Telecommunications services, use of cable television networks

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The rapporteur supported the abolition of the restrictions on the use of cable television networks for the provision of telecommunications services other than voice telephony. Me HERMAN (EPP, B) could accept the legal basis chosen by the Commission (Article 90(3)), in spite of the PSE's opposition. The rapporteur felt that if cable TV operators were allowed to compete with telecommunications operators there should be an element of reciprocity. He also felt that it was essential to make provision for transitional periods and recommended the liberalisation of audiovisual broadcasts via telephone lines by 2000. Mr BANGEMANN began by highlighting the differences between the Member States: on the one hand, France and Germany, which were not sufficiently liberalised, risked having to pay a great deal for their delay; on the other hand, Spain and Luxembourg would be ready by 1 January 1998. As far as the amendments were concerned, the Commissioner would incorporate those on voice telephony in the Directive on that subject. He agreed with Amendments Nos 1 and 2 but opposed the equalisation of charges among the various categories of service and geographical areas; he preferred charges to be based on the costs. He also supported the principle of the separation of accounts. As regards the universal service, it was vital to reconcile liberalisation or deregulation with harmonisation.