

Europe's struggle to reduce pollution

Voice-over 1:

Rotterdam's sulphur dioxide readings today are down 80 per cent from 1970 levels. Throughout Europe, similar reductions took the bite out of acid rain. An online emissions register shows how industries in Europe are making an effort over pollutants. But a growing volume of traffic remains. In Europe today there are three times as many vehicles as there were in the 1970s. Laws promoting cleaner fuels have been introduced, but medical research over the last decade has proved disturbing. Experts say average life expectancy's been shortened by around nine months.

Christian Farrar-Hockley:

About 370,000 people will die prematurely every year from health-related problems associated with air pollution. These particles enter people's lungs, erm, and particularly the small ones, they enter the lung and then it's very hard for your... your natural biological systems to remove these particles, so they interact with your lungs and for example if you're asthmatic, they will cause you severe problems.

Voice-over 1:

European air pollution laws have improved dramatically since the E.U.'s founding, but environmentalists warn that water quality has suffered with Europe's growing prosperity. In Worms, Germany, this building houses a control station monitoring the Rhine river. One of Europe's longest, it crosses six countries. As long as there's been industry it's been vital. At the same time, it is a water source for more than fifty million people. Students visit the monitoring centre to learn about protecting their water. This teacher recalls what the river used to be like.

Voice-over 2:

Summer 1964 was the last time I swam in the Rhine, and it smelt so bad and was so polluted I felt nauseous and was sick. I said then I wouldn't swim here any more, and I haven't done so since. I'd rather like to swim across again, but I don't dare to. I'm a bit out of practice. If someone swam with me or just kept an eye on me I'd like to, in the summer.

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