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**European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]**

THE MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT HOLLANDE AND CHANCELLOR MERKEL MUST SET A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR EUROPE

15 May 2012

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) hopes that the meeting between the new president of the French Republic, François Hollande, and the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, will mark a new beginning for a Europe of growth and not longer of austerity.

The ETUC has for years criticised the automatic austerity imposed on certain European countries as a remedy for their deficits. The European trade union has always called for a stimulus plan through investments for growth so as to create quality jobs and social justice. Austerity is an economic and political failure, as proved in the recent elections in Europe. European leaders seem to have heard the message of the voters, because growth has become the main topic of European discussions. The ETUC calls for growth through investments and through the activation of certain financial levers (tax on financial transactions, Euro bonds, redefinition of the role of the European Central Bank and the European Investment Bank). Margins of manoeuvrability are possible.

The ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Ségol stated: *"We have noted a change of tone and content in the discourse of certain European leaders and we are delighted. It turns out that generalised austerity has reached a stalemate and growth is seen as a serious way forward, to the point of featuring in the discussions in several European countries. Growth has also cropped up in the European institutions debate, as an informal summit is to be held on this issue on May 23rd. I hope that the meeting of the heads of state of France and Germany held today will help to put Europe back on track for growth and mark a turning away from budgetary rigour alone. Even if the political discourse is moving in a direction we consider favourable, we must stress that the economic situation remains worrisome with unacceptable unemployment levels. We are seriously concerned about the deteriorating situation in Greece but also in Spain. An upturn for growth, yes – but not just any growth. We will not*

accept growth based on structural reforms – a euphemism for deregulation. We have always had another ambition for Europe and for European workers.”

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 83 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 12 industry-based federations.

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