

PRESS RELEASE

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Driver training with joystick: Space Drive training on the roads of Austria

The Powerdrive driving school in Styria, in cooperation with Paravan, offers special training for people with physical disabilities in Austria

Driver training with the Space Drive digital driving and steering system is now available in Austria. The Powerdrive driving school near Graz (Styria) offers special training in cooperation with Paravan GmbH, thereby expanding the range of mobility options for people with physical disabilities. The cooperation was officially launched with the handover of a specially equipped driving school vehicle. The first customers have already started their training.



Markus Matzinger, a driving instructor from Styria, is preparing to train learner drivers with disabilities in Austria using the Space Drive system. Photo: Paravan

There is high demand for specialized driver training with the Space Drive System in Austria. The collaboration between Powerdrive and Paravan provides a qualified training center. "We have been receiving numerous inquiries from Austria for years. This makes it all the more important that we have now been able to realize this offering together with a qualified partner," explains Thomas Minde, responsible for the Austrian market at Paravan.

From the school desk back behind the wheel

The Powerdrive driving school has stood for practical and quality-oriented training for many years. Markus Matzinger has been a driving instructor in the family business since 2009 and, in addition to classic driver training, also manages the affiliated driver safety center. With Space Drive training, he is expanding the range of services specifically for people with physical disabilities.

Before starting, Matzinger completed intensive training on the Space Drive system at the Aichelau Mobility Park – and became a learner driver himself once again. For two days, he practiced using the various input devices and the active driving school unit.

"I was able to get to know the entire system in depth – from the two-way joystick to the mini steering wheel to the four-way joystick. With the four-way joystick, the entire vehicle is controlled and steered with one hand. That's a real challenge," says Matzinger, describing his first impressions. "You have to think much further ahead and empathize with the situation of the learner driver. That's exactly what makes the training so demanding."

The training concluded with a test drive at the German TÜV – a formal quality check before the start of training. "It is important to us to provide high-quality training. We want to really master the system so that we can pass it on responsibly."

Technology for individual mobility

The driving school vehicle provided is equipped with the digital, redundant Space Drive driving and steering system, which enables a vehicle to be driven without a mechanical connection between the steering unit and the steering gear. Depending on individual requirements, various input devices are available – from two-way and four-way joysticks to mini steering wheels and gas/brake sliders. Secondary functions such as turn signals, lights, and horns are operated via the Paravan Touch System or voice control. Barrier-free access is provided by a ramp, allowing wheelchair users to drive directly into the vehicle.

Training begins with a so-called observation drive. During this drive, the individual requirements of the learner driver are recorded and the necessary vehicle adjustments are determined. On this basis, the vehicle is prepared to fit the driver's needs perfectly.

Mobility as a step towards freedom

The cooperation provides people with physical disabilities in Austria with a qualified training center. Paravan sees this as an important step toward ensuring barrier-free mobility in the long term and plans to carry out further vehicle conversions in the Austrian market in the future.

"Mobility means independence and social autonomy," says Markus Matzinger. "These candidates deserve to be mobile and enjoy their freedom. If I can contribute to this, I am also giving something back."

Further information at:
www.paravan.de/austria

SEVEN STEPS TO YOUR OWN MOBILITY

1

STEP 1: Do you already have a driver's license?

First, we clarify whether you already have a driver's license or whether you would like to obtain a new one. Depending on your initial situation, this may involve complete driver training or an adjustment to your existing driver's license.

2

STEP 2: The medical examination

If you have a physical disability, a public health officer will examine your fitness to drive a vehicle. This examination will determine whether and under what conditions you can safely participate in road traffic.

3

STEP 3: The right driving school

Next, contact a driving school that has experience in training people with physical disabilities. It is important that an appropriately adapted training vehicle is available.

4

STEP 4: The observation drive

During the observation drive, you will drive in an adapted vehicle together with a technical expert and a driving instructor. This will determine which technical adaptations or input devices you require.

5

STEP 5: Driver training

The training consists of theory and practice. You will learn to drive using the input devices that are suitable for you—for example, a joystick, hand throttle, or mini steering wheel—in a specially adapted vehicle.

6

STEP 6: The driver's license test

Once you are ready, you will take the theoretical and practical driving tests. If you already have a driving license, you will take a practical driving test with the adapted vehicle.

7

STEP 7: Your driver's license

After passing the test, the necessary requirements and technical modifications will be entered in your driver's license. You will then be allowed to drive on public roads in an appropriately modified vehicle.



After the test drive in Germany: High safety standards are a key requirement for Markus Matzinger in training. Photo: Paravan



Intensive training is also provided on the installation and configuration of the system – safe operation begins with technical preparation. Photo: Paravan



Driver training with Space Drive: Controlling the vehicle via joystick and digital driving functions in the training vehicle. Photo: Paravan



Training with the driving school unit: Control and intervention options are intensively trained in real driving situations. Photo: Paravan



Working together for mobility in Austria: from left to right, Markus Matzinger with Thomas Minde, sales manager for Austria, and driving instructor Michael Grunert. Photo: Paravan

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About Paravan GmbH:

PARAVAN GmbH is the global market leader for highly customized vehicle solutions for people with disabilities. Around 180 employees at the Pfronstetten Aichelau site and in the Heidelberg branch develop and produce individually adapted vehicle conversions, electric wheelchairs, and even specialized driver training. PARAVAN pursues a holistic approach with its "everything from a single source" concept. The technological highlight is Space Drive, an intelligent digital control system based on the drive-by-wire principle. Thanks to the active redundancy of the servo motors, it is completely fail-safe and the first to be approved for road use. With the help of this innovation, severely disabled people, some without arms or legs, can drive cars independently and safely. These drivers are unable to simply turn the steering wheel. Space Drive has proven itself worldwide over the past 25 years on more than two billion kilometers of road and is used by numerous industrial customers for test vehicles in the field of autonomous driving. The system is available as a retrofit kit with an open interface for all known vehicle types. www.paravan.de

About the Powerdrive driving school

Headquartered in Straßgang, Graz, the Powerdrive driving school has been providing modern and practical driver training for all classes since 1997. With 30 years of experience, the company prepares learner drivers for road traffic in the best possible way. Powerdrive has seven locations in Styria: Strassgang, Lieboch, Knittelfeld, St. Peter, Eggenberg, Andritz, and soon in the north of Graz. In addition to traditional driver's license training, the driving school operates its own driver safety center and offers comprehensive training programs on traffic safety and driving skills. With its specialization in training people with physical disabilities, Powerdrive is now expanding its range of services specifically in the area of inclusive mobility. www.powerdrive.at