

# Eurochild Code of Ethics

## Annex A to Eurochild's internal Rules Adopted by the General Assembly on 17 June 2021

### 1. FOREWORD

A message from Eurochild's Management Board

Every day, we at Eurochild strive to promote the rights and well-being of children and young people across Europe. To realise our vision of a society where children and young people can grow up as happy, healthy, confident and respected individuals, we engage in advocacy, membership exchange and research.

This Code of Ethics (the "Code") reflects our core principles and values that we wish to embody as an organisation. As such, our organisation is rights-based, membership-driven, learning-oriented, based on partnership and empowering. In order to achieve our Purpose, we attach special importance to the 7 Core Ethical Principles detailed in the Code.

As members of the Management Board, we promise to lead on the implementation of the Code across the organisation and to do our best to act as role models in everything we do.

We urge all of you, the membership, staff, interns and volunteers, to read, understand and comply with the obligations and standards set forth in the Code and all other Eurochild governing rules, materials, guidelines and policies. Our long term success will depend on how we accomplish our Objects and the trust we engender from our stakeholders and the people we serve.

We look forward to working with you in achieving our Purpose in full compliance with this Code and to build and grow our organisation together.

### 2. VISION, MISSION & CORE VALUES

#### Vision and Mission

Our vision is a society where children and young people grow up happy, healthy and confident and respected as individuals.

Our mission is to promote the rights and well-being of children in policy and practice through advocacy, membership exchange and research.

#### Core Values

Rights-based. Members have a shared commitment to the full realisation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as well as its associated Optional Protocols, General Comments and guidance.

A rights-based approach recognises the indivisibility and inter-connectedness of children's rights. It also requires that all rights are underpinned by 4 key principles: non-discrimination;

the best interest of the child; right to life, survival and resources; and the right of the child to be heard in decisions affecting them.

**Membership-driven.** We are accountable to our Members through our governance structures. We use various membership engagement tools to ensure our work reflects members' expertise, needs and interests, and helps them achieve their goals. Members' engagement in our advocacy is especially important if we are to impact policies at EU and national levels. We also facilitate collaboration, networking and partnerships among Members.

**Learning organisation.** We are responsive to changing environments, be it in policy, research or the broader political or civil society sector. We are eager to learn from our mistakes and to change and adapt to new realities. We are committed to learning from the insight and experiences of children and young people, and adapting our work to reflect their ever changing realities and ensure maximum impact. We provide regular opportunities to reflect on and improve our ways of working in the Secretariat, governance structures and within the wider membership. We have a monitoring and evaluation framework which sets out our goals and expected outcomes.

**Partnership.** We seek to collaborate with other organisations and networks working towards the same goals and operating with similar values. We establish and participate in partnerships, alliances and umbrella networks where they bring added-value and we can contribute. We are transparent about our areas of interest and expertise, seeking to play to our strengths and to those of our partners. We regularly evaluate these external partnerships.

**Empowering organisation.** We aim to ensure Members have equal access to information and opportunities to participate fully in the network. This includes ensuring our outputs are accessible and understandable to a broad audience and finding more and better ways for Members to engage and, where appropriate, to take a leading role in implementing Eurochild's activities. Through our Child Participation Strategy, we will take account of the views of children and young people. We will build their capacity to engage meaningfully in our advocacy work and embed children's participation into our events and within our governance structures.

### **3. EUROCHILD'S CODE OF ETHICS**

#### **Introduction**

Eurochild is a network of organisations and individuals working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research.

Our work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and guided by the principles of the best interests of the child.

This Code aims to reaffirm Eurochild's values as defined in Eurochild's Strategic Plan and establishes the general principles and operational standards which create a framework for the way in which we carry out our work.

The Code is not intended to provide an answer to every single ethical question which may arise in our work. Instead, it provides a set of guiding principles to follow when faced with an ethical dilemma which can help us to do the right thing. To help apply the Code, we have included a guide to ethical decision making.

Before setting out the essential points of the Code, we want to address some of the questions that have arisen as we developed the Code.

### **Why create a Code?**

Many organisations both in Europe and across the wider international community, have created ethical codes to guide them in their work. Like us, they see these codes as an important tool in creating shared values and principles which can unite and bring organisations and networks together to help fulfil a common purpose.

### **Why is ethical behaviour important for the Network?**

Ethical behaviour or having a sense of integrity matters to us, as it is the key to develop and create trust in what we do and in our services and is the foundation for the long term sustainability of our network. Poor ethical behaviour will damage our reputation and risks our credibility with our stakeholders and the people we serve.

### **Who does the Code apply to?**

The Code will apply to the staff of the Secretariat, volunteers, interns, Members (when participating in the activities of the network or representing it) and the Management Board when carrying out its duties.

### **How does the Code relate to our key procedures and processes?**

The Code only provides the general ethical principles to follow when dealing with any matter. More detailed rules are laid out in the relevant procedures and internal regulations of Eurochild. These documents are referenced in the text of the Code with the relevant link.

### **How has the Code been developed?**

The Code has been developed with the help of an external consultant, Berkley Associates, who worked closely with Secretariat staff and the Management Board. Its preliminary content has been discussed with members at General Assemblies in 2019 and 2020, and the draft Code has been circulated for written consultation with members. Eurochild's Children's Council has also been consulted on different aspects of the Code. Consequently, it is very much our Code - we all own it.

### **How is the Code organised?**

The Code is organised in 8 key sections. Sections 1 & 2 deal with the Core Principles and how they apply to the structures we have established to manage the network. Sections 3-6 deal with our contacts and relationship with the outside world (external representation, professional relationships, dealing with sponsors and funders, working with children). Section 7 deals with how the Code will be implemented and covers the creation of an Ethics Committee, breaches of the Code and 'Speak-Up' provisions (voicing concerns). Section 8 covers how the Code will be approved and describes the review mechanism.

All provisions, statements, guidelines, principles and similar rules set out in this Code are without prejudice to the provisions of the Statutes and the Internal Rules other than this Code. In the case of any contradiction between the Code and the provisions of the Statutes or the Internal Rules other than the Code in this Annex A, the provisions of the Statutes or the Internal Rules other than the Code in this Annex A shall prevail in compliance with article 18.4. of the Statutes.

## **Section 1 – The Core Principles**

This section covers the core ethical principles that govern the work of the network and apply to Members participating in the activities of Eurochild, members of the Management Board, staff members, interns and volunteers. These 7 Core Principles, inspired by the 4 behavioural norms detailed in Eurochild's Strategic Plan, are not meant to constitute a closed list. Taken together, they make up our definition of ethics for the organisation, or to put it simply, they help us to do the right thing in any given circumstance, in accordance with our vision, mission and values.

We would also like to underline that the keystone of these principles is our commitment to the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child and to take action in line with the best interests of the child.

The 7 Core Principles are the following:

**INTEGRITY:** We share a common commitment to the values of Eurochild. We are respectful, courteous and act honestly and fairly towards each other, seeking to build trust and quality relationships within the network.

**PROFESSIONALISM:** We are committed to make a difference to the lives of children. We seek to apply and develop our professional skills in the best way possible to further the goals of Eurochild and our respective organisations.

**COLLABORATION:** We seek to find ways to reinforce each other's work and to create synergies between members and between members and the network as a whole, including staff.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION:** We treat everybody equally. We do not discriminate on any grounds. We will avoid any action or behaviour that might amount to harassment of any individual or group.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** We take responsibility for our actions and understand and accept the consequences of them. We will always act in accordance with the law.

**TRANSPARENCY:** We are honest with ourselves either as individuals or as an organisation about the actions we are taking and whether those actions are consistent with Eurochild's Core Values and beliefs.

**INDEPENDENCE:** We shall act impartially and objectively in our work and make decisions based on the merits of each case, free from any outside influence. We shall always declare promptly any conflicts of interest<sup>1</sup> that might arise in our work in accordance with Eurochild's procedures on conflicts of interest.

## **Section 2 – The Core Principles and Our Operational Structures**

This section deals with how the Core Principles described above, are applied to our operational structures namely, the Secretariat, the Management Board and the Membership.

### **2.1 The Secretariat**

Our staff are a vitally important resource for the network to achieve its Purpose.

The Staff Handbook sets out the following operational and ethical values for the Secretariat: trust and respect, professionalism and commitment and a collaborative spirit and shared

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as having a personal, family, financial or corporate interest which might conflict with your duties or obligations to the network.

vision. These values are very much part of and are included in our Core Principles outlined above.

We expect Staff to observe in their work the following behaviours that put the above principles and values into practice. They will, in particular:

- Carry out their duties in good faith and to the best of their abilities. Staff shall be loyal to Eurochild and to do their best to promote its activities, as well as its vision, objectives and values.
- Act in accordance with the law and follow the procedures and processes that have been established by Eurochild for the proper management of its activities.
- Seek out the correct and ethical course of action with respect to any particular situation with which they are faced, in line with the values of Eurochild and the principles established in this Code.
- Support the management and each other and take responsibility and be accountable for their individual actions or decisions. Treat all persons whether inside or outside the network, with courtesy and respect.
- Build a service culture with the membership, supporting them in their work and communicating with them in an open and transparent manner. They shall ensure that all enquiries and requests for information from members are dealt with promptly in a professional manner.
- Be consistent and fair in the application of the rules and procedures of Eurochild that may apply to the membership. Staff shall treat all members the same regardless of the size, influence, status or resources of the organisation concerned.
- Act responsibly and not do, say or write anything that would harm or damage the good name or reputation of Eurochild. Promptly bring to the attention of the management any wrong doing or breaches of this Code in line with the provisions of Section 7 of this Code.

The above behaviours or standards apply to managers as well as to staff. Managers in addition, have a duty to treat their staff with respect, to provide a safe and supportive working environment (including respect for a healthy work-life balance), and to apply the personnel and human resources rules in a consistent and fair manner. Managers shall also listen to the concerns of their staff and promptly deal with any reports from them of illegal activities and wrong doing in accordance with the provisions of Section 7 of this Code.

All staff should be supported to put the principles and values into practice in their daily work, through individual supervision, team meetings, and internal Secretariat policies and guidance.

## **2.2 The Management Board**

The role and function of the Management Board is governed by the Statutes, as well as by the Internal Rules. The latter defines the Management Board as “the democratically elected governing body responsible for providing leadership and strategic direction to the Eurochild network.” It is accountable to the membership and external stakeholders for the delivery of Eurochild’s Purpose and Object, as defined in the Statutes and Strategic Plan. The Management Board oversees the work of the Secretariat and ensures that the network has a sound financial base in order to secure its long term sustainability. The Management Board is elected by the General Assembly which also appoints its officers including a President, who provides its leadership and overall direction. However, independent of the position of each

Management Board member, accountability rests with the whole Management Board and it is their joint and several responsibilities.

The Internal Rules established operational values<sup>2</sup> for the Management Board which reflect the Core Principles, detailed in Section 1 of this Code. We expect that the activities and behaviour of the Management Board will comply with these values and principles. In particular, the Management Board and each Management Board member will:

- Perform their tasks and responsibilities with due care and attention in accordance with their mandate and Belgian law. They shall ensure that all the activities of Eurochild put the interests of the child first.
- Ensure that Eurochild has put in place the procedures and policies to properly govern and manage its activities in line with standard business practices. These procedures and policies shall be in writing, clearly articulated and in an accessible format and in line with the mission and values of the network including this Code.
- Oversee the work of the Secretariat and ensure that it is properly evaluated and monitored. Where necessary or required by law, such monitoring shall be supported by the use of outside experts or auditors.
- Ensure that the network has the necessary human and financial resources to carry out its work and secure its future.
- Investigate and act decisively where problems or issues are revealed or reported to them. All decisions of the Management Board shall be made in a transparent manner and properly recorded.

### **2.3 The Membership**

Eurochild would not be able to accomplish anything without the support and actions of its Members – they are the lifeblood of the organisation. The abiding principle and philosophy of the network is that all Members are equal regardless of status, influence, size and resources.

The rules, rights and duties of Members are set out in the Statutes and the Internal Rules. We expect that the behaviour of each Member will reflect these rules as well as the Core Principles described in Section 1 of this Code. In particular, each Member will:

- Commit to the vision, mission and goals of the network and wherever possible, participate in its activities including meetings.
- Promote their membership of Eurochild. Wherever possible, put the needs of the network first and not to influence decisions of the network on the basis of purely personal or corporate interests.
- Keep the Secretariat informed of the activities and developments in their organisation and ensure that all reports are submitted on time in order to meet the planning cycles of the network.
- Contribute to the financial sustainability and well-being of Eurochild by promoting its activities and events and ensuring that membership fees are paid on time.

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<sup>2</sup> These cover; Effectiveness and Efficiency, Transparency and Accountability, Consensus Oriented, Participation, Rule of Law, Due Care, Responsive.

- Respect each other and the staff of the Secretariat and not do anything that would bring the name and reputation of Eurochild into disrepute.
- To try to resolve conflicts and disputes between Members or between Members and the staff of the Secretariat, amicably in line with the Core Principles. In particular, in resolving disputes, it shall be guided by the principle of putting the needs and interests of Eurochild first.
- Commit to ensure child protection in all their work with children and young people, either by signing up to and complying with Eurochild Child Protection Policy, or by complying with their own existing child protection policy which is in line with that of Eurochild.

### **Section 3 - External Representation**

Without any prejudice to the legal representation rules laid down in articles 15 of the Statutes, external representation covers representing Eurochild at events, conferences and seminars, participating in meetings with other organisations or institutions or government bodies (for example, meetings at the European Commission, the European Parliament, United Nations working groups or committee meetings, national, regional or local government or bodies, etc). It may also cover participating in press conferences or interviews. External representation may be carried out by a staff member as part of their duties, by a Management Board member, or by a network Member who has been requested to represent Eurochild. If you are called upon to perform representative duties, you should bear in mind that the Core Principles of Integrity, Professionalism, Accountability and Transparency will apply. In particular, the following points should also be observed:

- Act in accordance with the mandate and any specific instructions or guidelines that you have been given. Check with the Secretariat where you are not sure whether what you are intending to do or say is in line with the official position of the network.
- Ensure that you represent the official viewpoint of the network and not only your own personal opinion or that of your organisation to which you belong.
- Do not do or say anything that would damage the good name or reputation of Eurochild.

### **Section 4 – Working with Others**

In order to carry out the activities of Eurochild, it may be necessary to use outside experts, consultants, suppliers (including hiring hotels and conference centres and caterers), and service providers such as computer technicians, auditors and lawyers, etc. This section covers the general ethical principles that should be observed when dealing with these outside suppliers. In applying our Core Principles to these type of activities, it is important to underline that the good name and reputation of Eurochild matters and that our suppliers and service providers should also be treated ethically and correctly (with respect, politeness and courtesy).

The following points should be emphasised:

- Suppliers should be appointed in accordance with transparent procedures where the decision is based on the principles of objectivity, impartiality and equal treatment.

- Decisions on selection of suppliers or service providers should take into account their social responsibility principles and practices. Eurochild should not knowingly engage with third parties with unethical policies or practices.
- A staff member or network Member shall not take part in any decision relating to a supplier or service provider where he/she has a conflict of interest with respect to that organisation.
- Any supplier has the right to be treated fairly and equitably which includes receiving a contract or written confirmation of the work to be carried out or the service to be delivered. The supplier shall be paid on time in accordance with its contract or written arrangement unless there is a genuine dispute about the quality of the services delivered.
- The independence of decision-making of Eurochild should not be put into question by accepting gifts or hospitality from a supplier or service provider unless this is done with the express written authorisation of the management or in accordance with any rules on gifts and hospitality established by Eurochild.

## **Section 5 – Funders and Sponsors**

In carrying out its activities, Eurochild may wish to seek funds from outside organisations whether as sponsorship or as a grant to cover the activities and expenses of the project concerned. This may involve seeking funding from public bodies such as the European Commission or from corporate partnerships and philanthropy (foundations and trusts). Decisions on funding and sponsorship are governed by the Core Principles of Integrity, Transparency, Accountability and Independence. These principles are explained in the network document, Eurochild Fundraising Ethics. Decisions relating to sponsorship must be taken in an objective and impartial manner in line with Eurochild’s mission, core values and the principles set out in this Code.

The following practical points should be born in mind when dealing with funders and sponsors, in particular Eurochild will:

- Only engage in partnerships with funding partners and sponsors who align with or share the mission and vision of the Association and help it to achieve its Purpose and Object.
- Not work with companies or institutions that are involved in activities that might damage its reputation or bring it into disrepute. Consequently, by way of example, without the intention of creating a limitative list, offers of sponsorships from tobacco, alcohol, gambling and the arms and defence industries (including foundations set up on their behalf), will be rejected.
- Not endorse or give the impression that it is endorsing any product of the sponsor or corporate donor. However, the sponsor may mention the fact that it is supporting the work of the network.
- Ensure that sponsorship or funding arrangements are covered by a written agreement which sets out clearly the terms of the sponsorship or grant arrangement. As a general principle, Eurochild will not accept money by cash or cheque from a sponsor although there may be exceptions to this rule to take account of local circumstances.



- Ensure that where the sponsor works with children or carries out activities involving children, it has in place adequate child protection policies similar to those of Eurochild, especially its Child Protection Code of Conduct.
- Abide by the terms of the sponsorship agreement and ensure that where reporting is required under the terms of any grant agreement, it is accurate and timely and reflects the activities and costs incurred.
- Review funding and sponsorship proposals on a case by case basis in line with the principles detailed in this Code. Existing arrangements will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the requirements of this Code are being complied with.

## **Section 6 – Working with Children**

Eurochild accords great importance to the direct participation of children and young people in its work. As a network underpinned by the UNCRC we are committed to ensuring that all children (defined as anyone under the age of 18) regardless of their background have the rights, information and space to be able to express their views and communicate effectively with other children and adults. This entails allowing children different ways of expressing themselves both offline and online. A special emphasis is put on supporting access for more vulnerable groups and ensuring diverse representation. Free from coercion and pressure, children are always participating completely voluntarily in all Eurochild activities.

To ensure no harm occurs in any situation to children and young people during their involvement in Eurochild activities, Eurochild has developed a Child Protection Policy. Being regularly reviewed, it ensures the highest standards of professional behaviour and personal practice when working with children. It includes a Code of Conduct to guide ethical and proper standards of behaviour of adults towards children, and also of children towards other children.

Eurochild Members working directly with children and young people are required to sign up to and comply with Eurochild Child Protection Policy, or demonstrate they have their own child protection policy which meets or exceeds the standards contained in that of Eurochild.

Eurochild will also ensure that any supplier or service provider that it uses which will have contact with children in connection with the services it shall deliver, agrees to abide by the terms of its Child Protection Policy, especially the Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Eurochild's Child Participation Strategy set out the network's commitment to embed child participation in its activities and decision-making. We recognise that children are the experts of their own experiences and, when being adequately supported are very capable of expressing their needs, concerns and ideas. The Child Participation Strategy outlines the structures and the activities in which children are involved and the goals we want to achieve. It also provides guidance regarding the selection of children, their training and preparation, recognition and certification, their involvement in communication activities, and how we monitor and evaluate our child participation work. It aims to make our work directly accountable to children and young people by facilitating safe, fun and meaningful participation throughout our activities.

## **Section 7 – Implementation of the Code**

This section gives a brief description of how the Code will be implemented by Eurochild and covers the setting up of an Ethics Committee, dealing with breaches of the Code and Speak-Up provisions.

## **7.1 Ethics Committee**

An Ethics Committee will be established by the General Assembly. Its role will be to oversee and review the implementation of the Code and to provide advice and guidance to the Secretary General and the Management Board about ethical issues as they may arise during the implementation of the activities of Eurochild. The Ethics Committee shall be comprised of up to a maximum of five (5) members to be appointed by the General Assembly for a period of three (3) years. Members of the Ethics Committee can be drawn from any category of membership and may include outside experts nominated by the Members or the Management Board. The precise definition of the tasks of the Ethics Committee and its operational procedures, shall be defined in a detailed document to be proposed by the Management Board and approved by the General Assembly. Such a document shall provide for an annual report of the Ethics Committee which shall summarise its activities throughout the year concerned.

The Ethics Committee is not a disciplinary body and will not be involved in deciding on penalties for breaches of the Code. However, it may be consulted by the Secretary General (for staff) or the President of the Management Board (for Members) for its advice on whether a particular case could amount to a breach of the Code.

## **7.2 Breaches of the Code**

Breaches of this Code may involve sanctions or penalties which shall be set out in the Statutes and Internal Rules (for Members) and in the Staff Handbook (for the Secretariat staff). For Members, serious breaches of the Code may involve exclusion of the Member concerned. Breaches of the Code shall be investigated in accordance with the procedures established in the Eurochild Statutes, Internal Rules and other governing rules.

## **7.3 Speak-Up / Whistleblowing Procedures**

Eurochild supports a Speak-Up culture and encourages Members as well as all staff, including interns and volunteers, to come forward to voice concerns, point out problems or just to suggest ideas for improvement. The first point of contact for staff (including interns and volunteers) will be their line manager, except when the conflict involves the line manager in which case they should contact the Secretary General, or a Management Board member, in case the Secretary General is concerned. For Members, the President of the Management Board will be the first point of contact, except when the conflict involves the President, in which case another member of the Management Board should be contacted.

We all have a responsibility to speak up if we see something happening in Eurochild which might be unethical, potentially harmful or which could damage the reputation of the organisation. Anybody raising a concern in good faith will not be subject to sanctions and the complaint will be treated as confidential by the person receiving the complaint - normally the persons indicated above.

Further information on this Code of Ethics may be obtained from the following persons:

For staff (including interns and Volunteers): Jana Hainsworth Secretary General  
([jana.hainsworth@eurochild.org](mailto:jana.hainsworth@eurochild.org) )

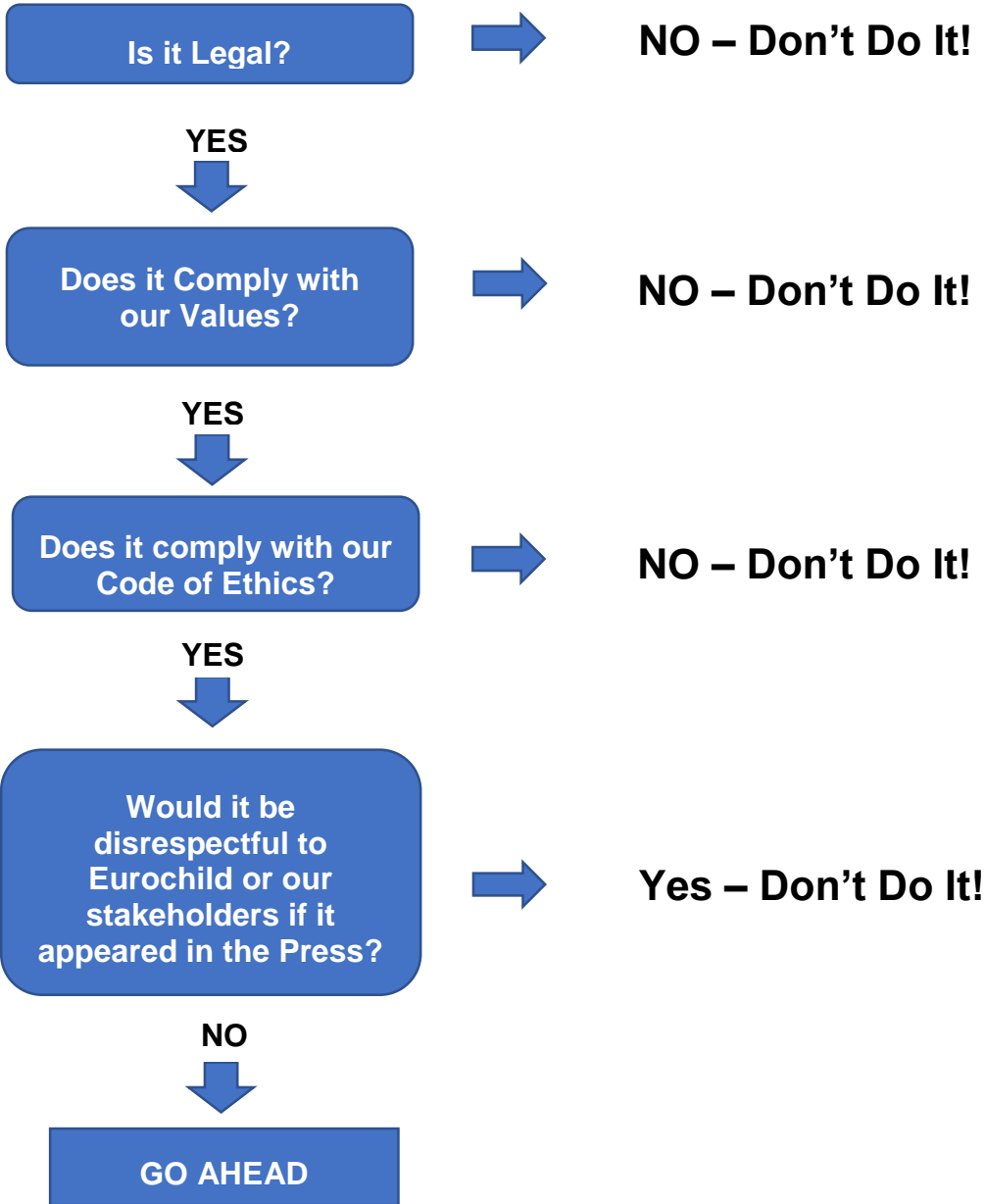
For the Membership: Fanni Mátyók Membership Officer  
([fanni.matyok@eurochild.org](mailto:fanni.matyok@eurochild.org) )

**Section 8 – Approvals and Reviews**

This Code of Ethics was approved by the Management Board on the 12 April 2021 and by the General Assembly on 17 June 2021.

This Code of Ethics will be subject to a comprehensive review every five (5) years counted from the date of its approval by the General Assembly. Outside of such a review, it may be amended by the General Assembly upon a proposal of the Management Board or the Ethics Committee contained in their annual report.

**ANNEX TO EUROCHILD CODE OF ETHICS - ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**



## Some Steps to take in Resolving Ethical Issues

Gather the facts – make sure you have all the information concerned.

Check what you are intending to do against the applicable law, values and code of ethics of the organization (see diagram above).

If the checks carried out in point 2 above do not give a clear result, use an approach such as TEF3:

Transparency: Do I mind others knowing what I have decided?

Effect: Who does my decision affect or hurt?

Fairness: Would my decision be considered fair by those affected?

Discuss your intending action with colleagues or your peers.

Take Action.

Evaluate the result.