





HUMAN CENTERED  
ORGANIZATION  
By Sintetica

”Human behaviour flows from three main sources: desire, emotion and knowledge”.

(Plato)

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# THE PLAN AGREEMENT

Man is nothing else than his plan.  
(Jean-Paul Sartre)

The central role of people is more than just a strategy for Sintetica, more than a concept. It is an integral part of its very core.

The new “human-centered” philosophy, building on the wider concept of a “great place to work”, has led the company to take a highly significant new step in this direction: the establishment of plan agreements in close collaboration with the employees concerned.

These agreements define the aims, plans, and commitments of each individual's life path, private as well as professional. Company and employee work together in a constant two-way action aimed at the fulfilment of these plans. The company will do everything it can, with due regard for the necessity of the effective running of its business, to enable its employees to achieve their pre-determined goals.

With this “Plan Agreement”, Sintetica is revolutionising the usual approach taken by employers when dealing with their employees. The central role of people, a fundamental value in our human-centered approach, must be evident not only in the everyday commitment to ensure a balance between private and professional life, but also when looking to the future.

Sintetica maintains that meaningful life plans for its employees should be supported, facilitating their fulfilment as far as possible.

The Plan Agreement surpasses and rewrites the idea of the benefit, offering a holistic view of the person and giving rise to a truly human-centered policy.

# THE THREE AREAS

Plan agreements can be envisioned and put forward in three areas:

## Education

The desire for education (in the academic and/or advanced tertiary sector) is an important value to be encouraged and supported. Sintetica intends to accommodate these wishes even in those cases where the training which the employee means to undertake is not strictly in service of the needs of the company. Equally, Sintetica commits to facilitating access to higher education (academic and/or advanced tertiary) for the children of employees, in particular by doubling the state contribution for studying or thorough the special solution of a kind of “company Erasmus scheme”. This will allow young people to complete their education with the support of the corporate organisation’s various operational sites.

## The family

Two kinds of plan with considerable added value emerge in this context. These plans touch on the extremes of the cycle of human life: the birth of a child and the care of family members affected by serious illness or at the end of their life. Plans for birth should therefore be encouraged and incentivised, allowing parents to ensure every possible care and attention for the newborn. Similarly, at the other extreme, an intense, painful life stage such as the serious illness or the end of the life of a close family member (parent, partner, child) calls for great attention, care and commitment in order to prevent isolation setting in or having to entrust care to total strangers.

## Socio-cultural

Social and cultural plans which contribute to an individual’s ethical and moral enrichment should also be encouraged and supported. In particular these include volunteer work, participation in projects with a high sustainability value, and devising trips aimed at increasing one’s own social and cultural knowledge.

# THE TOOLS

## Education

### Leave

Flexible working hours and leave which guarantees job retention and the continuation of professional development (in-house training) for the duration of the training chosen.

### Funding

Possible loans and/or contributions to education costs. For the children of employees who intend to undertake academic or higher tertiary education, payment equivalent to the Swiss state contribution for children in education.

### Erasmus-Sintetica

The possibility for young people to complete their education with the support of the company's various operational sites (one a year per site).

## Preparatory tools

In-house consultation, external consultations (specialised, institutional, civil society, the economic world).

## Practical solutions

Organisation of working hours, paid and unpaid leave, funding (doubling of study grants), loans.

## Monitoring and reports

for every single plan.

## Precise, fair rules

for respecting the agreement.

## Family

### Leave

Great flexibility in working hours and leave (also including policies such as personal time banks or a temporary reduction in professional responsibilities), guaranteed job retention and continuation of career development (training) for the birth of a child and the care of close family members with serious illness or at the end of their life.

### Funding

Possible financial loans, also in the form of grants, in the event of emergency situations.

## Socio-cultural

### Leave

Unpaid leave with guaranteed job retention for the duration of the project (social or cultural).

### Funding

Possible loans.

# THE PROCEDURE



The employee's own manager will act as their primary contact person to whom they will submit their plan (as a rule, if possible, at least 6 months before the plan is to be put into action). After this initial stage, the plan is submitted to the management of the Department of Sustainability and Human Resources to be organised into an agreement. This procedure involves discussions (sharing information) on the carrying out of the plan concerned. A final report is required, which also serves for the continued growth of the entire company's general expertise in a totally innovative and revolutionary field of its wholly human-centered philosophical outlook.



## EDUCATION -

# SUPPORT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Besides professional training, personal education is one of the touchstones of Sintetica's philosophy and corporate strategy. The company is strongly committed (particularly with MIP in Milan) to the creation of high-level training opportunities partly aimed at the management of today and tomorrow and partly administered in the form of democratic learning: **Sintetica Never-ending School**. In addition to this wealth of options, Sintetica wishes to contribute through plan agreements to the individual educational growth of its employees, facilitating specific personal education pathways in the academic sphere and more generally at a tertiary level. This may also be in fields that are not necessarily strictly related to their professional role within the company. Depending on day-to-day business, and for the duration of the chosen educational path, this will be achieved through increased flexibility in working hours and through periods of leave, having ensured guaranteed job retention and the continuation of professional development within the company. At the same time, Sintetica can provide loans or contribute to the costs of the chosen training.

### Support for children's education

A second sphere of great importance to Sintetica and for which it intends to uphold plan agreements, is that of the education (again at an academic level or more general tertiary level) of its employees' children. In this event, support will take a financial form: Sintetica will match the Swiss state contribution for children in education (currently 250 francs per month until they turn 25 years of age or until they obtain the qualification).

### Erasmus-Sintetica

Backed by four operating sites (two in Switzerland, in Mendrisio and Couvet, one in Germany, in Münster, and one in London), the Sintetica corporate organisation potentially has the prerequisites available for a kind of "company Erasmus". As a result, it is able to offer the children of its employees assistance (subject to a time limit) in the various educational pathways. This refers in particular to the possibility of internships, in a more familiar setting both practically and personally.

FAMILY -

## CARE AGREEMENT

Caring for relatives affected by serious illness or infirmity, or who are reaching the end of their life, is frequently an additional source of major worry for those engaged in a professional role. A lack of time, flexibility, and availability both to deal with emergencies and to manage an ongoing situation generates anxiety, worry, and suffering even in those who feel a sense of responsibility for and are emotionally involved in the care. In this sense, a job often proves to be an obstacle which also has serious repercussions in psychological terms, both for those who need care and those wishing to provide it. An obstacle that has a considerable impact on the quality of life for both. Placing the person at the centre of our attention and worry means, in contexts such as these, enacting a series of measures that contribute to reducing the obstacle of the professional commitment as much as possible, with due regard for the minimum operative needs of the company. Hence Sintetica, by means of specific plan agreements, will be concerned with supporting job flexibility for its employees as much as possible when faced with family situations of this kind. The first tool to be employed, and with a certain ease since it is already an operational practice at Sintetica, is that of flexible working hours.

Anyone entering into a care agreement should be able to take advantage of even greater flexibility, clearly linked to the given care needs. This framework will also include contingencies borrowed, for example, from the model applied for time off for sick children without a medical certificate. Multiple occurrences are obviously to be expected even over an extended timeframe. A useful tool in this framework can be what is known as a personal time bank, to be drawn on in times of need, subsequently “balancing the books” with the number of working hours “borrowed”. To the same end, it will also be possible to proceed with a temporary reduction (without financial compensation) of one’s professional workload. Another tool which manifestly may be of great help in reconciling work and family is taking advantage where possible of remote working, even intensively.

### **Financial support**

With regard to possible financial support for situations of this nature, it must be emphasised that this is already guaranteed by the social systems of the main countries in which Sintetica employees are based.

SOCIO-CULTURAL AREA -

## OPENNESS TO THE WORLD

Openness to people and to the world is another distinctive hallmark of Sintetica's corporate and humanistic culture. Given this perspective, the company therefore also intends to support individual volunteer projects and/or participation in projects with a high social and environmental sustainability value. Equally, special travel plans aimed at increasing one's own social and cultural knowledge will also be taken into consideration. Sintetica will support these plans by guaranteeing unpaid leave, job retention and, where necessary, the possible granting of loans.

# THE AGREEMENT AS A BENCHMARK

The Plan Agreement is a benchmark in the enactment of truly human-centered policies, going beyond mere benefits and looking ahead to the future: the work-life integration of the new generations. In light of this, it is helpful to examine a recent study carried out by MetLife, a major American consultancy firm creating work/life solutions. The title of the study is: Employee Benefit Trends Study 2019 (<https://www.metlife.com/employee-benefit-trends/ebtsthiving-in-new-work-world-2019/>) and consists of 4 parts.

**Part 1** - Establishes the need to create workplaces in which there is a genuine alliance between employer and employee. People leverage work to gain fulfilment, pursue their goals and align their values and experiences more authentically with those of the organisation of which they are part.

**Part 2** - Offers 5 guidelines to reshape the workplace to the following effect:

- Create trust in the company's leadership
- Show genuine interest in individuals and their success
- Encourage dialogue and the sharing of ideas and personal opinions
- Develop a sense of belonging
- Customise benefits to employees' needs.

**Part 3** - Explores the idea of the need to reimagine the standard concept of benefits in order to meet expectations more satisfactorily. While individuals' expectations of organisations are growing, their perception of their standard benefits is not. Employees' satisfaction with their standard benefits packages is actually declining. Organisations must reshape their benefits plans with a holistic approach, playing a fundamental role in helping people to achieve their personal and work-related goals, and in supporting them through their more stressful challenges (financial, health-related etc.). When the line between work and life was clearer and more distinct, traditional benefits were enough to meet employees' needs. Today this is no longer the case. Work and life are now much more intertwined, and new solutions are needed to support employees from a physical, emotional and financial point of view.

**Part 4** - Offers some important practical suggestions. What, then, should organisations do within the context outlined here? Fully understand what motivates their employees: ask questions through in-house surveys that can give insights into their attitudes, motivations, goals, concerns and values both in and out of work (going beyond mere demographic information). Foster a culture of mutual trust and care for others: recognise personal achievements beyond the annual performance review, including through peer to peer feedback, and ensure that each employee is aware of the contribution they can make to the organisation's mission and therefore to its success. Establish human-centered policies: flexible, accessible, appropriate to each stage of life and integrated with work. Encourage personal and professional development through a variety of opportunities. Create a benefits programme with a holistic approach: a range of options, which each employee can adapt to their own individual needs and in which they can be supported and guided by in-house experts. Communicate effectively: instead of simply showing a list of products/solutions, helping people to understand how a range of options together can add value to their lives. The Plan Agreement fully satisfies the guidelines this study proposes, its name alone perfectly encapsulating the points for reflection offered.

# THE AGREEMENT AS WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

The Plan Agreement surpasses and rewrites the concept of the work-life balance, offering a vision of work-life integration consistent with the needs of the new generations. The '70s/'80s concept of the work-life balance sought to establish a balance between the personal and the professional, almost as if they were separate, at times conflicting, circumstances. Millennials and particularly Generation X are undoubtedly more interested in organisations and career paths that are more consistent with the lifestyle chosen by each individual. These new generations place particular importance on their lifestyle and seek out jobs that will support it. The traditional approach of the previous generations, of finding a job and then building a life around it, has now been reversed. The new generations do not see work and life as separate entities, nor do they see work as something that interrupts their free time and vice versa.

It is no longer a question of seeking a work-life balance, but of finding harmony in work-life integration.

# THE CREATION OF AN AGREEMENT

Once each plan intended to be proposed to Sintetica has been conceptualised, it must first be discussed with the line manager and then submitted to the Department of Sustainability & HR, which has decision-making responsibility over whether the agreement is granted or not. A request for a plan agreement will state:

**Reasons:** care / training / culture

**Necessary means:** time / resources (work times/funding/loan) procedure

**Milestones:**

- for care: status of the situation / progress forecast
- for education: timescales / level of qualification
- for culture: timescales / programme and stages of the plan

**Persons concerned:** line manager (who will in turn report to the department manager) and, following a favourable response, the management of Sustainability & HR which takes ultimate responsibility as regards whether the plan is accepted or not. In establishing an agreement with Sintetica, the employee actively commits to their plan. Any issues or provisional changes should immediately be reported to both the line manager and the management of the Department of Sustainability & HR.

**Reporting:** regularly (or when possible) even in a moderate way as the plan proceeds. By written communication every six months (interim report) or after exams (for educational plans). A final report will always be provided at the conclusion of the plan. The end or the interruption of a plan will automatically entail the termination of contributions paid by Sintetica (in the case of children's education) and the start of repayment, by a mutually agreed method, of any loans obtained by the employee.



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