



Fundacja Adeptów i
Miłośników Ekonomii

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HR EXCELLENCE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN



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1. Organizational background

FAME|GRAPE is a research center operated by a non-governmental organization to initiate scientific collaboration, host scholars with scientific projects, promote young scholars and encourage their advancement in the academic ladder. FAME|GRAPE is also heavily involved in promoting and disseminating science.

The objectives of the FAME|GRAPE are: scientific activity, educational activity, educational activity, research activity—in the field of economic sciences. FAME|GRAPE pursues its objectives as unpaid or paid public benefit activities through basic research (as defined by Polish law), organization of workshops, conferences and seminars, as well as funding international dissemination, publishing scientific research. The core activities include creating and disseminating research tools and software (codes), supporting the development of scientists by providing scholarships and research grants to conduct research and improve skills. FAME|GRAPE has a mandate to cooperate with businesses, NGOs, and employers' and employees' organizations. FAME|GRAPE is a non-profit organization and does not engage in business activity.

FAME|GRAPE is a grass-root non-governmental organization. The tasks in addition to pure research activities are divided between the staff members. The staff of FAME|GRAPE consists of researchers at various stages of career (from graduate students to full professors). The researchers are involved in submitting research proposals, managing projects, hiring new team members, mentoring and reporting. The team is universally engaged in promoting science.

FAME|GRAPE has developed organizational procedures and standards in compliance with the requirements of the national and European research funding agencies. These procedures include tendering, business travel and hiring as well as accounting and reporting.

The core of the FAME|GRAPE consists of two founders (whose role is to supervise the management) and five members of the management board (whose role is daily management of the organization). The team of FAME|GRAPE is a broad group of researchers involved in past, current and future research projects. Within the team, the current staff of FAME|GRAPE includes the principal investigators of the current projects as well as their collaborators: senior researchers and junior researchers. Currently, FAME|GRAPE implements one ERC-funded research project and is a leader or team member in five more research projects. In addition, FAME|GRAPE implements two science dissemination projects. The staff of FAME|GRAPE comprises also the support team, with accounting and communication tasks.

FAME|GRAPE specializes in three primary fields of economic research: overlapping generations models, microeconometrics of labor market inequality, and public policy evaluation. These three areas of specialization stem from the expertise of FAME|GRAPE's founders and key collaborators. The research environment at FAME|GRAPE constitutes a unique combination of skills and research experience in Poland.

The researchers affiliated with FAME|GRAPE routinely provide scientific output in the form of papers published (along with data and codes shared). The full up-to-date list of publications is available at <http://grape.org.pl/publications>⁷. Researchers disseminate the results at leading

international conferences and through a series of Working Papers series, which are available at <http://grape.org.pl/publications/wps>. As a result of this progress, GRAPE is ranked 6th among Polish institutions in the [Ideas/RepEC](#) ranking.

FAME|GRAPE has a long record of institutional cooperation in both research and policy contexts. In cooperation with local research organizations and independently, FAME|GRAPE has been contributing to several studies by The World Bank and OECD in Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe as well as North Africa. We organize and co-organize international conferences and develop local policy reports <http://grape.org.pl/grape-on-policy>.

The staff of FAME|GRAPE also has an extensive and growing network of international contacts, with multiple foreign co-authors and hosting international researchers, including scholars from the US, Italy, Argentina, Kenya, Ukraine, Iran, Turkey, the Netherlands, the UK, and the Czech Republic.

Scientific equipment includes Matlab (concurrent local license), Fortran (concurrent local license), STATA (perpetual network license), R-CRAN, TeX, etc. – making it possible to develop research in most fields of economics. Access to facilities necessary for laboratory experiments is facilitated by the cooperation with the University of Warsaw (LabSEE).

Services such as accounting, administrative supervision, documentation, etc. are also available at FAME|GRAPE for the in-house researchers. FAME|GRAPE is also committed to facilitating the combination of personal and professional life, making it possible to work from home and in flexible hours whenever deemed fit by the associates.

FAME|GRAPE is a recognized research institution at EUROSTAT (ID 2017/059/PL).

FAME|GRAPE has also recently acquired access to numerous microeconomic datasets, that may be of use for calibrating the models developed in the project (such as Polish Labor Force Survey, Polish Structure of Earnings Survey, Polish Household Budget Survey, multiple national labor force surveys, and household budgets surveys, individual longitudinal level data for the UK, Netherlands, USA, Canada, South Korea, Luxembourg, Germany, Russia, Ukraine, and many others.).

FAME|GRAPE is a Global Labor Organisation (GLO) institutional member.

2. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practice

Values

FAME|GRAPE was founded by researchers and for researchers. We welcome and support a diverse community of individuals. We come from a variety of backgrounds and have various experiences, lifestyles and religious, philosophical, and political beliefs. We are united in our pursuit of intellectual excellence.

Our commitment to diversity is rooted in our fundamental belief that engaging with new ideas, perspectives, cultures, and people from a variety of backgrounds creates the right conditions for

scientific progress. We believe in the worth and dignity of human beings of all ethnicities, nationalities, ages, gender identities and/or expressions, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, cultural and religious backgrounds. We strive to create an inclusive environment where all feel safe and can develop, thrive and contribute.

Ethical aspects and procedures

Throughout the years, FAME|GRAPE has developed a range of policies: from communication standards in the common space of our office to formalized recruitment procedures, work-travel procedures, establishing an ombudsman function and Gender Equality Plan.

Ombudsman. This position is held by an academic with high professional regard and no direct or indirect links to the FAME|GRAPE Management Board. All collaborators are informed about the possibility to report directly to the ombudsman in the welcoming / induction package, before they even start working at our premises. This information package explains the role of the ombudsman, the independence of this person from all staff involved with GRAPE. It includes the contact details for that person. Ombudsman in principle inquiries in response to all reports.

Gender Equality Plan. The document has been developed with the participation of all FAME|GRAPE collaborators in 2020 and it is operational since 2021, with biannual reports on the progress in reaching gender equality. GEP identified a number of areas where inclusivity is not achieved and formulated actions to be taken regularly both in terms of change in policies and in terms of measurements of progress towards equality. The information about GEP is included in the welcoming / induction package for all new collaborators, hence they learn about the values and their operationalization in GEP before they start working at our premises.

Recruitment procedures. FAME|GRAPE endorses *European Charter of Researchers and the Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers*. We developed a procedure for the recruitment of scientists (the organization has only scientific positions at this stage, other functions are outsourced due to a small scale of operations). Recruitment of a scientist for all positions and for all durations requires an open competition procedure. The call for applications specifies: the skills of the target candidate and the evaluation criteria, the tasks to be performed, the terms of employment including the compensation, the duration of the contract, the time equivalent and other relevant working conditions. The call for applications are open to applicants of all ages, genders, races, religions, views, places of birth, sexual orientations and gender identifications as well as all other personal characteristics unrelated to the applicants' research potential. However, if required by the funder, the call for applications may define eligibility based on age or stage of career (e.g. period of doctoral studies, the post-doc, etc.). The call for applications is announced by the FAME Management Board. The Board appoints the recruitment committee members. The committee can comprise 3 to 5 people. The principal investigator is always a part of the committee. Following the insights from the GEP analysis, the committee ought to include at least one woman and at least one man. To offer the candidates fair information about FAME|GRAPE, the call for applications

has to include information about the scientific position, the type of the contract, the compensation, the required qualifications and supporting documents, as well as the relevant.

The selection of candidates is carried out in two stages. The first stage consists of the assessment of all applications for eligibility and substantive compliance with the call for applications. The selected candidates proceed to the second stage, i.e. an interview. The candidates are notified about the date of the interview in writing by the principal investigator or the FAME Management Board. This procedure does not apply to project managers if their employment is financed from their project.

The strength of the recruitment procedure is that it is clear and feasible to implement even in small teams. While we are careful to eliminate gender imbalance in the recruitment committee, the analysis within GEP has identified that we are not receiving an equal proportion of applications from women. We are experimenting with effective methods of attracting female candidates, such as using visualizations of women in our recruitment posters. We are also emphasizing equal opportunity in recruitment posters. We have yet to see substantive changes in the share of women applying in the calls for applications.

Working conditions – in office. FAME|GRAPE provides equal working conditions for each worker. All senior and junior researchers are provided with a workplace, computer and any needed devices and software. FAME|GRAPE has a fully equipped office space of 140+ m² located in the center of Warsaw, with high-speed internet access, new and high power computing machines as well as access to scientific literature at par with public academic institutions (via the service provided by ICM UW). There is also a separate space for seminars (equipped with a 6m wide screen and a high-resolution digital projector) as well as social space for all in-house researchers.

Currently, the office space is equipped for approximately 20 scientists, with personal computers, printers, scanner, copying machine, etc. The computers are fully equipped with the office as well as scientific software. We also offer a 256GB RAM computing server, with remote access, cloud computing, and IT support.

FAME|GRAPE is a grass-root organization, most non-academic tasks are carried out by the researchers themselves. The Board is responsible for bridging the communication between the principal investigators and the outsourced services providers (accounting, HR, etc.). The Board is also involved in communication with the funders and potential funders. We consider the highly individualized approach to each case a strength. However, in the case of periodic abundance of administrative duties (e.g. an audit by a funding agency) this self-help structure and personal involvement of the Board members may have adverse effect on the research output of both the PIs and the Board members. One of the necessary directions of development for our organization is to be able to fund a position of a managing director, who could coordinate administrative work and take this workload off the shoulders of the PIs and the Board members.

FAME|GRAPE does not have fixed working hours. We allow full flexibility of both the work-from-home routines and the specific hours to be held for the researchers. We encourage our senior and junior researchers to work from the office as often as possible. We believe this helps to cope with challenges (both merit-based and organizational) and provides equal treatment of all researchers. Especially in the case of the junior positions (e.g. research assistants), we encourage high involvement with the office, as this contributes to better networking of junior scholars, offers them a chance to learn from the peers as well as share experiences and knowledge, which is very helpful at the early stage of carrier.

We systematically evaluate the satisfaction with the work in the office. In this process, we have noticed that for some scholars, especially the students employed as RAs, the challenge of establishing boundaries between professional involvement in the projects, own education and private life to manage one's own time is sometimes burdensome. This challenge is particularly relevant in the periods of conference submission deadlines, proposal deadlines or period of finishing and submitting the PhD theses. Our own research demonstrates that establishing boundaries between professional involvement in the projects, own education and private life puts a psychological strain on individuals unaccustomed to managing their own time. As an organization, we need to develop and implement tools that help young scholars deal with this challenge and avoid building up unhealthy work habits and at the same time allowing them to reach their potential.

The decisions within the projects are taken by the PIs in consultation with their teams. The Board is not in principle involved in those consultations, though for some cases involvement is indispensable. However, the discretion of the PI does not include compensations (they are determined in grant agreements and typically they cannot be altered). Nor are the PIs in position to influence who is involved with FAME|GRAPE. Their discretion concerns their own team. So far, we did not observe conflicts that would require developing a conflict resolution procedure, but with the growth of the organization, such a procedure may become necessary and will be developed in collaboration with the ombudsman.

One of the challenges in assuring the equal working conditions concerns compensation of the researchers. The scholarships for the juniors and wages for the researchers are often determined within the funding agencies and their funding rules. FAME|GRAPE is not able to offer equal wages to all scholars at a similar stage of career and with similar achievements, because the wages are a consequence of the rules set outside our organization. This has proven to be particularly acute in the case of 2022-2023, when the scholarship rates were settled in the grant agreements before the spike in inflation and FAME|GRAPE was neither legally allowed nor financially able to accommodate the rising costs of living by increasing the scholarships. While all collaborators fully recognize the limitations related to the rules imposed by the funding agencies and their grant agreements and do not express that FAME|GRAPE ought to address this issue.

As regards the skills of our collaborators, FAME|GRAPE does not have a training program. Board Members share with the researchers all information about possible training, and career development events: summer schools, workshops, conferences, study visits, courses and so on. If

it is possible within the project budgets, FAME|GRAPE can finance such training to research assistants. Furthermore, the nature of our organization is that scholars share their knowledge and experience with the junior scholars and research assistants on a daily basis.

However, with the exception of the welcoming / induction package (as well as mandatory health and safety for all employees) we do not have any training program for the scholars and we do not have formalized rules for research assistant trainings either. Each team is developing its own methods of induction for the new team members (making it easier for them to build sufficient knowledge to fruitfully participate in the project). Providing structure to this process and helping some teams benefit from the experience of the other teams could improve the induction experience for the new team members. Providing a formalized system of training for all junior scholars would raise their scientific versatility and ability to build successful careers.

To partially mitigate this shortcoming, we have established a Mentorship program for all those individuals who think that they could use guidance of an experienced researcher from outside FAME|GRAPE. Board Members help to link with the potential mentors and FAME|GRAPE covers the costs of meetings. We proposed this program for the first time in 2022 and so far only one junior scholar decided to opt-in. Part of the reason for the low popularity of this program was lower than expected is that our scholars do not feel that they require more mentoring than with the senior scholars within the team. However, part of the low take-up may have been that our collaborators are mistaken in this belief: they think that they could not benefit and thus opt out, but in fact they should be encouraged to try interacting with an external Mentor. Our intention is to popularize the Mentorship program in the coming years.

Working conditions – out of office. Business trips in projects are defined by PI, in accordance with the funding agreement. FAME|GRAPE is allowed to engage the travel budgets for a conferences, workshops or seminars when one of the team members presents the results of the project; summer schools for research assistants in projects; and meetings of the team in projects implemented with international partners. To provide our collaborators with convenient means of communicating their travel needs, FAME|GRAPE Board developed an online form where the PI of a project can provide all links, information about conference fees, preferred flight connections and suggested hotels. These suggestions are checked for compliance with the funding rules by the FAME|GRAPE Board and either subsequently implemented or adjusted in collaboration with the PI. Due to legal limitations, FAME|GRAPE cannot reimburse own expenses in full: we are obliged to use the average NBP exchange rate from the day before the transaction for financial reporting purposes. Thus, we cannot reimburse fees or foreign exchange spreads on private cards of the collaborators. This is why all team members are encouraged to make travel arrangements in advance in which case all payments can be made directly by FAME|GRAPE, without imposing the non-reimbursable costs on the researchers.

After completing the trip, the researchers prepare a post for the project website, to disseminate the slides refer to the event in general, giving a public opinion the opportunity to learn about the effects of scientific conferences.

Ethics compliance. FAME|GRAPE has established an Ethics Committee to provide judgment on experimental research. Any member of FAME|GRAPE team can consult ethical issues with the Committee – cases that can be considered by the Committee include scientific and personal issues. Concerns can be also discussed with the ombudsman. With the exception of experiments and surveys, our research does not involve animals or humans and does not necessitate ethics approval. Despite this, the rules of ethical research applying to our team have not been formalized and this is certainly a gap that should be filled.

Growing the FAME|GRAPE community

FAME|GRAPE is an open community, welcoming researchers at various stages of careers to develop collaborative research projects. If those projects require funding, FAME|GRAPE is providing guidance on how to identify the funding sources and how to successfully obtain third-party funding. FAME|GRAPE is unable to fund such projects itself.

FAME|GRAPE co-organizes several international events every year. These are conferences with scholars from abroad, intended at networking the FAME|GRAPE researchers with the international research community. These events are aimed at fostering scientific collaboration and disseminating better the research of FAME|GRAPE collaborators around the world.

FAME|GRAPE is encouraging its researchers to disseminate their research output to general public. We build presence in the social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). We have also a mailing list of international scholars who agree to receive emails from us. We are publishing op-eds in a Polish daily and broadcast a podcast on economics, featuring our collaborators and their work.

However, we are facing difficulty in both establishing lasting international collaborations, which could produce joint grant applications and common research agendas. Part of the reasons for this shortcoming is that the collaborators of FAME|GRAPE are currently heavily burdened with current obligations and their ability to engage any further is limited. Partly, this is related to the fact that a large share of administrative burden falls on the shoulders of the PIs and Board Members. More involvement from the other team members, requires the PIs and the Board Members to develop more structure to these tasks so that they could be delegated. This is a critical constraint on growth, which limits our fundraising and development possibilities.

Part of the reasons are external to FAME|GRAPE, as they relate to eligibility rules in funding of the networks and partnerships. Our weakness is that we are not overcoming these limitations and one of promising ways to overcome this limitation is to encourage more team members to actively seek partnerships and become involved in networking.

3. Actions & implementation

Action 1	Responsible	FAME Board
Code of Ethics and Best Practices needs to be developed and adopted by the team.	Timing	We plan to develop the Code until the end of 2026, and then periodically re-evaluate its relevance.
The Code will include: general ethical research rules, all good practice in research of the institution, rules of the cooperation, and procedures in conflict situations. We will collect propositions of the rules and practices of the all members of FAME GRAPE. The Code will be written down. For each rule, there will be an monitoring indicator	Indicators/Targets	Code of Ethics and Best Practice with indicators and transparent report from internal consultations

Implementation. So far we strived to assure fulfilling ethical standards in experimental research. In the process of developing the Code of Ethics and Best Practices we will review our general research and organizational practices, commitment to reproducibility of research and ethics of our daily operations, including the green footprint, etc. In the process we hope to identify the areas where performing SMART needs to be monitored, because it does not come naturally or it is not induced by the general professional standards and focus our measurement efforts on those areas. For example, our organization is universally avoiding predatory journals and due to the age structure of our team, it does not discriminate against young or inexperienced workers. However, there may be areas where our values are not automatically displayed in actions and those ought to be particularly diligently monitored.

Action 2	Responsible	FAME Board
OTM-R policy needs indicators	Timing	We plan to amend the OTM-R until the end of 2026, and then periodically re-evaluate its relevance.
Our current OTM-R is published and available, but the monitoring of recruitment covers gender equality aspects only. We will work on other aspect of the recruitment process to develop indicators for these aspects.	Indicators/Targets	Publishing an improved OTM-R policy with indicators. Improved reporting on monitoring OTM-R implementation.

Implementation. A first version of OTM-R policy has part developed and published on FAME|GRAPE website (both in Polish and in English). One of the main points of action plan is to develop SMART indicators for the recruitment (and retention) of scholars that go beyond what is currently reported in GEP (gender balance of the candidates as well as the team status and engagement). We are currently working on how to collect feedback from individuals who did not decide to work with us (they applied, but eventually accepted a different position). We will also construct feedback for exits. While the turnover in our organization is small, especially the first

group is relatively numerous, thus providing important insights for constructing SMART indicators for the OTM-R

Action 3	Responsible	FAME Board
Continue with the implementation and improvement of the Gender Equality Plan	Timing	We plan to amend the for the evaluation period covering 2025 (performed in 2026), and then periodically re-evaluate its relevance.
Our current GEP reporting is showing only moderate improvements in some categories. We need to re-think the tools deployed towards improving gender equality.	Indicators/Targets	Regularly measured progress towards gender equality and transparent GEP reports with informative indicators.

Implementation. Our Gender Equality Plan has so far been monitored twice: first directly after the establishment and two years later. With the two data points, we are not able to draw inference on overall trends, but we can note that some proposed measures are not sufficiently informative and some of the implemented actions are not delivering as we expected. We will use this experience to reevaluate how to best approach gender equality in our organization and in our interactions with other organizations.