

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE CITY OF MESSINA AND THE  
DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY AISBL FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME  
“LE AGORÀ DI MESSINA”**

## **Introduction**

The City of Messina, as part of the “Incubator for participatory democracy”, commits to work with The Democratic Society to create the foundations for a longer-term infrastructure for participation in Messina that can be used for multiple purposes. The results of this process will directly feed the “World Forum for Democracy 2018”, particularly about the project’s contributions to gender mainstreaming of participatory democracy and its impact on the participation of women in democracy.

## **Background**

Messina has already had some experience of participatory initiatives, such as legislation on common goods and the many and different partnership with European institutions.

Last year, Messina became a member of the “Incubator for Participatory Democracy”, sponsored by the Council of Europe and mainly coordinated by The Democratic Society, which connects cities to democracy innovators who can support and scale up participatory initiatives. The City of Messina attended last November the “World Forum for Democracy”, a unique platform to encourage democratic innovation and to debate key challenges for democracy worldwide

This last project was the occasion for the administration to path for the creation of a foundational piece of participation infrastructure for the city that supports and enhances existing ground-up networks and actions in a systematic way, independently from political parties.

## **Purpose and Duration**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to implement a programme to develop participatory democracy in the city of Messina, named “Le Agorà di Messina”.

This Memorandum is valid for a 12 months period, from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

This project will be long-term, conversational, and not driven by a single event or decision point, so that the networks and structures we create are around for more than the period of the process. It is made up of seven key-milestones, at least 3 big events with all citizenship, a steering group made up of different stakeholders and many planning session.

The concept note of the programme is attached to this MoU and constitutes part of it.

## **Parties**

Parties to this MoU are:

1. The City of Messina (“the City”), in person of its legal representative, the Mayor Renato Accorinti;

2. The Democratic Society AISBL (“Demsoc”) in person of its legal representative, the President Anthony Zacharzewski.

### **Commitments of the City of Messina**

The City of Messina commits itself to follow the below principles, promoted by Demsoc for local participation in work with local administrations:

- We will be **a networked municipality**, connecting and involving the full range of groups, communities and citizens across our area
- We will be **an open municipality**, enabling and supporting public understanding of our decisions, our data and our reasons for action
- We will be **an accessible municipality**, prioritising flexible online communications while providing offline and face-to-face information where it is needed
- We will be **an involving municipality**, supporting our residents and community networks to participate in and discuss every aspect of our services
- We will be **a collaborative municipality**, fostering independent discussion spaces for which council and citizens are both responsible
- We will be **a creative municipality**, designing engaging events and innovative environments that build participation in every group, service and place.
- We will be **a responsive municipality**, responding honestly and openly to what we hear, whether we agree or disagree.
- We will be **an ambitious municipality**, taking this vision of democratic public services to all our local partners, with the aim of extending a continuing, inclusive and productive democratic conversation across our area.

The City commits to working with Demsoc to identify suitable local partners to carry out programme activities and will in case sign separate MoUs with such actors.

### **Commitments of Demsoc**

To deliver the programme, Demsoc intend to deploy the following roles:

- a locally based project officer;
- a democracy architect;
- management and support from wider Demsoc team.

The above staff will be employed, managed and accountable to Demsoc.

Demsoc commits to working openly and collaboratively with all local actors.

### **Budget and finances**

The present MoU implies no direct cost or financial obligation for any of the partner. Demsoc is working to secure external funding for this programme, with the assistance of the City.

There will be no direct costs to the City and Demsoc for design and delivery of any aspect of the programme, without prior agreement in a written record.

Programme finances received from external funders will be received, managed and reported in a transparent and accountable way by Demsoc.

Funding may be distributed to named local partners who provide written confirmation that they will adhere to the same standards.

## **Arbitration**

The City of Messina and The Democratic Society AISBL commit to working together in an open, honest and transparent manner.

Any controversy that might arise from or be connected with the present Memorandum will be dealt according to the applicable law.

As well as the main points set out above, please also note the following:

**Demsoc's role:** The Democratic Society will co-ordinate the project from our bases in Pisa and in Messina, with the wider organisation from its bases in Belgium and UK. We will work with citizens and key actors in Messina to carry out the activities required to run the events. We will design the formats and methods for the events. We will take the outputs from the events and feed them up to the European level in occasion of the World Forum for Democracy 2018. We will later provide feedback to be circulated locally. Additionally, we will also lead on reporting and evaluation.

**Demsoc's independence:** The Democratic Society is an independent nonpartisan organisation and our goals are to support the involvement of citizens in decisions and to improve democracy. Our independence and reputation for honesty is of immense value to us and to you. To preserve that reputation and independence you must not use our logo, name or our involvement in this contract so as to suggest that we support or are aligned with any particular political position, party or cause.

**Publication of results:** The Democratic Society reserve the right to publish information about the project, and any outcomes, on our website and social media channels.

*Signed in two original copies, in Italian and English languages.*

The City of Messina

Renato Accorinti, Mayor

Date:

The Democratic Society AISBL

Anthony Zacharzewski, President

Date: