Telecommunications services, use of cable television networks

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The European Parliament adopted the report by Mr Fernand HERMAN (PPE, B) on the Commission's draft directive on the abolition of the restrictions on the use of cable television networks for the provision of telecommunications services. The purpose of the current restrictions imposed by the Member States on the use of cable television networks for the provision of services other than the distribution of television programmes is to preserve the telecommunications bodies' monopoly over the provision of infrastructure. The draft directive makes provision for this monopoly to be abolished in 1996 for the benefit of cable operators, which will be able to provide all services other than voice telephony. It is planned to abolish the monopoly on infrastructures and voice telephony on 1 January 1998. The main purpose of this early, selective liberalization is to allow for experimental multimedia and interactive television services. Mr HERMAN's report approved this draft directive and also proposed that the reciprocal liberalization of audiovisual broadcasts via telephone lines should not be authorized until 2000, rather than in 1998, as initially planned.