



CANTON DU VALAIS
KANTON WALLIS

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ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE
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VILLE DE SION

PRESS RELEASE

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Launching phase two of EPFL's Valais expansion The second amendment to the agreement of 19 December 2012 has been signed

(IVS).- The Canton of Valais, the City of Sion and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) held their annual strategy committee meeting on Wednesday, 30 August. Building on the achievements of the EPFL Valais Wallis campus over the past three years, the parties have officially launched the second phase of EPFL's Valais expansion. At the committee meeting, the Canton of Valais and EPFL signed the second amendment to the 19 December 2012 agreement on the creation of the EPFL Valais Wallis campus, thereby formalizing the agreement in principle reached in December 2016. A new EPFL building that will host a research center on alpine and extreme environments will be constructed on the Energypolis campus in Sion. The rehabilitation and health cluster and the green chemistry and energies-of-the-future hub will also be strengthened.

EPFL and the Canton of Valais formalized the launch of the second phase of EPFL's expansion in Valais, as set out in the December 2016 agreement in principle, by signing a second amendment to the agreement of 19 December 2012. The amendment was signed at the 2017 strategy committee meeting attended by the entire Valais Council of State, EPFL's president and senior management, and the mayor of the City of Sion.

Under the amendment, EPFL will provide a new building. The building will house five or six new chairs specializing in the science and technology of alpine and extreme environments, in fields ranging from biology to physical processes. It will also be home to the Swiss Polar Institute (SPI), which was co-founded at the end of December 2015 by EPFL and Editions Paulsen together with the Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich) and the University of Bern, and with the official support of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). This institute aims to bring together research initiatives in the field of extreme environments by coordinating international projects and expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic.

EPFL's increased presence in Valais will build on the budding dynamic there and further develop EPFL's critical mass in that canton, in a sign of the school's growing prominence both in Switzerland and abroad. Around 16 or 17 chairs will be based in Sion, together with some 350 researchers and staff. The nine chairs and three research groups already there have led to the creation of 191 high value-added jobs in the past three years thanks to the combined efforts of the Canton of Valais, the City of Sion and EPFL. The EPFL Valais Wallis campus, which opened in March 2015, has attracted 52 million Swiss francs in additional competitive third-party funding from national and international sources, both public and private. Two startups have come out of the campus laboratories run by Professors Hubert Girault



and Andreas Züttel in conjunction with the Ark Foundation, which promotes economic development in Valais canton. And two new synthetic materials for the energy industry (for eliminating CO₂ and producing hydrogen), called Sion 1 and Sion 2, were developed in Professor Berend Smit's Laboratory of Molecular Simulation and are now patent pending.

This second phase will not require any change in the financing commitments already made by the Canton of Valais in the 19 December 2012 agreement and consequently by the City of Sion. It will be funded by the monies initially earmarked for moving the large-scale hydropower research activities from Lausanne to Sion. EPFL will pay for up to the equivalent of ten research chairs instead of the four initially planned in 2012.

On the academic side of the second phase of EPFL's expansion in Valais, the green chemistry and energies-of-the-future initiative will be continued – with the addition of two demonstrators and the positioning of this research hub in the Switzerland Innovation Park Network West EPFL – while another initiative, on the science and technology of extreme environments, will be launched. EPFL Valais Wallis's rehabilitation and health cluster will be strengthened through research work and the development of a training course for medical staff on new neurotechnologies in conjunction with the SuvaCare rehabilitation clinic in Sion, Valais Hospital and the Health Sciences faculty of the University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland (HES-SO Valais). This cluster will also develop stroke recovery activities at the Valais Hospital health center, in collaboration with EPFL's Center for Neuroprosthetics and Campus Biotech in Geneva.

The Energypolis campus continues to expand on schedule, with the new building for the School of Engineering of HES-SO Valais being constructed at the Sion train station beside the EPFL Valais Wallis campus. This project is a priority for Valais and a unique opportunity to forge a partnership between EPFL, HES-SO Valais and local companies while creating a complete value chain. This project will help Valais position itself in the area of innovation at the international level.

Contact people

- Canton of Valais:
Christophe Darbellay, President of the Council of State's permanent delegation to EPFL and the Energypolis campus, 027 606 40 00
- EPFL: Marc-André Berclaz, Operational Director of EPFL Valais Wallis, 079 417 98 90
- The City of Sion: Philippe Varone, mayor of Sion, 027 324 11 02