

PRESS RELEASE

The gravity-defying class photo in Valais Switzerland

This year, the HES-SO Valais-Wallis, a Swiss university of applied sciences, reached new heights when some of its students, supervised by professional mountain guides, went to the top of the Pierre Avoi mountain for the highest class photo in Switzerland. This unusual picture shows them suspended at right-angles to the rock face. At the university, as in the photo, professional support and an amazing setting create a unique experience for students.

A bold, creative approach

This unusual feat is a follow-up to the videos released by the HES-SO Valais-Wallis in 2017, which featured two established sportsmen, freeride skier Laurent de Martin and mountain biker Ramon Hunziker. These videos were distributed on social networks, and received over 1.4 million views. This latest film required four cameramen, two of whom were drone pilots. The photo itself has been printed on a giant banner which will be displayed at the university's premises in Sierre.

Making its students into stars

This year, the HES-SO Valais-Wallis wanted its students to have the starring role. They were selected two weeks beforehand via an audition process that included a test of their head for heights. This involved abseiling down the wall of the university's building in Sierre. They didn't know what to expect until the last minute, it was only on the day of filming itself that they found out about the idea for the photo and what they would have to do.

Meticulous organisation

The students met at Le Châble, and in a few minutes they were at the top of the Pierre Avoi, which is 2400 metres high. The operation was meticulously organised by professional mountain guides from Valais, under whose supervision the students soon found themselves suspended along the mountain face at 90° to the summit, so that the highest class photo in Switzerland could be taken. After spending almost an hour at the end of a rope, the students were very glad to ski back down to Verbier.

A (much) higher education

Studying at a higher education institution helps young people achieve peak performance in their chosen career. The Valais canton, with 41 mountains that are over 4000 metres high, is the ideal place for those who are aiming for the top. The university's publicity campaign, entitled "A very very high school", which has been created and orchestrated by Bern-based communications agency franz & rené, is based on the idea of studying in the heart of the mountains and benefiting fully from this environment. The campaign also illustrates the dynamism of the HES-SO Valais-Wallis, whose 4 schools (Engineering, Health Sciences, Management and Tourism, Social Work) offer 9 degree programmes and educate more than 2300 students. The youthful, innovative approach taken to publicity is also evident in the university's 7 research institutes.

Video: <https://www.facebook.com/hessovalais/videos/1581951161912489/>

Photos: <https://we.tl/K8sMRgjZbR>