Open letter to the European Council ahead of discussions on the UK EU referendum on 28/29th June 2016:

**Eurochild calls for children’s rights to be prioritised**

*Brussels, 10th June 2016*

Mr. Donald Tusk  
President of the European Council  
B-1048 Brussels

cc. Secretary General of the Council, Mr. Jeppe Tranholm-Mikkelsen  
cc. President of the European Commission, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker  
cc. Head of the Cabinet of Mr. Tusk, Mr. Piotr Serafin  
cc. All Permanent Representatives to the European Union

Children make up one fifth of the EU population and have the biggest stake in the outcome of the referendum. While they do not have the right to vote, as current and future citizens, movers, workers, parents, carers and consumers, it is children who will arguably bear the full brunt and, indeed, the benefits of either outcome of the UK EU referendum.

As a network of 178 members across Europe working to ensure that the rights and well-being of children are at the heart of policy-making and are protected and promoted in practice, Eurochild calls for children to be at the heart of decisions made by the European Council regarding the outcome of the UK EU referendum.

- **If the UK remains in the EU:**

  The proposals agreed to by the European Council on 19th February 2016 have the potential to negatively impact on huge numbers of children across Europe.¹ Eurochild members have raised concern that the best interests of the child have not been considered in the development of the proposals, which could significantly undermine steps to implement the European Commission *Recommendation on Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* (2013). There are significant risks that the implementation of the proposals will impede the right of all EU citizens to freedom of movement and threaten progress towards greater social convergence and raising social standards across Europe.

- **If the UK leaves the EU:**

  The impact on children’s rights and well-being should the UK leave the EU has been absent in the debates on ‘Brexit’, overshadowed by economic and financial concerns. It would undoubtedly be a time

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¹ The *proposals* include an option for Member States to index child benefits exported to a Member State other than that where the worker resides, and for Member States to restrict access of migrant workers to in-work benefits “to the extent necessary” for a total period of up to four years from the commencement of employment.
of great uncertainty but it is crucial that any decisions made by the European Council are assessed to fully identify, analyse, strengthen or mitigate the impacts on children and young people.

**On 28/29th June, the European Council will meet to discuss the results of the UK EU referendum on 23rd June 2016.** Whether the UK votes to remain or leave the EU, this is an opportunity to consider a vision of a future EU and it is essential that children can meaningfully input and be involved in the decisions made that will shape our future Europe.

Reflecting the General Principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which all Member States have signed up to, Eurochild calls for the European Council to:

- Ensure that the **best interests of children** are central to their decisions;
- Consider how the **voices of children** and young people can be heard and fully taken into account;
- Guarantee that its discussions focus on the **most vulnerable children** living in Europe such as children in poverty, disabled children, children in care and refugee and asylum seeking children.

We thank you in advance for consideration of this letter and warmly welcome any opportunity to discuss further how the three vital actions listed above can be meaningfully taken forward by the European Council.

Jana Hainsworth
Secretary General, Eurochild