



SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE

Businesses choosing to locate in Valais benefit each and every day from the natural environment and general conditions that are conducive to both creativity and productivity. The canton enjoys political stability, has attractive operating costs, a relaxed real estate market and favourable energy prices.



Sound governance

Image
Government-building of the Canton of Valais (Sion)
© Serge Ballestraz

POLITICAL STABILITY: FERTILE GROUND FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2015, Valais celebrated the 200th anniversary of its joining the Swiss Confederation. Celebrations and events commemorating these 200 years of shared history took place throughout the year.

The government of Valais, which is elected by popular vote, consists of five members, who make up the Cantonal Council. Each is responsible for heading up a different department. Members serve a four-year term of office and the position of President rotates among them on a yearly basis. Legislative power rests with the Cantonal Parliament, which comprises 130 members. The people of Valais are regularly called upon to take part in referendums on strategic issues at cantonal or federal level. The results of these votes frequently bear testimony to the Swiss electorate's propensity for ensuring that the common interest prevails. For example, in 2012, 70% of the electorate in Valais voted to reject an initiative proposing an increase in the annual leave entitlement (from four weeks to six), and in 2009, 60% voted in favour of a temporary rise in VAT to help finance the federal disability insurance scheme. Valais's 134 communes enjoy a large degree of autonomy, for example, when it comes to tax rates.

The stability of political life, an efficient administration and the accessibility of the political authorities guarantee a high level of reliability and economic pragmatism.

SOCIAL COHESION

Valais is Switzerland's third largest canton in terms of size; the natural elements – mountains, lakes, glaciers, forests – take up a large part of the territory, adding to its beauty. The permanent population currently numbers 336,000 inhabitants and is steadily growing. Most live in the Rhone valley and adjoining hillsides. The canton's capital, Sion, has 33,500 inhabitants. The other main towns are Brig, Visp, Sierre, Martigny and Monthey.

A comfortable standard of living, strong traditions and values, a deeply ingrained sense of community and the successful integration of foreigners (in 2015, they made up 23% of the population, most of them from European countries) are the factors that bind society together in Valais.

What is more, Valais has one of the lowest crime rates of all the large Swiss cantons. This figure has been falling since 2012, and in 2014 it was the lowest in the French-speaking part of Switzerland for the fourth consecutive year. A particular focus is placed on prevention and building trust between the population and the law enforcement agencies.



Favourable employment and real estate markets

Image
Employees in an administrative building
(Martigny)
© Etat du Valais Francois Perraudin

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES: A LASTING PARTNERSHIP

As in the rest of Switzerland, unemployment in the canton of Valais is low, standing at around 4%. The unemployment rate for young people is only slightly higher than the general rate. This demonstrates in exemplary fashion the advantages of the Swiss education system, which allows students to choose between a vocational apprenticeship and tertiary education (universities, universities of applied sciences, institutes of technology). This dual-track system creates a sizeable pool of skilled labour at every level from core business activities to the most specialised of profiles.

A growing number of young people in Valais (7,700 in 2014 compared with 4,400 in 2000) now attend Swiss higher education institutions in order to gain advanced qualifications. The dynamic nature of the research and training organisations in Valais helps to sustain the demand for labour through partnerships and projects undertaken jointly with businesses. The HES-SO, for example, which is particularly keen to address the needs of industry, launched a degree course in Energy and Environmental Technology in 2013 to meet the demand for increasingly sophisticated expertise and skills within these sectors.

In addition to being highly qualified, the workforce in Valais has superior language skills thanks to the fact that the canton is bilingual in French and German and home to numerous foreign communities.

Employers and trade unions engage in an active social partnership: conflicts are settled around the negotiating table and strikes are extremely rare (the last major strike dates back to 1954). In addition, thanks to the outstanding quality of life, Valais attracts a great deal of talent from the rest of Switzerland and abroad, while remaining competitive on salaries.

To sum up, business owners will find a skilled, multilingual, reliable and committed workforce in Valais along with guarantees of clear, stable and effective employment legislation.

A RELAXED REAL ESTATE MARKET

A number of properties are available throughout the canton to companies who choose to set up and develop their activities in Valais. Furthermore, the prices are advantageous and it is customary to sign a leasehold agreement for the sites.

There are no restrictions on foreigners buying real estate that is to be used exclusively for economic activities. Compared with the rest of Switzerland, the modest residential vacancy rates (2.04) and advantageous cost of construction make finding somewhere for the family to live relatively easy.



Attractive tax rates

Image
Services and consulting (Sion)
© Etat du Valais Jean-Yves Glassey

MODERATE TAX RATES FOR COMPANIES AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

In Switzerland, taxes are set and collected by the federal government, the cantons and the communes. This tax competition at national level makes a decisive contribution to keeping taxes low, such that corporate taxation and the taxation of highly skilled labour are generally very favourable in Switzerland. At the federal level, the corporate tax rate is just 8.5%. On top of that, corporate income taxes are levied by the canton and the commune.

VAT was introduced in Switzerland in 1995. The regime adopted is similar to that in the majority of European Union countries. The normal rate is fixed at 8.0%, making it one of the lowest in Europe. A reduced rate of 2.5% applies to different categories of goods and services.

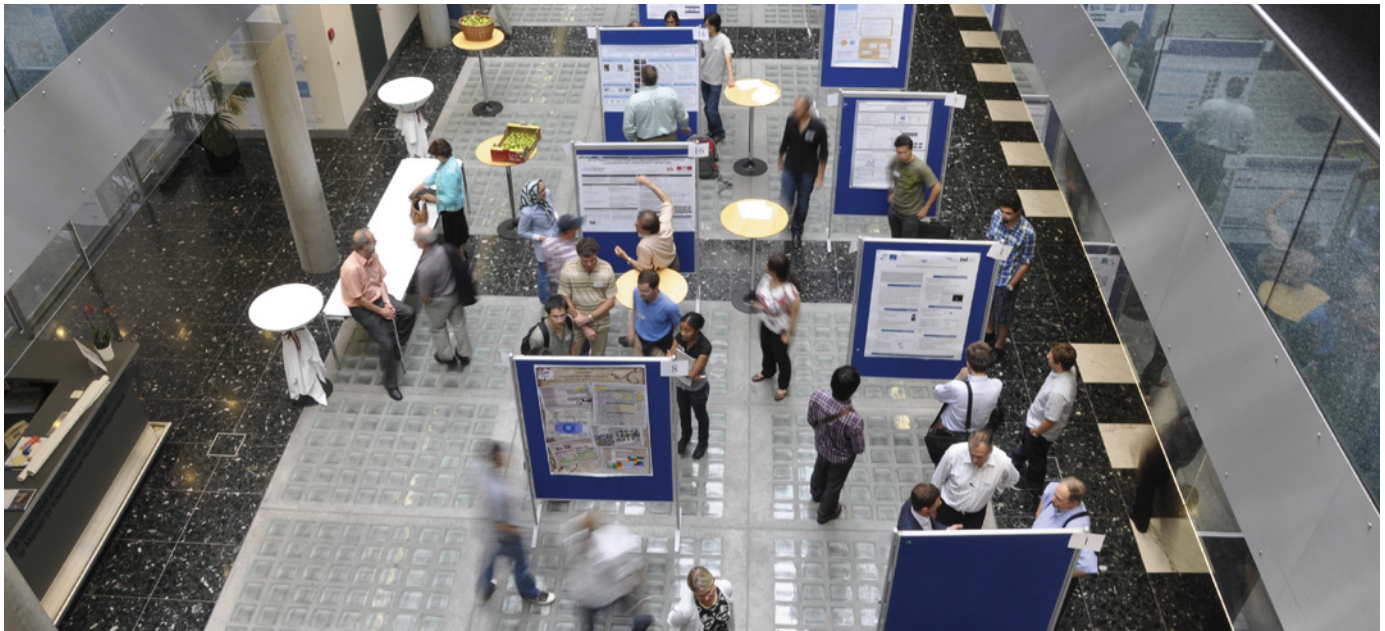
SUPPORT MEASURES AND TAX INCENTIVES

When a company with an investment project moves to Valais, it can, under certain conditions (creation of jobs in the canton, innovation, investment, no local market competition), take advantage of tax exemptions at the cantonal and communal level. In certain municipalities, it may be exempted from the direct federal tax.

Under certain conditions, businesses choosing to set up in Valais can also claim financial assistance (help with equity financing, sureties, subsidies).

NO INHERITANCE TAX

The Canton of Valais does not impose any tax on inheritances or on gifts to spouses who are not legally separated and heirs in the direct line. Moreover, the tax rates for relatives in the collateral line are very favourable.



Company formation made easy

Image
Idiap (Martigny)
© Etat du Valais idiap

THE FAST AND EASY WAY TO SET UP A BUSINESS

Setting up a business is fast and easy for both companies and private individuals. In the majority of cases, the legal formalities take only two to four weeks to complete and generally cost no more than CHF 5,000. The only condition that must be satisfied: the authorised signatory must reside in Switzerland. It should also be remembered that the ease of access to the decision-making authorities and a fluid administration greatly facilitate the administrative steps involved for companies.

ONE STOP SHOP

Business Valais groups together all the local economic development actors under one roof. Acting as a single point-of-contact, it is able to provide a fast and efficient response to a variety of requests from those looking to develop a project.

Business Valais informs interested foreign entrepreneurs about the general conditions in the canton, its advantages as a business location and the procedure to be followed for setting up a company or making an investment. Once the decision to locate in Valais has been taken, Business Valais provides free support in coordinating the project through its case managers, who advise business owners on every step that needs to be taken in realising their idea. In addition, Business Valais can provide a wide range of professional and tailored services thanks to the expertise of its partners, which covers mentoring and coaching, obtaining financing, technology transfer, training and networking. The many services offered by Business Valais include:

- Financial support for companies
- Support innovation
- Support for international expansion
- Investments and settlements facilitation
- Promote Valais as a business location
- Events and professional networking