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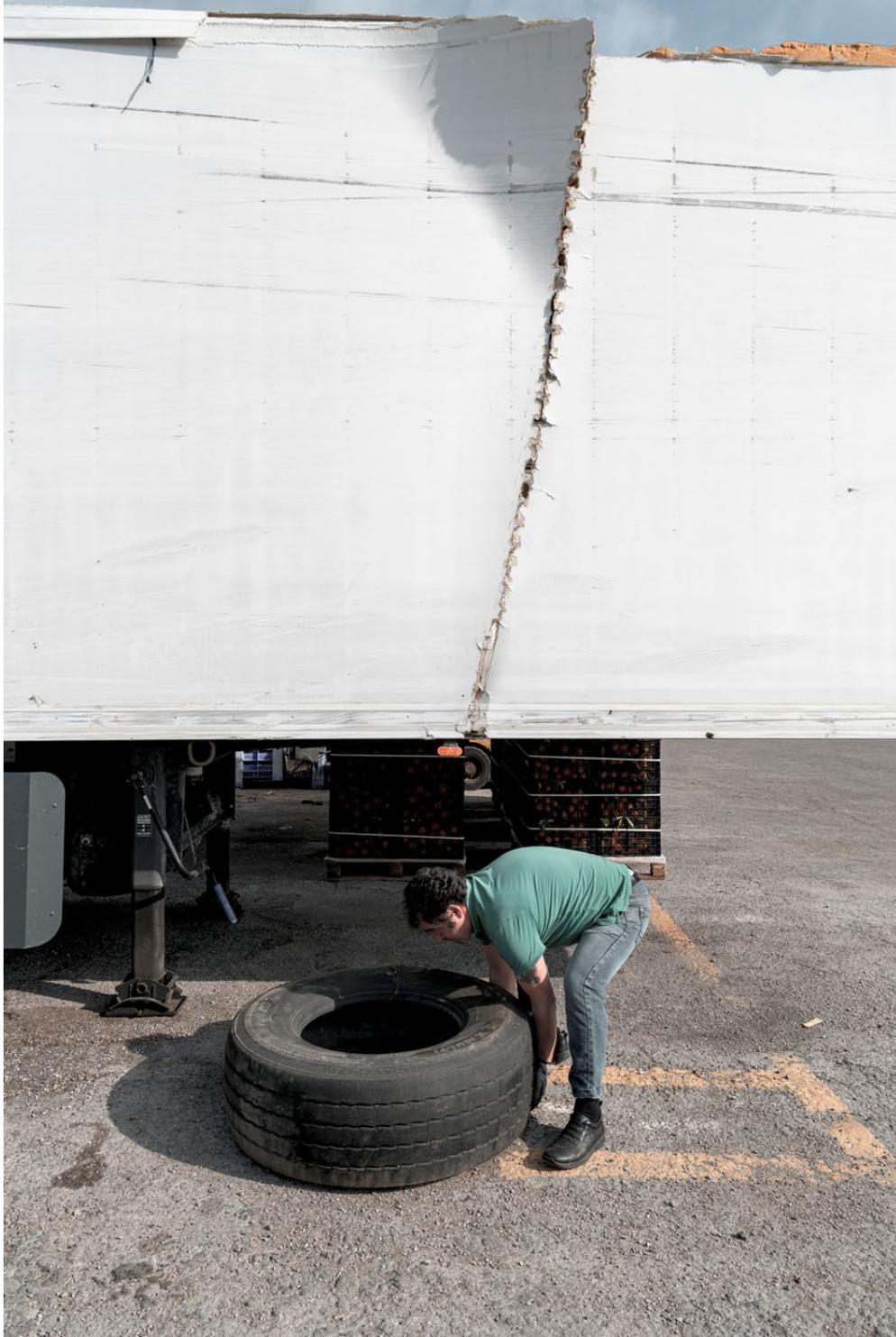


When an articulated lorry becomes a home from home

Whether we like it or not, lorries are a mainstay of our economy. In Italy they transport 91 per cent of freight, in Spain 97% and in Germany 70%. In Europe as a whole road haulage is still preferred to air, sea or rail because of the greater flexibility it offers and, in some cases, the lower costs.

However, in spite of the good prospects the sector offers, young people are no longer attracted to the profession. In Italy, for example, almost half of drivers are aged over 50, while those younger than 40 make up just 18% of the total, although among these, the number of women is rising. The causes are probably the increasingly intense and tiring pace of the job, a profession that involves spending time away from home, sometimes for weeks on end.

One of the aspects most associated with the job of a lorry driver is solitude. For drivers the cabs of their lorries can become a home from home, where meals are eaten hastily and where they sleep under their soft lighting. Days can be almost identical, while the drivers rack up an eye-watering number of kilometres. Like the 5462 km in eight days travelled by the protagonist of this story Giovanni Fusco.



Left: Giovanni Fusco changes a tyre. Each tyre weighs around 60 to 80 kg. Born in 1970 and a father of three, Giovanni had stopped working as a lorry driver to spend more time with his family but returned to the profession because of the pandemic when he felt the need to have a secure job. | Right: The lorry refuels at a service station.



A rest stop in France. Lorry drivers choose the rest stops that best suit their requirements. Some are more secure than others. Incidents of fuel theft during the night, from the truck's tanks or from the tanks of the trailer's cooling systems, are not uncommon. The average fuel consumption is 30-40 litres per 100 km, and is one of the costs that have the greatest impact on the final price of the transport cost, which fluctuates according to oil price.



Left: A lorry park. Drivers are often extremely diligent when it comes to taking care of their vehicles. | Right: Giovanni Fusco inserts the driver card into the digital tachometer. Heavy vehicles are obliged to use the chronotachograph that records the speed, times and journeys of the heavy vehicle as well as the hours of rest taken by the driver. Each driver is permitted to drive for a maximum of 9 hours a day and no more than 56 hours a week.



Left: Lorries are loaded and unloaded at distribution centres at every hour of the day or night. | Right: During the Covid-19 pandemic there was an increase in traffic of refrigerated transport, mainly carrying pharmaceutical products.



A parking area in Spain. Spain has the most extensive motorway network in Europe, spanning 15,444 km. Road freight, due to the Covid-19 pandemic saw a general decline, except for those companies transporting pharmaceutical or agricultural products.



Left: An ability to adapt, a willingness to make sacrifices and an inclination towards solitude are all qualities required to be a lorry driver. | Right: During a 9-hour driving shift the lorry driver is required to stop driving every 4 and a half hours for 45 minutes. During these breaks, which drivers call "the 45s", a gas cooker with an improvised windbreak is all that's required.



The lorry can become like a home from home. In and around the lorry, drivers perform their ablutions, eat their meals and sleep beneath the soft lighting of the cab.



Left: France has rest areas that are well equipped with water taps and sinks. Lorry drivers organize their short stops to wash their clothes. One of the techniques used is to soak washing in buckets that are then placed at the lower parts of the lorry so that the vibrations of the journey help the soap to clean the fabric. | Right: Some parking areas are equipped with showers. To use them drivers have to leave their keys at the desk.





Left: After driving, the most important skills for a lorry driver are being able to organize journeys by calculating the breaks, journey times and stops at the service stations with the lowest fuel prices. | Right: Giovanni Fusco during a break.



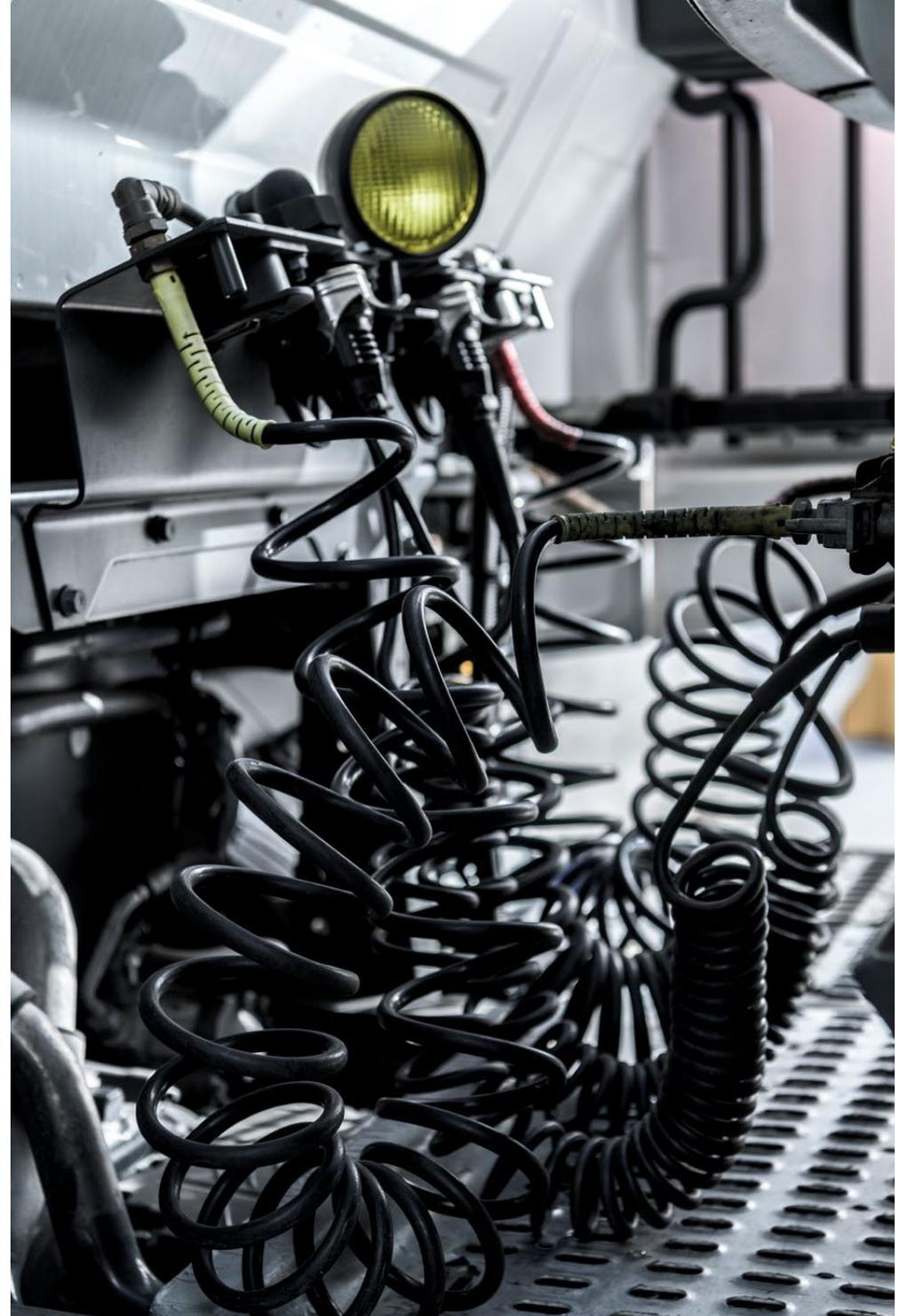
Lorries often depart before dawn in order to avoid motorway traffic near big cities.



Left: Shaving is an important ritual for drivers and they do this with water warmed on the gas cooker either in the morning or during the second 45-minute break. | Right: Italian lorry drivers are highly organised when it comes to preparing lunch and dinner. They stop to buy French baguettes or Spanish "barrita de pan" and then, during the "45-minute break", they cook, have a coffee and wash the dishes. Today, because of Covid-19 there are fewer and fewer opportunities to spend time together.



Spain. In Valencia, Alicante and Murcia there are orange groves as far as the eye can see. Travelling at night you can't see them but you can smell their perfume. Italy, in spite of being the second largest producer of oranges, imports tonnes of them from Spain because they are cheaper, also thanks to the fact that in Spain it's possible to use insecticides that are banned in Italy.



Left: Valladolid, Spain. Lorry driver Alfredo Fernández has come to see a colleague in a rest area 40 km from his home to bring him a hot meal and some Spanish products. There is a network of lorry driver friends who know each other and help each other out, but all say that friendship and respect in the profession used to be more widespread. | Right: Now and again, during the short breaks, the drivers check the lines connecting the cab to the trailer. During manoeuvres the lines can get tangled up and this can stop them from working.



The parking area at a large fruit and vegetable distribution company in Latina, Italy. Pallets are a standard system for storage that, during the twentieth century, replaced barrels and wooden crates, also thanks to the introduction of machinery like forklifts and pallet transporters for moving them around.



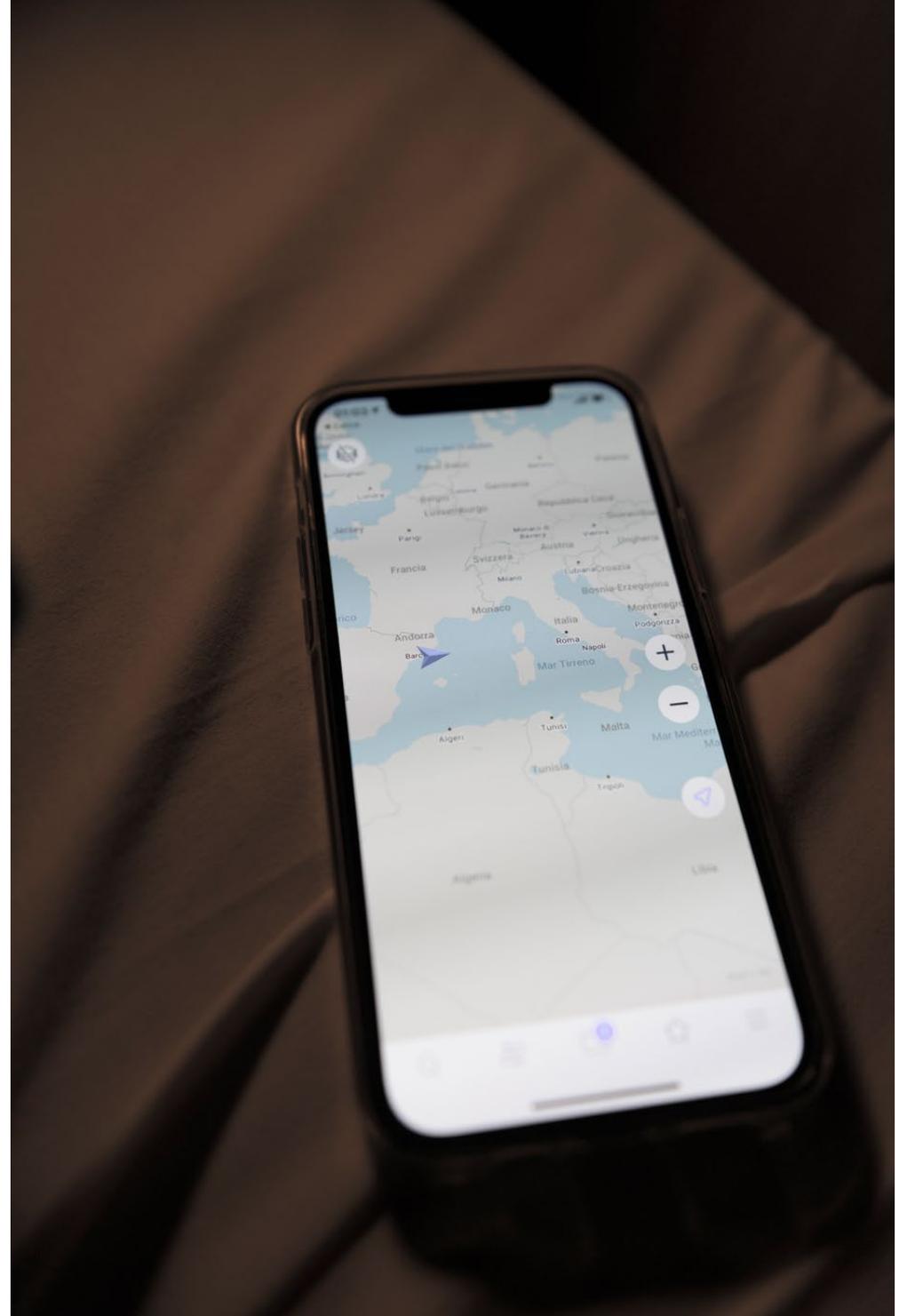
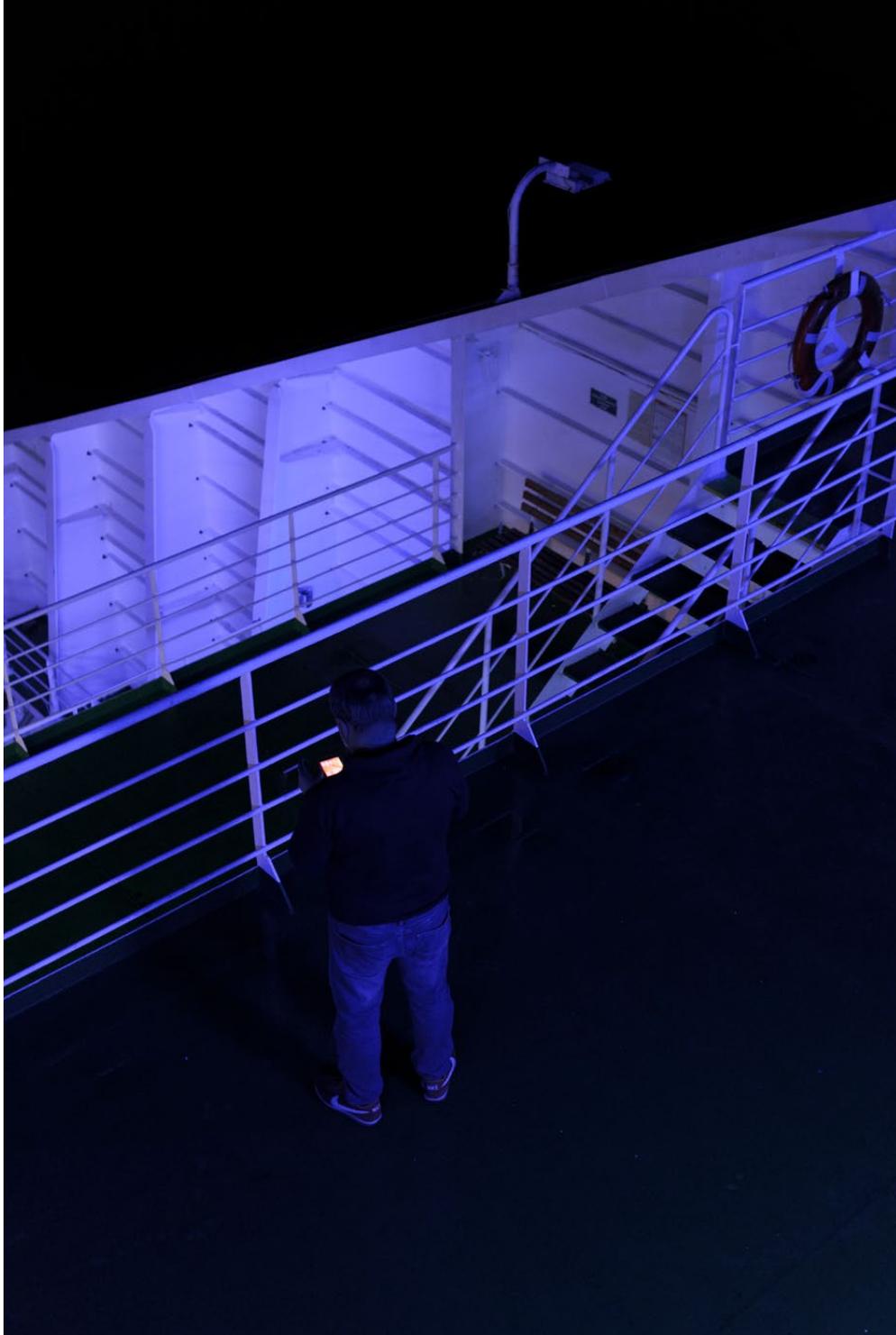
The internet and fast connections have had a big impact on the lifestyle of lorry drivers, who can feel less lonely by browsing social media or watching a film.



The return journey from Spain to Italy is usually made by ferry. Boarding the lorry onto the ferry is a very precise operation. Once their own vehicle is in position, each lorry driver waits until all of the nearby vehicles have been parked in order to avoid bumps and accidents. The space between the lorries is just 20 to 30 cm.



Ana Lis (born 1966, lorry driver for 16 years) and Antoine Ubrais (born 1952, lorry driver for 45 years). A couple in life and at work. They are originally from Brazil and work for a Portuguese transport company. They say they regret the lack of respect that people generally have for lorry drivers. Although it remains a mainly male job, more and more women are taking up the profession.



Left: Aboard the ferry time seems to stand still. For most of the journey there's no telephone signal but the phone is still a preferred companion. Returning by ferry is also a way of stretching your legs, walking on deck after thousands of kilometres of sitting and driving. Right: The journey from Spain to Italy. The ferry trip from Barcelona to Civitavecchia lasts around 24 hours.



The Mediterranean Sea as seen from the ferry.



Left: Port of Barcelona. Catuscia Goffrini waits for the unloading documents. A lorry driver for 20 years, she is married to a colleague and has three daughters. In the early years she used to take her two youngest daughters with her on trips, the father the eldest. "We used to meet up around Europe, often in France, to spend a few days together while we were stationary." | Right: Loading and unloading is done with forklifts that can carry very heavy loads stored on pallets.

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