

KS2 Geography. A location in Europe

Rotterdam, Netherlands

MARTINA: (IN ENGLISH) My name is Martina. I'm 11 years old, and I live near the port of Rotterdam.

MARTINA (TRANSLATED): The port of Rotterdam is the biggest and busiest port in the whole of Europe, and it is also the fourth largest port in the world. It's the gateway to Europe. Rotterdam is often called the Europort.

Rotterdam is right on the North Sea, and at the mouth of two important rivers, the River Rhine and the River Meuse. We always have wind here, so we use the wind for energy. The wind energy is used for extra electricity.

MARTINA (IN ENGLISH): Look, this is a really big container ship!

MARTINA (TRANSLATED): I'm very connected to the port, because both my grandfathers worked as sea captains. Both my parents work in the shipping industry. My mother organises shipments to go all over the world, especially to Norway and Iceland. The shipments of coal and quartz are used for products like silicone. This is used for touch screens, make-up and solar panels.

This is EMO, the European dry bulk terminal. It's the largest in Europe. Dry bulk means things like iron ore or coal.

Over here, we have coal from different countries, like Africa, Colombia, Indonesia. This is the area where they unload it. The grab can hold 80 tonnes. That's about 13 elephants or 40 cars!

The coal is used for energy in steel factories and power plants. It's stored here and then exported to other countries all over Europe. The black heaps are coal, and the brown heaps are iron ore. Many products get taken down the Rhine by boat. Lots of products also go with really long trains. Everything is going somewhere.

My father works as a shipping agent. He makes sure all the ships have everything they need when they come into harbour. My dad looks after about 2,000 ships. Sometimes my dad books tug boats for the really big ships. Tug boats pull or push the ships into the port. They are very strong and powerful.

MARTINA (TRANSLATED): The big ships can carry over 14,000 containers. The containers have everything in them: food, clothes, shoes, TVs, games - anything you can think of!

MARTINA (IN ENGLISH): This is ECT, the European Container Terminal. Look! There are no drivers!

MARTINA (TRANSLATED): This is where the containers are offloaded from the ships. Its nickname is the ghost terminal, because all of the machines work by themselves. Even when it's pitch dark. The idea was invented here.

Sometimes it's fun to watch the ships with my best friend, Manon. She's nice and she helps you out if you need help. And, well, she's just a really good friend. We chill out and watch the ships coming in. It will overtake the other in no time. It goes 'Wheeee!' It goes really fast.

My dad also books pilots and pilot boats to guide the ships into the port.

They know the port so well that the foreign sea captains don't have to worry about how to find their way in.

The pilots are sea captains who have special training to be Rotterdam port pilots. They guide about 65,000 ships a year. They are fit and healthy because they have to climb up the side of the ships. I think it's scary and exciting at the same time, because when it's dark and you can't see anything, you still have to climb up the side of a really big ship. They also have to do this in thick fog or in rough seas.

Every ship is going somewhere in the world, fetching or delivering.

Sometimes my dad books a helicopter to bring the pilots to the ship. Helicopters are needed for lots of different reasons, like, for example, if the weather is bad, or if the ship is really big or far out.

Sometimes my dad hires a helicopter when there's an accident. Luckily, that's not very often. He can't keep the ships waiting, so the pilots need to get them in quickly.

Huge ports are pretty exciting places!