

HS2's Maria Grazia Zedda named in UK's Disability Power 100 list

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HS2's workforce equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) manager Maria Grazia-Zedda has been recognised by the [Shaw Trust](#) for the wonderful work that she does supporting people with disabilities.

Maria, who is severely deaf, has been named as one of the UK's top 100 most influential people living with an impairment or disability. Maria has worked at HS2 Ltd for almost five years and plays a leading role in ensuring that HS2 meets its corporate EDI commitments and targets – this includes attracting more women into the sector and increasing the number of people from BAME and underrepresented groups into employment.

Maria, who is originally from Cagliari, Sardinia, and now lives in London, is passionate about disability rights and celebrated the publication of her first novel earlier this year on disability and intersectional rights. Written in her first language, Italian, the novel is based on her own true story and the struggles she faced when she left Italy as a teenager to start building a new life in the UK.

Her achievements over the last 12 months, which played a part in her winning her award, include the development and launch of HS2's new accessibility policy and digital accessibility hub – which launched on

International Day of People with Disabilities in December 2021.

Speaking about her award win, Maria said: “It’s an absolute honour to have been recognised and I thank my colleagues at HS2 for their continued support, as we drive to set new standards which embed and promote equality and diversity in everything we do

“I want people to feel empowered to speak up, and speak out, about their disability and HS2 shares that passion. With a 28,000-strong workforce, we can make a real difference to people’s lives and drive positive change right across the construction sector.”

Maria describes her ultimate goal as the day in which accessibility becomes ‘business as usual’ and not a special request. Her own reliance on captioning and lipreading to communicate is a simple reminder of how quickly a person can feel disconnected.

She adds: “Remote working, during the pandemic, raised awareness of the simple IT adjustments that can be made to enhance communication with people who have multiple and differing needs.

“With that same level of awareness and commitment channelled into the workplace environment, we can make a real difference to so many people’s lives.”

In February 2021, HS2 Ltd earned the accolade of becoming the only organisation in the UK to have achieved the Clear Assured Platinum Standard accreditation. It received the award in recognition of its commitment to embedding inclusive best practice into all elements of its work, including the design and delivery of Britain’s new railway.