12.2 R&D NETWORKS

Research & development at voestalpine is decentralized and located close to both the respective production facilities and the market. This global network of over 70 sites is controlled by the Research Board and through Research Coordination.

A variety of formats are used to exchange knowledge: Information is exchanged between the R&D managers in the Research Committee, Group projects link the knowledge available in several divisions, R&D expert clusters offer platforms for researchers to exchange ideas on a specific topic, and the R&D Day—an annual Group-internal conference—supports knowledge transfer, as well as providing the opportunity for people to meet and network. This Group-wide network is supplemented by cooperation with outside partners. This means that knowledge and resources supplied by scientific partners can be used for necessary application-oriented research.

The global cooperation partners include around 100 university institutes, research institutes, and competence centers. Cooperation is also maintained with customers in order to develop products that meet their needs. Our strategy lies in striving for long-term cooperation based on mutual trust.

12.3 R&D AIMS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The continual development of new products and production processes is indispensable for voestalpine as it aims to stand out from the global competition and maintain its role as a technology leader. Innovation driven by R&D thus ensures the company's success in the long term. The principle of sustainability is a key decision-making criterion for actions within the company.

voestalpine's sustainability strategy covers the three pillars of the economy, environment, and society. Research & development establishes the link between climate and environmental protection and the development of sustainable products and services, and is therefore an important component in the cross-functions "Sustainable processes" and "Sustainable business activities" (see the chapter "Sustainability strategy").

Steel will continue to play a major role in the future and form the basis for sustainable solutions in infrastructure, the energy industry, and mobility. One focus of R&D activities is therefore further developments in steel production. Life cycle assessments, digitalization, increased efficiency, and expanded material and energy cycles help to achieve the goals of resource conservation and the circular economy.