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WRITTEN QUESTION E-2360/95
by Peter Crampton (PSE)
to the Commission

Subject: Maastricht Treaty - voting rights

The Maastricht Treaty provides for the right to stand and vote at European and local elections, provided that the citizen enjoys electoral rights in his/her own country.

United Kingdom law withdraws the right to vote from citizens of the UK who have been resident outside the UK for more than 20 years and thus do not enjoy voting rights in their country of origin.

What steps can the Commission take to ensure that disenfranchised Britons who are long-term residents of other EU countries are enabled to participate in European and local elections in their country of residence?

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Answer given by Mr Monti
on behalf of the Commission
(14 September 1995)

Article 8b of the EC Treaty provides for every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections and at elections for the European Parliament in the Member State in which he resides. The exercise of these rights was however subject to the detailed arrangements to be adopted by the Council.

In fulfilment of this obligation the Council adopted on 6 December 1993 Directive 93/109/EC¹ laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament, and on 9 December 1994 Directive 94/80/EC² laying down the detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections.

Subject to these provisions, United Kingdom citizens are able to vote in European Parliament elections and municipal elections in their Member State of residence under the same conditions as nationals of that Member State. For the 1994 European Parliament elections several thousand Britons opted to vote in their Member State of residence.

As the application of Article 8b does not presuppose complete harmonisation of Member States' electoral systems, the requirements that each Member State imposes on its citizens in order to allow them to vote in its own territory are a matter of national competence.

¹ OJ L 329, 30.12.1993

² OJ L 368, 31.12.1994