising the financing of their own career plans should rest primarily with EU institutions**, as it was the European Union that initiated the energy transition process in the broad sense of the term.

The responses can be illustrated as follows:



## EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN REGARD TO THE PLANNED CHANGE IN THE PROFESSIONAL SITUATION

The research team, was also interested in learning the respondents' opinions on expectations for additional support (in addition to the plans the respondents had already made themselves).



From the conducted study, it appears that the majority of employees of mining-related companies, as well as mines - signals the need for additional support. This is illustrated in the graph:

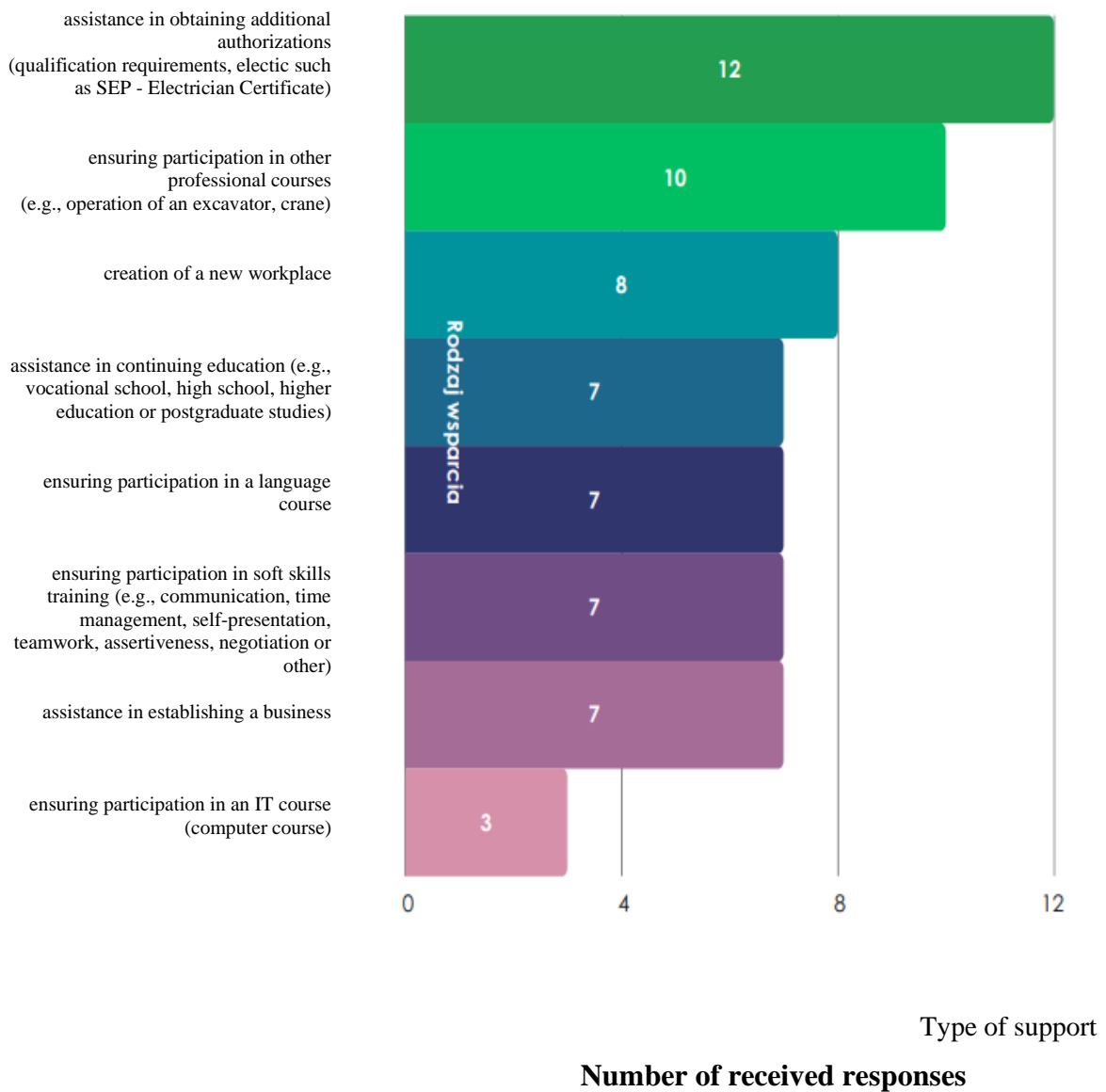
**In addition to what you have planned for yourself, do you expect any additional support?**



This was followed by determining **what specific additional support** the respondents expect to receive. The responses were varied. One can however see that the interviewed employees most often pointed **to assistance in obtaining additional authorizations** (qualification requirements, such as SEP - Electrician Certificate). Other forms of assistance expected by respondents include: **participation in other professional courses and creation of a new workplace**. The distribution of responses can be illustrated as follows:



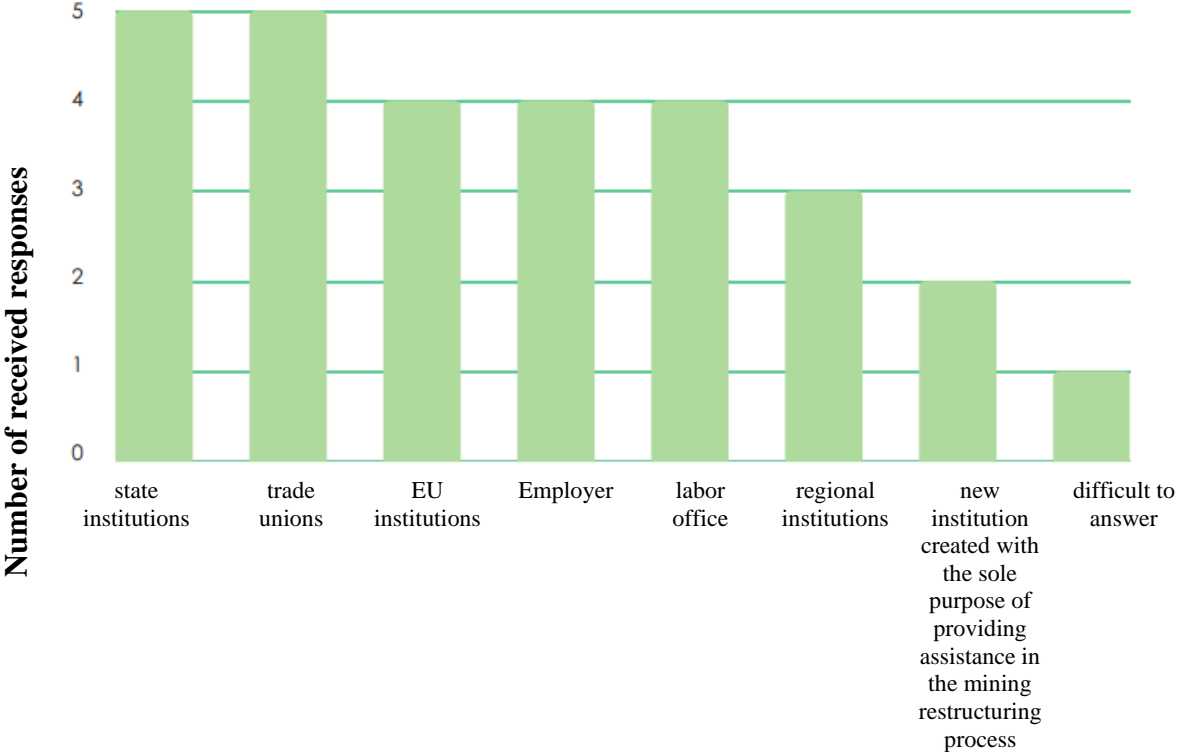
### What specific support do you have in mind?



Additional entities **that should organize additional support have also been determined.**

Among the entities expected to be involved in the provision of additional support for the employees of mining-related companies and mines in the realization of their professional plans, **respondents most often indicated state institutions and trade unions,** as shown in the graph:

**Who should assist you or take care of arranging these activities?**

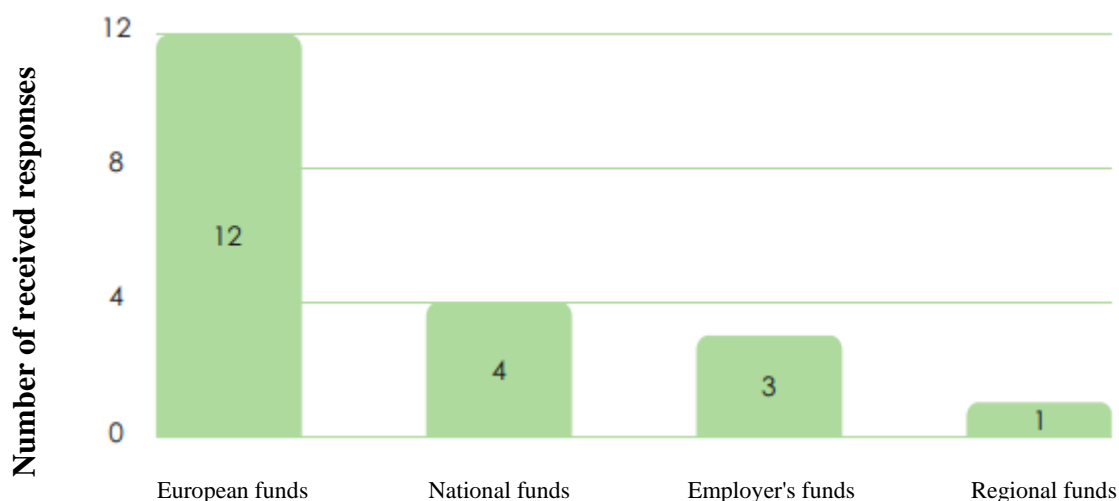


**The entity involved in the assistance**

Further, they were asked about expectations regarding **funding sources** for these activities. As the main source of funding for additional activities intended to carry out their professional plans, the studied employees of mining-related companies and mines pointed **primarily to European funds.** Other sources of financing were mentioned much less frequently. The data can be presented as follows:



### What resources should be used to fund these activities?



### Funding sources

## SITUATION OF EMPLOYEES WHO DO NOT HAVE PROFESSIONAL PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The conducted study has allowed to determine the reasons as to why some of the surveyed employees of mining-related companies and mines did not declare to have any plans in regard to their professional future as well as the expectations of those, with regard to the creation of such plans in connection with the energy transition process.

## **Conclusions on the lack of plans for employees of mining related companies**

Employees of the mining-related companies, do not have their own professional plans for the future in relation to the energy transition process due to:

- ▶ a high degree of variability of events and difficulty in predicting the future,
- ▶ a wish to work until retirement with the current employer,
- ▶ a high flexibility in the process of changing the workplace.

## **Conclusions on the lack of plans of mine employees**

Mine employees who do not have their own professional plans for the energy transition process in the Silesian Voivodeship suggest that the reason for the lack of such plans is:

- ▶ the belief that retirement benefits can be obtained from the mine,
- ▶ the lack of justification for formulating such plans in the highly unpredictability of the future, which is currently the case for energy policy.

## **THE ATTITUDE OF EMPLOYEES TOWARDS CHANGES**

Based on the study, the following conclusions can be made regarding the attitudes of respondents:

### **Conclusions on attitudes of employees of mining-related companies:**

- ▶ Employees of mining-related companies who declare knowledge of planned changes at the workplace voice negative opinions in regard to their workplace, due to poorly conducted human resources policy, restricting investments and miscommunication with employees.
- ▶ Employees of mining-related companies who do not declare knowledge of planned changes at the workplace, voice negative opinions in regard to their place of work due to: the lack of adequate employee preparation to the energy transition,

insufficient employer-employee communication, attempts to conceal certain facts about the future of the workplace by employers and poorly conducted HR policies.

- ▶ A part of respondents argued that the problem in relaying information to employees about the company's plans, results among other things, from external factors, as the changing political and economic conditions hinder the employers' decision-making process.
- ▶ Employees of the mines, who are aware of the changes in the workplace, have a critical opinion of its assumptions, claiming, among other things, that: under the conditions of the crisis, there should be a change in the adopted plans related to the closure of the mines, the mines need to be reinvested, the closure of the mines will lead to the loss of jobs in the mines themselves and in the mining related companies, which should be prevented.
- ▶ Employees of mines who do not declare knowledge of planned changes at the workplace voice a critical opinion on the lack of such an information policy, reasoning that, among other things, as follows: the mining industry requires precise, long-term planning, poor organisation of the mining transition process, can lead to numerous negative social and economic consequences that can be avoided, it is necessary to improve communication between participants in the energy transition process.

## **EMPLOYEES' EMOTIONS ABOUT CHANGES IN THE WORKPLACE**

Summarizing the emotions shared by respondents, the following conclusions can be made:

- ▶ The majority of employees of mining-related companies and mines declaring to have knowledge of the planned changes at the place of work, as well as those, who feel uninformed in this regard, feel negative emotions because of it, such as: fear, apprehension or anxiety.

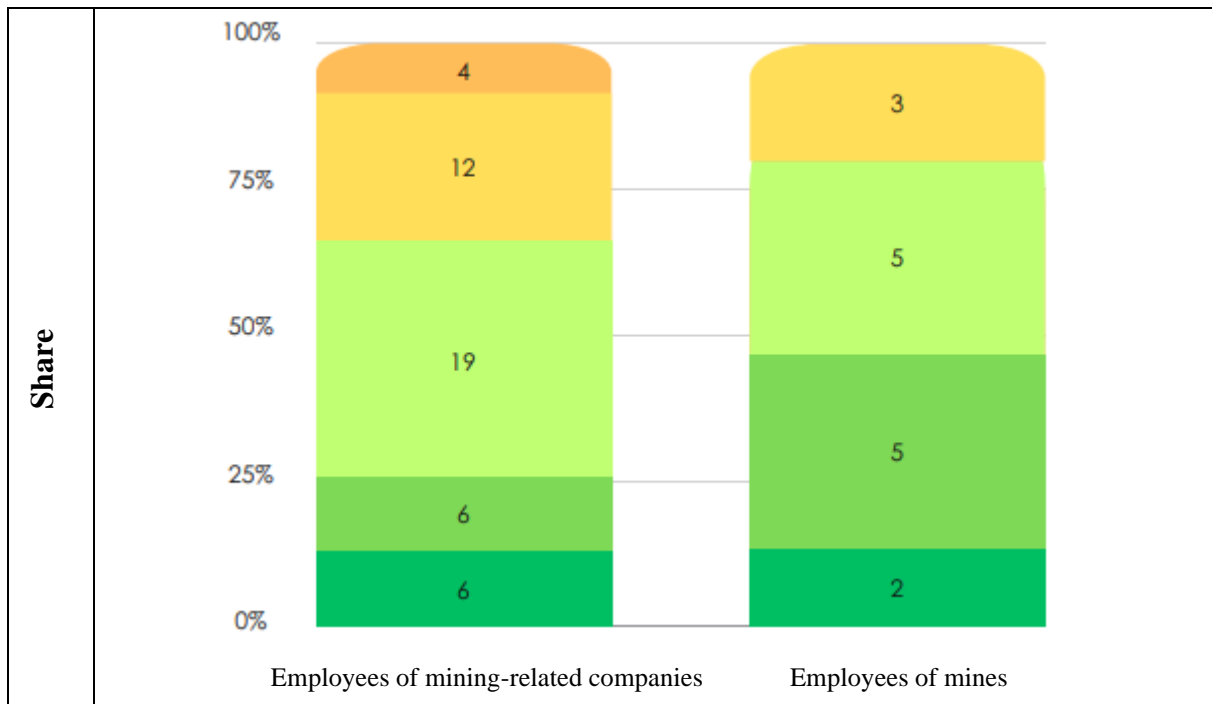
- ▶ The minority of employees of mining-related companies and mines with the knowledge of planned changes at their workplace, as well as those without such knowledge, did not express any emotions.
- ▶ A part of the mine employees showed an attitude of indifference to this phenomenon, which was related to the age of the respondent (65+) as well as the occurrence in some cases of a distant prospect of mine closure (this refers to situations where the parent mine is far down on the timeline in the Social Agreement as being designated for closure at a later date).

### **EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CHANGE IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL SITUATION**

The conducted study made it possible to determine **the attitude of employees** of mining and mining-related companies towards the change in their professional situation.

The largest share of both, mine and mining-related companies' respondents, are employees who perceive these changes negatively. However, it should be noted that among employees of mining related companies more than 30% of respondents, while in the case of employees of mines about 20% of respondents, perceive these changes positively. It can be illustrated as follows:

### What is your attitude towards changes to your professional situation?



- I am indifferent to them
- I view these changes definitely negatively
- I view these changes rather negatively
- I view these changes rather positively
- I view these changes definitely positively

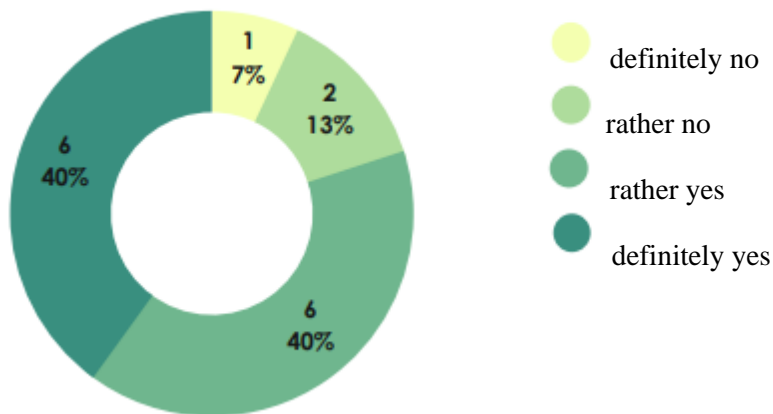
### THE ATTITUDE OF MINE EMPLOYEES TO CHANGING THEIR PLACE OF WORK OUTSIDE OF THE MINING INDUSTRY

As the last step, the study was able to gauge the attitudes of mine employees toward changing their place of work outside of the mining industry.

Participating mine **employees mostly responded** that they are willing **to take up work outside of the mining industry**. The distribution of the responses can be presented as follows:



### Are you willing to work outside the mining industry?



### SUMMARY

The survey provided an insight into the plans and expectations of employees of mines and mining related companies. The respondents shared their fears and hopes that the energy transition in Silesia might change the situation of their workplaces, as well as their personal professional situation.

The research team hopes that the survey carried out, the report drawn up and this brochure will synthesise the problems diagnosed and that, by involving representatives of the various institutions with the support of trade union organisations, it will make it easier for employees to go through this difficult process.