CASE STUDY

THE LABE CHEMICAL WORKS – AN ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION

Working as an International Environmental Advisory Team, students investigate a fictional former chemical plant on the Elbe River. The site is built from real Central European examples: chlorinated solvents in groundwater, chlorophenols, PAH-contaminated soil, a nearby river, a drinking-water source and a developer who wants to build homes. Information arrives step by step. Teams screen soil samples with a photoionisation detector and interpret laboratory data on three treatment options: HPLC, total organic carbon and *Vibrio fischeri* toxicity. They then react to an unexpected finding that changes their priorities. Three teams represent public authorities, the site owner and independent scientific advisors, and each holds information the others lack. With a budget too small to do everything, the teams must agree on one question: what should be done with this site during the next 10 years, and why? The key lesson is that removing a contaminant does not necessarily mean removing the risk.