

## CEOE<sup>1</sup> STATEMENT ON THE UK REFERENDUM:

### “10 reasons why the United Kingdom should remain as a member of the European Union”

The United Kingdom (UK) is the fifth world economy and the second in the European Union (EU). For Spain and its companies, it is a very important strategic partner, as it may be seen from the close economic ties between the two countries.

The UK is our fifth market (6.9% of Spanish exports head for the UK) and we have a very significant trade surplus (both goods and services). The UK is the main destination for Spanish investment abroad, with 14% of the whole. We may particularly emphasize our relations in the tourism sector, the UK being the main source of tourists to our country. The membership of both countries to the EU has been essential to achieve this.

Respecting the sovereign decision of the British citizens in the referendum to be held on June 23, the Spanish companies consider that there are 10 major reasons why the UK should continue in the EU:

1. The British economy will be more prosperous and its companies will be able to generate higher levels of wealth and employment, if the UK remains in the EU. The EU is an excellent platform that offers business facilities and opportunities to access to a market of over 500 million people as well as to constitute a block from which to compete globally. A platform especially beneficial for SMEs.
2. The UK provides the EU with a valuable vision and regulatory culture that promotes competitiveness, deregulation and free trade, favouring business activity. This has contributed positively to boost European economic growth and job creation over the past decades.
3. The various British Governments have made an important contribution for building up the European project. The UK stay in the EU and, therefore, its participation in the development of the single market will be crucial to the success of current initiatives of particular relevance for businesses, such as Digital Single Market, European Energy Union and Capital Markets Union.
4. The current European framework guarantees a set of social and health rights for the 1.2 million British residents in the rest of the EU, of which nearly 300,000 live in Spain.
5. The agreement reached at the European Council of 18-19 February is an opportunity to achieve a reformed EU: more competitive, more open and less bureaucratic, which looks after the interests of all its members.
6. The process for withdrawing from the EU will be very complex; it would require many years to be concluded and a long process of negotiations leading to a high uncertainty period with immediate consequences for investment, growth and employment.
7. Choosing to leave the EU would affect the internal cohesion, would encourage similar debates in other European countries and would entail a loss of credibility for the European integration project.
8. No EU member is able to compete, by itself, under the best conditions in an increasingly globalized economy. The most convenient dynamics is a greater integration.
9. An EU without the UK would be weakened and both of them would lose credibility in the international forums characterised by the prevalence of large poles of decision. In this way, the UK would be doubly affected, being outside the EU and having its main trading partner economically and politically weaker.
10. An eventual withdrawal of the UK would have a systemic effect for the whole EU. Therefore, its membership is key for citizens and businesses in the UK, Spain and the whole EU.

*13 April 2016*