

Alfa Romeo Mi.To according to the principles of the Autonomy programme

Turin, 19th June 2008 - The Alfa Romeo MiTo can be outfitted with special devices in accordance with the principles of the Autonomy programme. Fiat launched this initiative in 1995 with the aim of constructing individual and collective means of transport and services for those with reduced motor capacity, keeping pace with new product developments, and encouraging the differently able to join the world of motoring.

During the days devoted to the press presentation of the new model, a specially-equipped car will be exhibited as a significant example of the numerous available possibilities. Prepared by Handytech – one of the numerous bodybuilders that works with Fiat Group Automobiles in the sector of special equipment for assisted mobility – this Alfa Romeo MiTo is equipped with a leather-trimmed half-ring accelerator located above the steering wheel that operates totally independently of the original vehicle systems. The car is also equipped with a vertical long-armed brake lever with a brake lock and horn. Customers will also be able to appreciate the electric clutch servo: this device consists of an electric servo motor managed by an electronic control unit that simulates the features of an automatic transmission. In detail, on this example of the MiTo, the gearshift is controlled by a button on the gear lever (the system can be neutralised by a switch that restores the original clutch functions).

Right from the launch stage, Alfa MiTo customers will therefore be able to obtain a car that best meets their requirements and needs. All these devices are easy to install and fit perfectly into the passenger compartment without impairing car user-friendliness, passenger room, comfort and safety. They can also be fitted alongside standard controls to enable the car to be driven by people without motor difficulties as well. They can also be easily removed with the advantage that the car can be sold as a specially-equipped car or a normal car. Lastly, many financial allowances are available for differently able customers.

Since 1995, a specific commitment with specially outfitted cars and Mobility Centres

Since 1995 - the year when the autonomy programme was set up – Fiat's belief has been that guaranteeing mobility to all is not simply a great moral and civil aim, a goal the entire community must strive for, but also a fundamental premise for economic and cultural development in present-day society.

We are no strangers to pouring commitment and energy into achieving what we feel to be the specific duty of any automotive manufacturer. In other words, to design and produce technical solutions that allow everyone the possibility of using a means of transport - whether individual and collective - without limitations of any kind.

This activity is in any case perfectly consistent with the true vocation of an enterprise that by its nature operates on the market in accordance with strictly financial considerations to meet human needs. In other words, to meet the needs of customers. And that means all customers. A specific example? In 2007, more than 11,000 Fiat Group Automobiles cars were sold in Italy in accordance with the principles of the Autonomy Programme and more than 900 people made use of the services offered by the 18 mobility centres present throughout Italy.

In our Mobility Centres, disabled people are taken through the bureaucratic, legal and technical procedures and also undergo an initial appraisal of their fitness for a special driving licence (only Medical Boards can conduct a proper assessment and issue a certificate). This is achieved through the highly sophisticated processes and instruments made available (such as the driving simulator) but above all thanks to the many physiotherapists, driving instructors and technicians who man these centres completely free of charge.

The Autonomy Programme together with the champions of today and tomorrow

We should acknowledge the commitment of the Fiat Group Autonomy Programme that aims to do away with prejudice and common misconceptions through numerous, prestigious sporting events: There is no such thing as “different” competitions but only “different” abilities because all athletes have the same will to win and overcome any obstacle. The best demonstration of this undertaking is the participation of the Fiat Group – Autonomy Programme, as Main Sponsor, in the recent “2008 Italian Disabled Ski Championships 2008”, and also the fact that it was an official Partner of the 9th Winter Paralympic Games held in Turin 2006. Not to mention its sponsorship of both “Invacare World Team Cup 2008”, the Wheelchair Tennis world championship to be held in Cremona, and the World Handbike Championships and European Ice Sledge Hockey Championships in 2007.

Amongst other things, the Autonomy Programme and the Alfa Romeo brand sponsored the driver Alfredo Di Cosmo who took part in the Italian Touring Championship, first division, Group N 3 reserved for 2.0 cc cars, in 2006 and 2007. The Milanese driver was the only disabled driver to register in these two difficult races and took to the track in a powerful Alfa 147 TS 16v 2.0 GR that develops a power of approximately 180 bhp with a torque curve starting at 4200 and rising to 7200 rpm, for a minimum weight of 1014 kg. The car is also equipped with some special devices: Mechanical ring accelerator control located above the steering wheel, power-assisted ring brake located behind the steering wheel, Sadev six-speed sequential gear box with clutch activation button. The racing Alfa 147 also offers a lever-operated brakeforce distributor with 4 positions to increase or decrease the brake force on the front or rear, self-locking differential and adjustable gas shock absorber system.

Last but not least, the Fiat Group has confirmed its support for the world of sport by putting together a new team of young athletes – “Fabbrica Italiana Atleti” – who will represent Italy in the most important international sporting competitions. The ten top-level sports people who have already acted as testimonials for the Fiat Group and its business sectors include the Paralympic athletes Fabrizio Macchi for cycling and Roberto La Barbera for light athletics (the latter was selected by Coni, representing Italian athletics as one of the six testimonials of the new official uniform for Italian sport throughout the world).

Lastly, for the next two years the Autonomy Programme will back the “Freewhite Sport Disabled non-profit organisation”, a campaign that aims to teach differently able people how to ski and attain full independence on the snow. Introductory courses to the different types of skiing will take place on ski-runs in the Via Lattea (Milky Way) area of Italy, preferably in Sestriere, which hosted the Turin Paralympic games in 2006.