

Get them young: Merkel plans EU education

Pupils should be given a “European Union education” in the classroom to tackle “ignorance” and growing public Euroscepticism, according to an election manifesto signed by Angela Merkel and eight other leaders.

The German chancellor and the leaders of Ireland, Poland, Spain, Hungary, Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Latvia were in Dublin to launch a pro-EU, centre-Right manifesto for the European elections in May. The European People’s Party (EPP), a pan-EU political grouping, which David Cameron’s Conservatives left in 2009, will campaign around a 40-page, five-year programme that will aim to transform the EU into “a genuine political union”.

The programme calls for the introduction of “EU education in schools across Europe in order to prepare the next generation for future challenges and to nurture a European approach”.

“Europe has been in crisis for more than five years. Many people, especially the young, do not foresee a positive future. Euroscepticism is growing,” the manifesto said. “United, we can make sure that young people look at the future with optimism, hope and confidence.” Chancellor Merkel was a “strong supporter” of the proposal, said officials, because she believed lessons about the EU would “contribute to a common European identity and knowledge about history”.

The call for a federal Europe and European school lessons will put the Prime Minister at odds with Mrs Merkel, who is regarded as his key ally, and further isolate Britain at a time when other EU countries are seeking closer integration. In contrast to Germany and the bloc of EPP countries wanting

“political union”, Mr Cameron is seeking to repatriate powers from Brussels and last year the Government cut references to the EU from the National Curriculum because the lessons were seen as biased. Syed Kamall, the leader of Britain’s Conservative MEPs, said the proposal showed that the Prime Minister had been right to pull the Tories out of the EPP, to set up their own grouping, while he was leader of the opposition five years ago.

“Schools should be quipping students with the skills and knowledge they will need to create a globally competitive Europe fit for the 21st century – not navel-gazing over a 1950s vision of what Europe means,” he said. Jean-Claude Juncker, the former prime minister of Luxembourg, was chosen by the EPP to be its leading candidate during the EU elections and as contender to be the next president of the European Commission in October. Mr Juncker, is a passionate supporter of the idea of a “United States of Europe” and chaired meetings of the eurozone at the height the EU single currency’s debt crisis until he resigned as Luxembourg’s leader amid a scandal over illegal phone tapping.

“The knowledge of Europe has to be deepened in school programmes,” he said. “There is ignorance about the basics and this was evident during the so-called euro crisis.” In 2011, Mr Juncker courted controversy when he was caught on tape saying that he “had to lie” in his role as chairman of the eurozone and that important economic decisions could only be taken in “dark secret rooms”. “I’m ready to be insulted as being insufficiently democratic, but I want to be serious,” he said on a video recorded by the EUobserver website.

“When it becomes serious, you have to lie.” Nigel Farage, the leader of the UK Independence Party accused the alliance of European leaders of wanting “to squeeze children into a one-size-fits-all scheme of thought”.

Post note: All official ‘histories’ of Europe now refer to the

Second World War as “The European Civil War”.— Rev Philip Foster