

Exporting the successful Equality Roadmap

"We are looking at Europe and the United States as an exciting option to begin with, as soon as Covid is no longer an obstacle," says Þórey Vilhjálmsdóttir Proppé, founder & owner of Empower, about the company's plans to export the successful method of the Empower Equality Roadmap. Þórey is one of the speakers at the Reykjavík Global Forum – Women Leaders, which is now being held for the third time in Iceland. According to Þórey, equality issues are not only human rights but one of the biggest economic issues of the future. "After the Metoo movement, there is a great need to address gender equality issues within institutions and companies, and managers are looking for the right ways," says Þórey.

Empower's service is based on the Gender Equality Roadmap that Þórey has developed and tested over the last 5 years in Iceland. According to Þórey, the Equality Roadmap involves raising awareness in gender equality issues for companies and institutions. Þórey mentions as an example that Empower is currently working on the implementation of the Equality Roadmap with Alþingi, The Parliament of Iceland. She also says that boards are increasingly considering gender equality issues. "Corporate boards are beginning to realize that the management team needs to reflect society in order for companies and institutions to connect with their customers, and then they need to have women there" says Þórey. Þórey says that equality has good potential for expansion and mentions as an example that Empower will hold two international conferences on equality in the autumn of 2021.

Common manifestations that people do not realize

Can you name examples of gender-based prejudices that are common in the workplace, without people perhaps realizing it?

"Unconscious gender-based prejudice is very prevalent in the culture of companies and institutions. Those who oppose women often appear to be expected to do household chores in the workplace, even if they are in a managerial position.

Also, women are often judged harshly, and sometimes excluded from meetings and at meetings.

Women are more often interrupted in meetings than men, both by men and women.

Women often get promotions after having to prove themselves, while men get promotions because they are considered promising.

This, of course, has to do with what is one major problem; the stereotypes about managers, but our ideas about managers are unfortunately still very masculine, and this is mainly reflected in the fact that no woman is the CEO of listed companies in Iceland. Why do you think that is? Probably because of these ideas, "says Þórey.

According to Þórey, the biggest change achieved by the implementation of the Equality Roadmap is that the culture of the workplace is examined and changed. "If we are going to change the culture, we first need to define the exact challenges in order to change them. That is a key point," says Þórey. She says the Equality Roadmap is based on a proven methodology that contains four phases, starting with the unique 360 ° analysis framework that Empower has developed.

"We address all the main aspects with a special emphasis on culture. We then present these results to management and all staff, which is extremely important. There, everyone gets the opportunity to participate in a workshop, the challenges that appear in the analysis are discussed and ideas for solutions are presented," says Þórey and adds: "Men and women's experiences of the workplace culture are often very different, but there we usually overcome the barrier of understanding culture in different ways and move towards the next steps in sync." Þórey also says that the next step is to work on the improvement projects and set goals for three years."

The implementation starts with projects and education that help to achieve the goals," says Þórey.