

# Leipzig commemorates the Peaceful Revolution with its "Festival of Lights"

After prayers for peace in four Leipzig churches on 9 October 1989, some 70,000 people gathered in the city centre carrying candles in order to demonstrate for their human rights and more freedom in the GDR, in spite of the threat that police would be ordered to open fire on them. Thousands of police and soldiers were in position, ready to break up the demonstration by force, but everything proceeded peacefully. As a result these events, which came to be described as the Peaceful Revolution, became a major milestone on the way to the fall of the Berlin Wall, to German reunification and to a unified Europe.

## **Leipzig, City of the Peaceful Revolution**

Leipzig has for many years cultivated a culture of active remembrance of the autumn of '89. Among the most important events on the key date of 9 October are the traditional prayer for peace and the address on democracy. The element of light has, since 2007, continued to play a part – then and also in the following year the LTM GmbH held a “Night of Candles”.

In 2009 for the first time a Festival of Lights commemorated the Peaceful Revolution. On that occasion around 150,000 Leipzig citizens and visitors took to the Augustusplatz and the inner city Ring in remembrance of the events that took place 20 years ago. After the successful premiere of the festival in 2009, and a moving Festival of Lights in 2010 commemorating “20 Years of German Unity” and including an organ concert in Berlin, 2011 followed with the creation of a bridge to Poland. Strategically, the festival continues up until 2014 with the defined themes of Hungary (2012), the Czech Republic (2013) and the 25th anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution (2014). The continuation of artistic and citizen-based projects at historical locations within a European context is foreseen.

