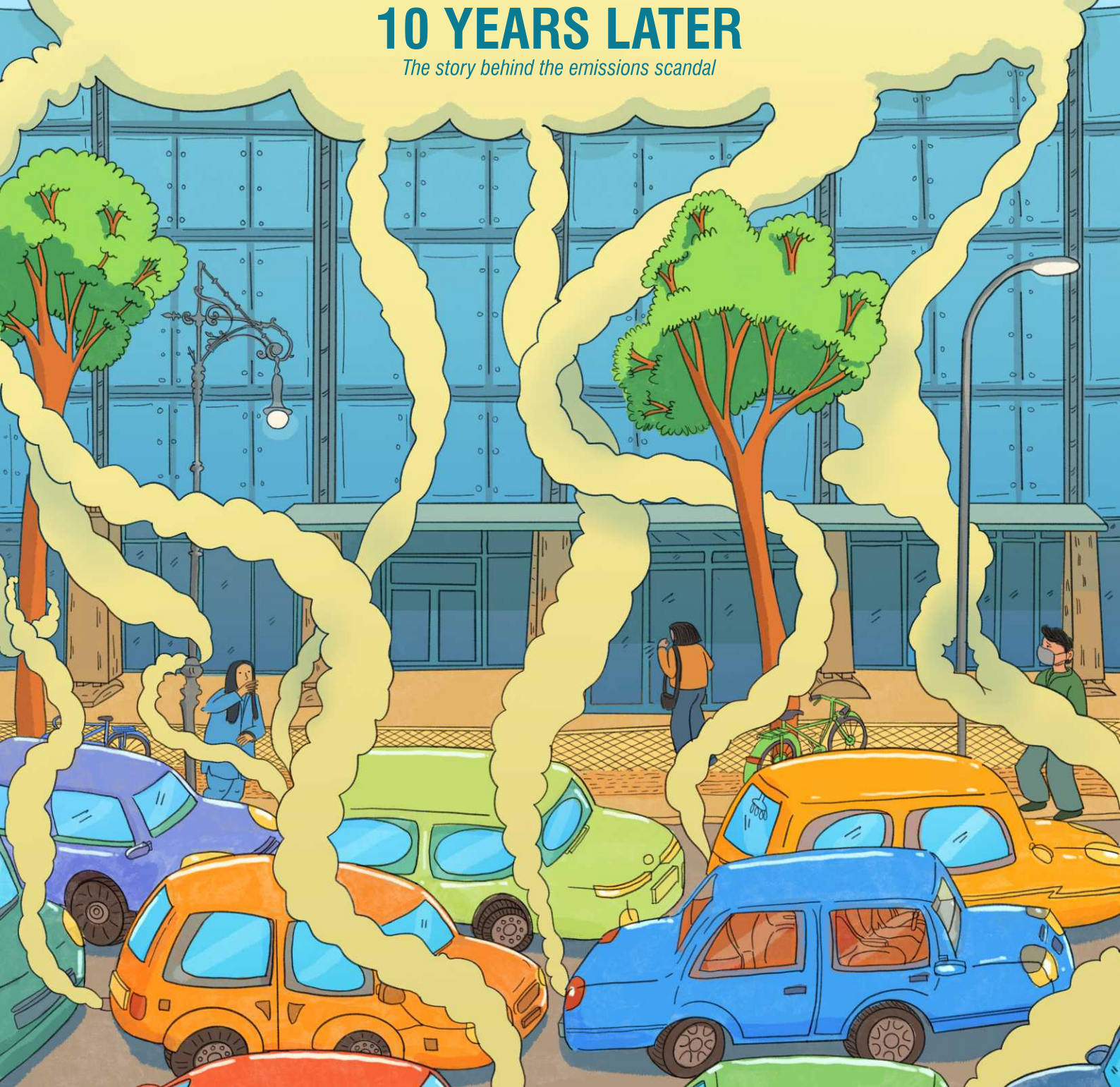


icct  
THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL  
ON CLEAN TRANSPORTATION  
*presents*

# DIESELGATE

## 10 YEARS LATER

*The story behind the emissions scandal*



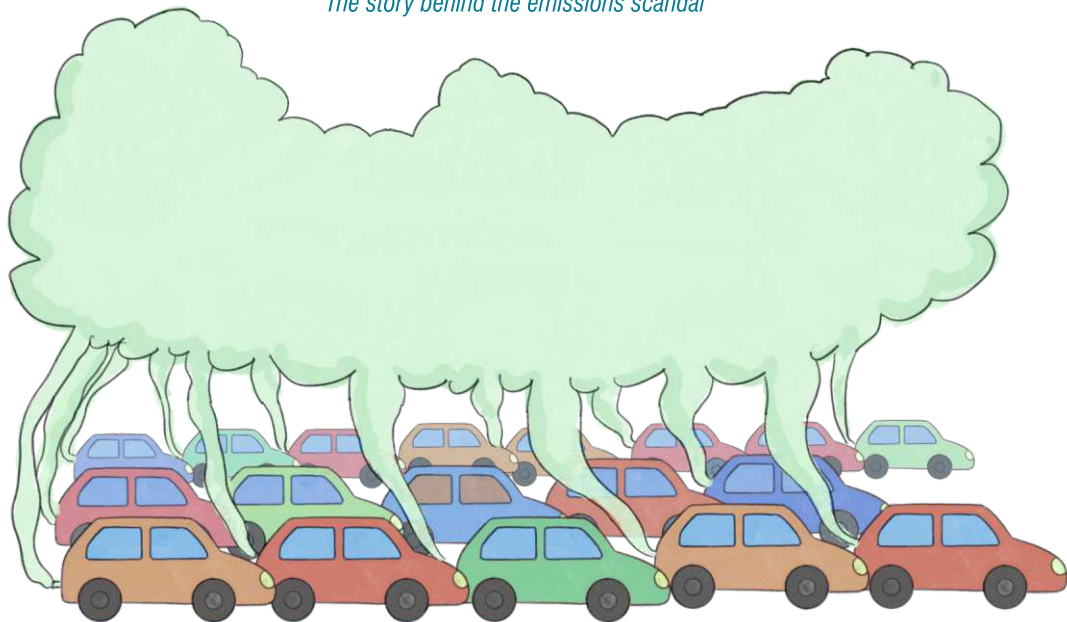


icct  
THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL  
ON CLEAN TRANSPORTATION  
*presents*

# DIESELGATE

## 10 YEARS LATER

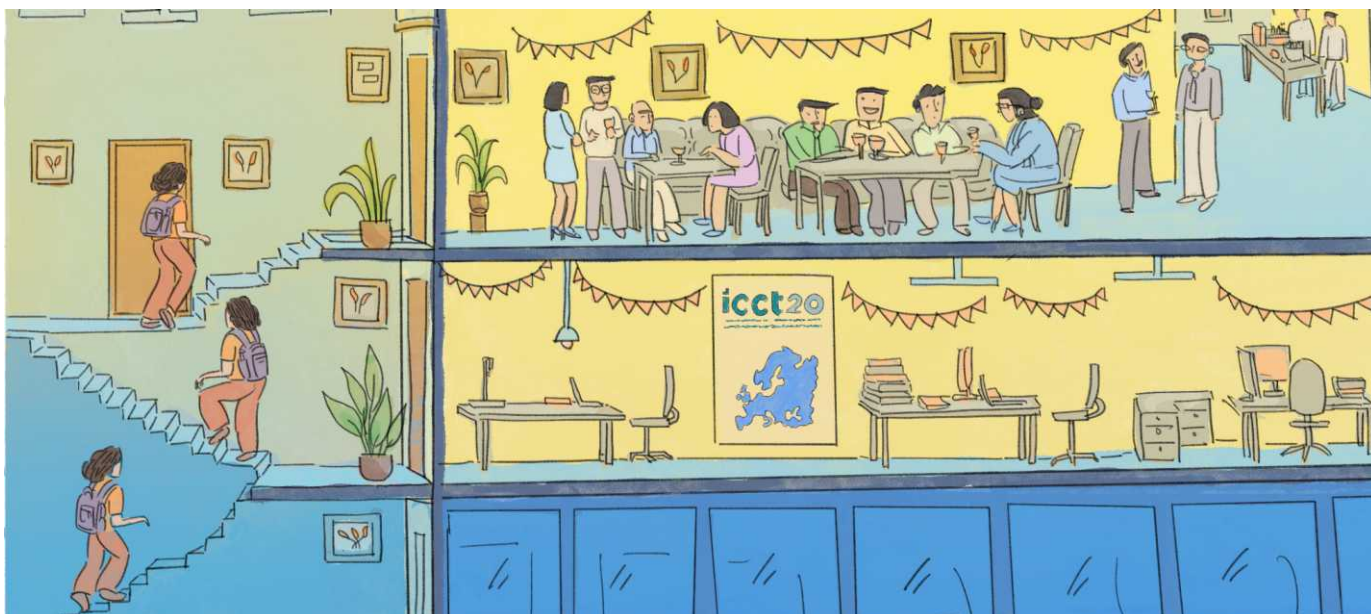
*The story behind the emissions scandal*



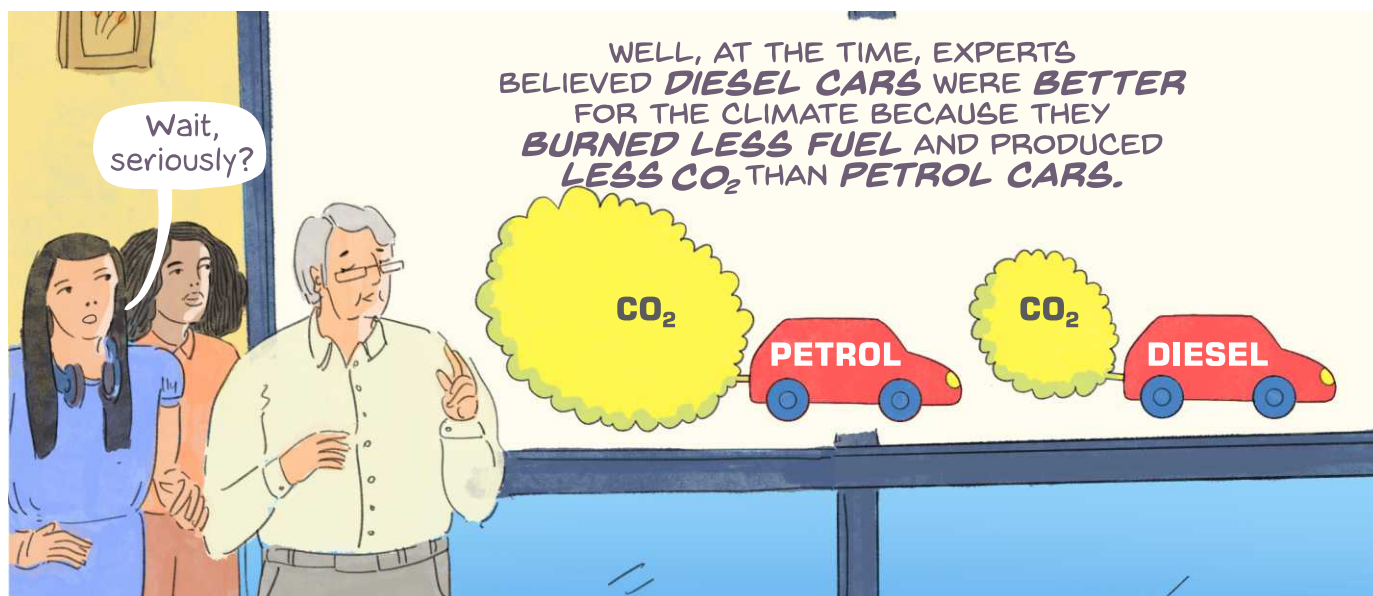
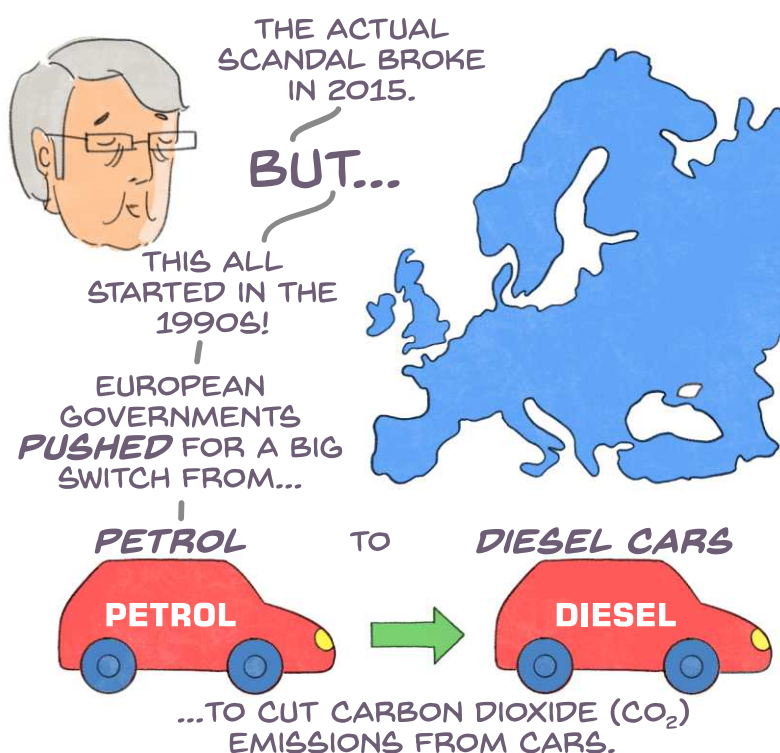
**PRESENT DAY...**

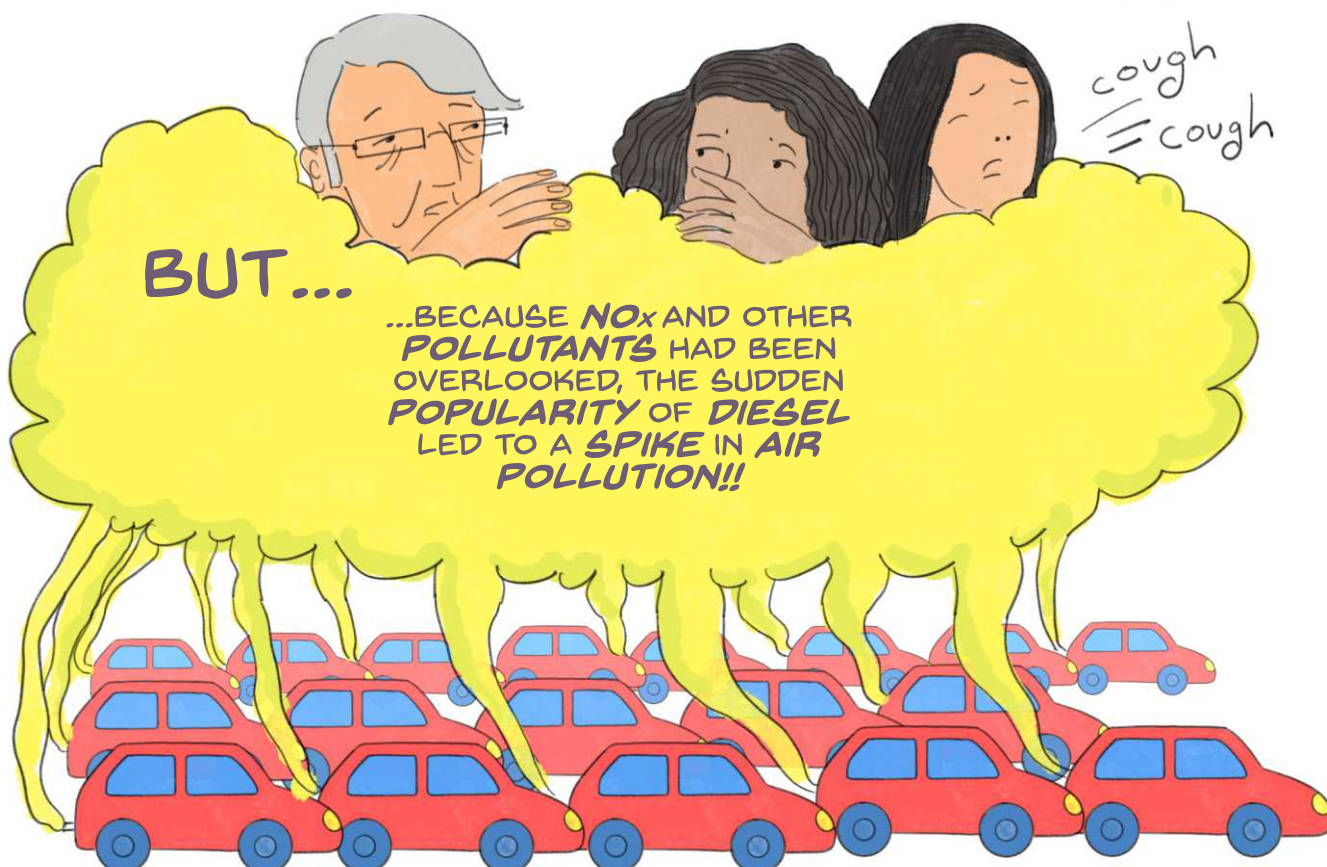
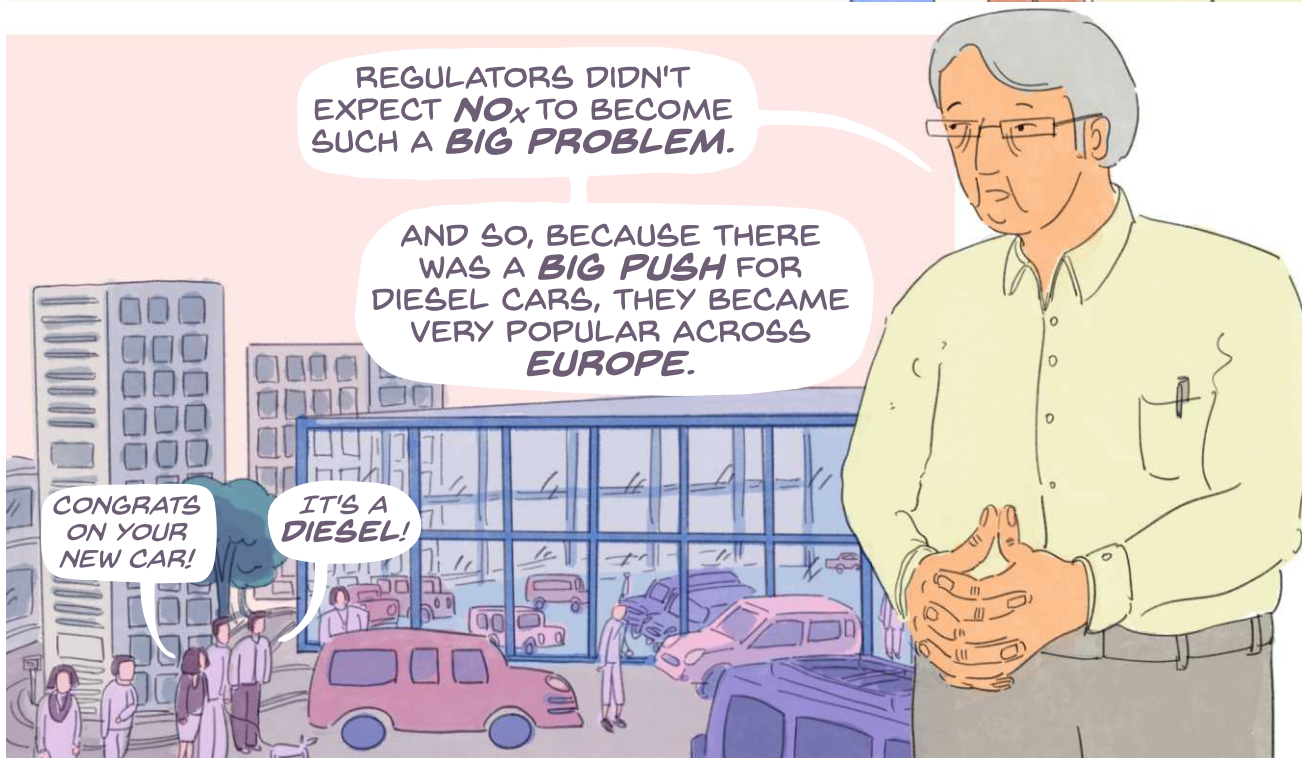
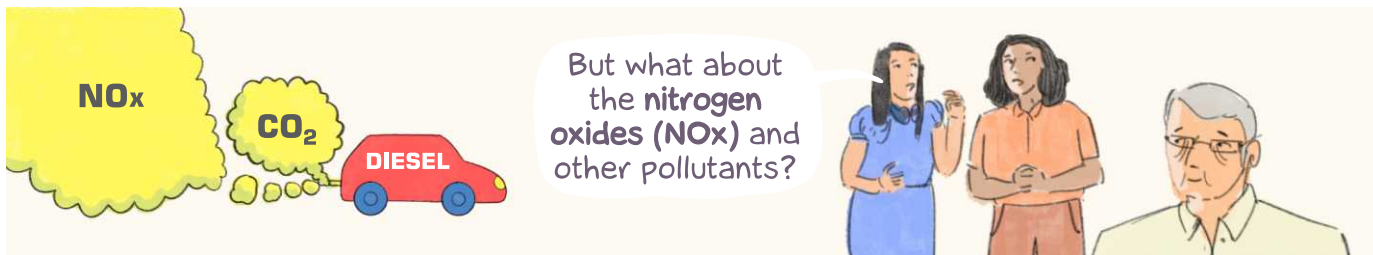


**ICCT Office, Berlin, 2025**

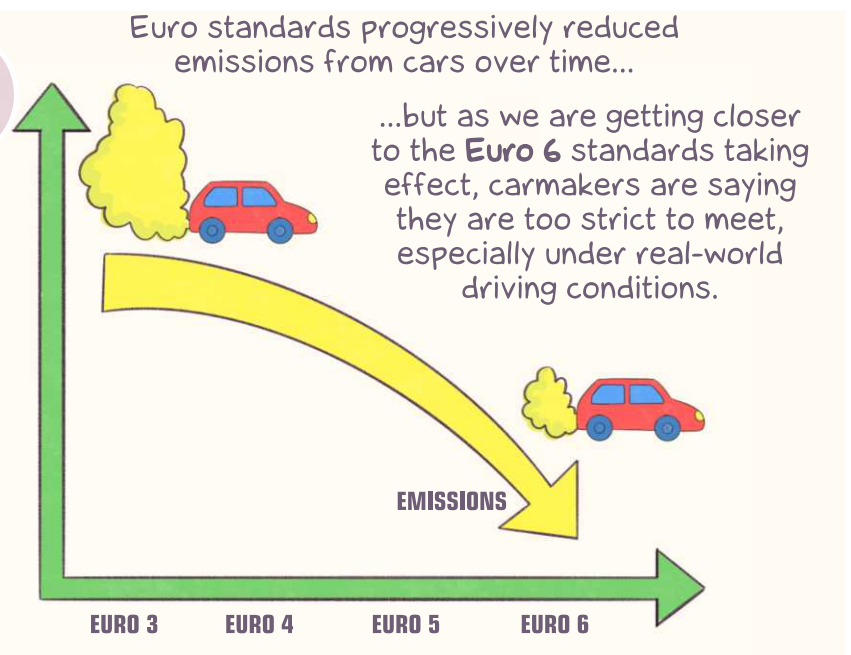
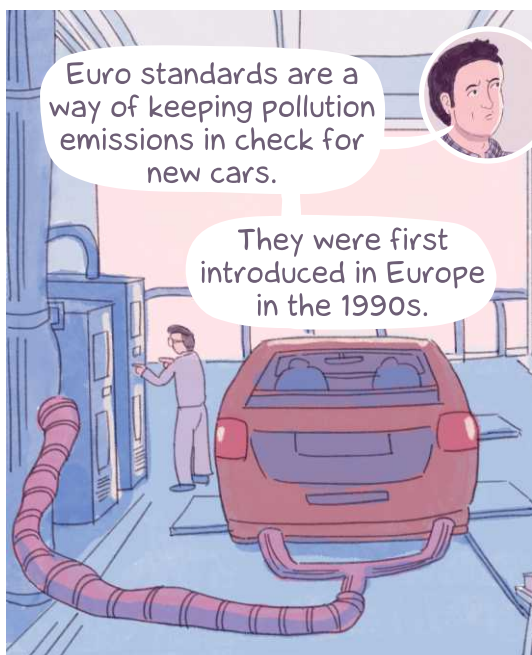
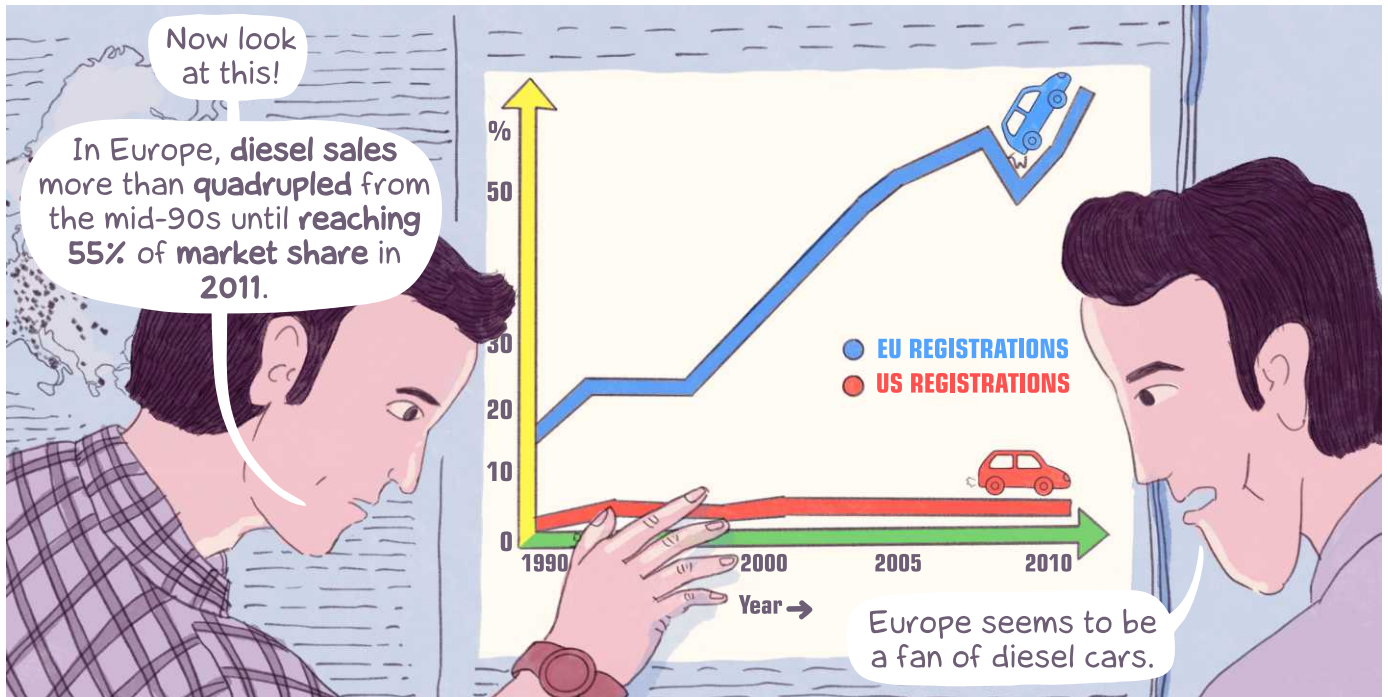


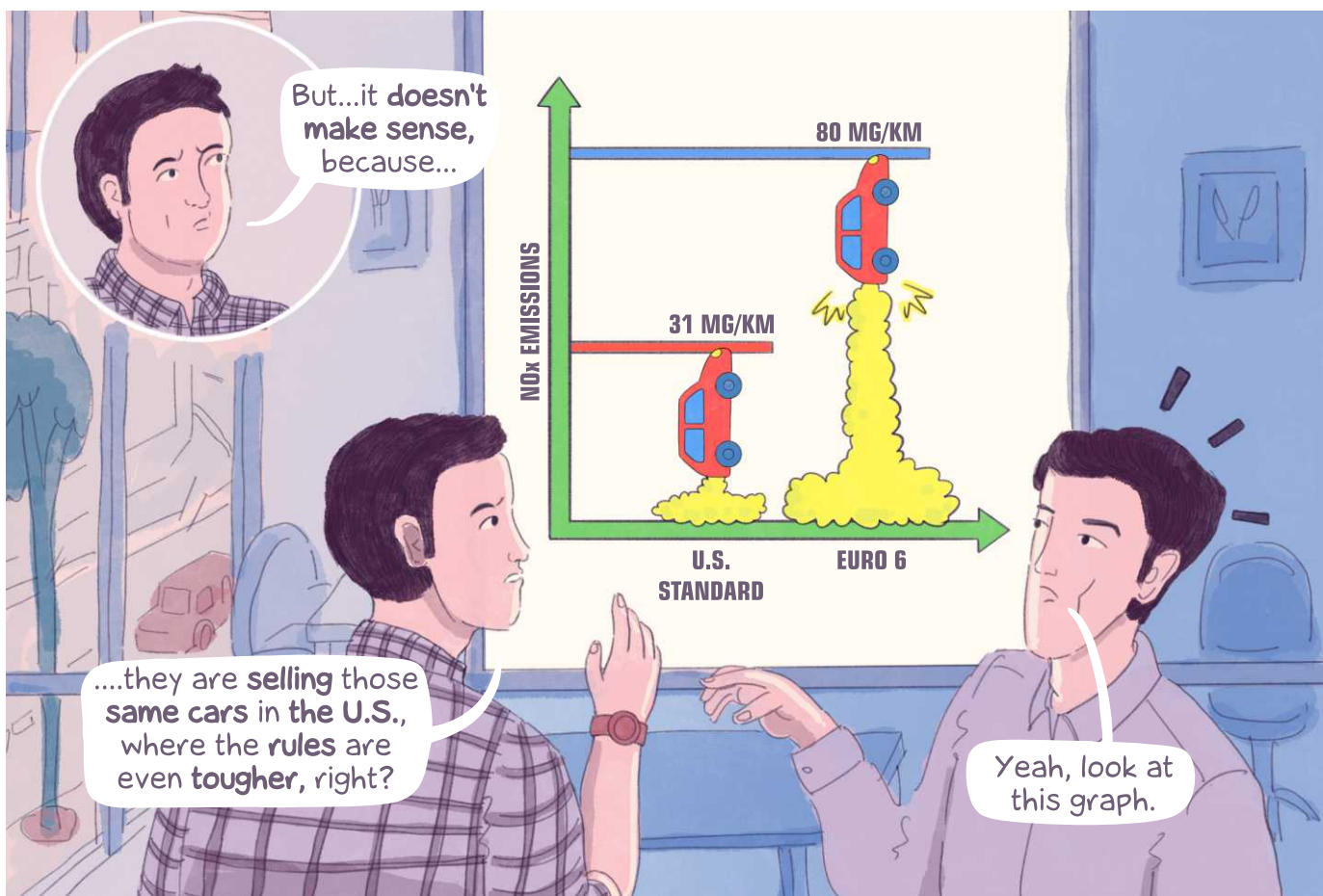
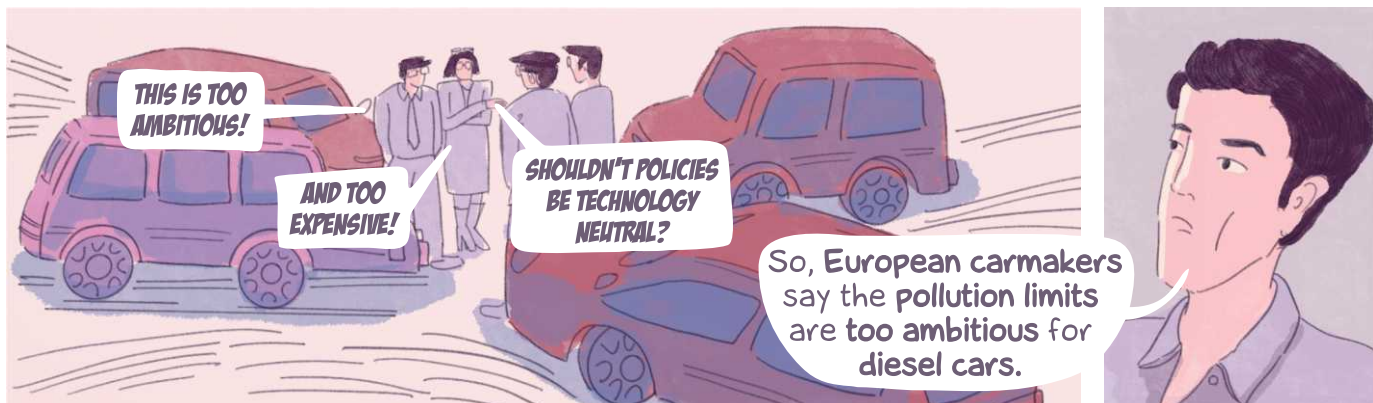












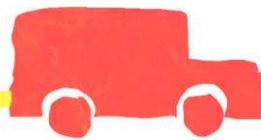
THIS IS TOO AMBITIOUS!  
WE DON'T AGREE!

AND TOO EXPENSIVE!

SHOULDN'T POLICIES  
BE TECHNOLOGY  
NEUTRAL?



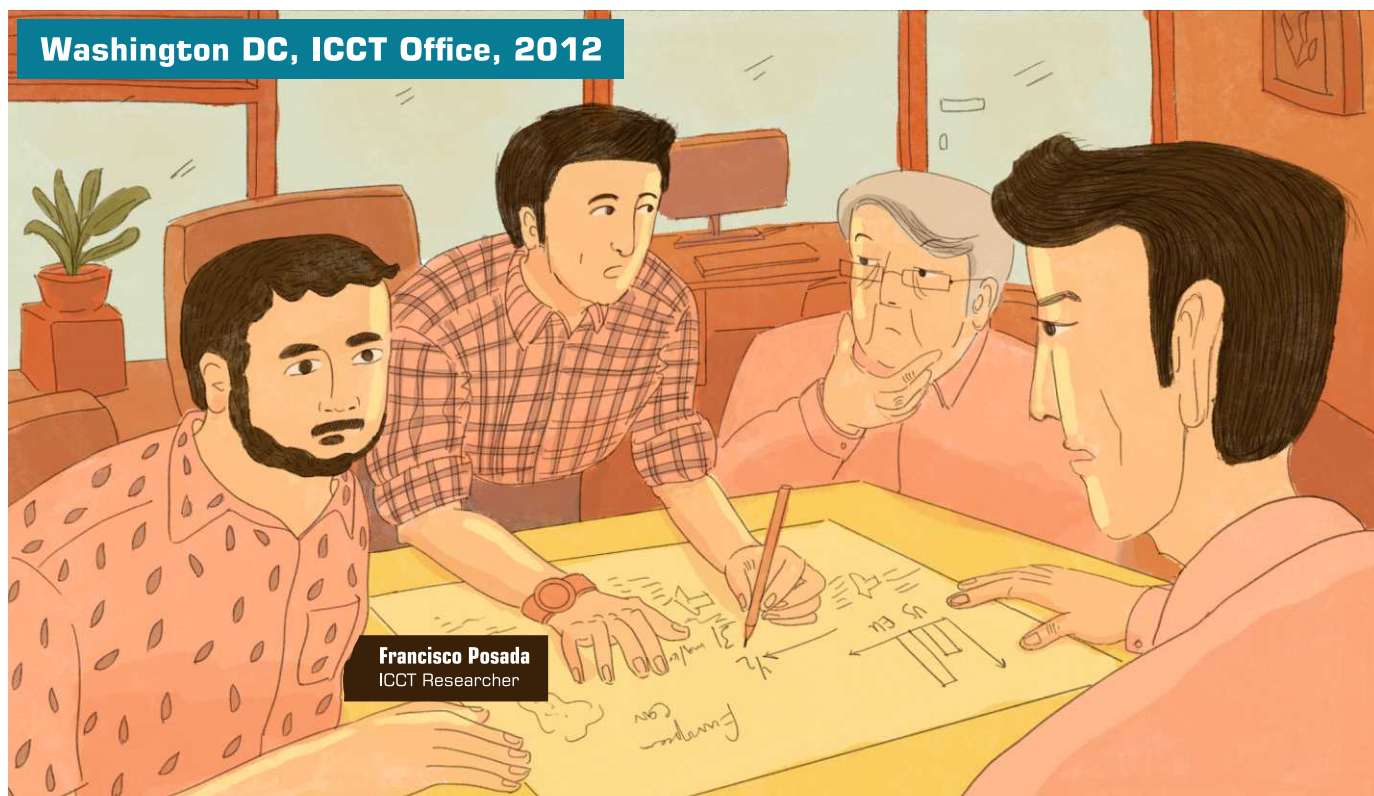
Then how can European automakers claim it's impossible to reduce emissions further in Europe?



We should loop in our U.S. team.

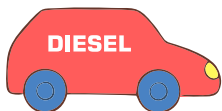


Washington DC, ICCT Office, 2012





So... to summarize... the **air quality** in **Europe** is **worsening** and the **emissions** from **diesel cars** on the road are the **primary suspect**.



**EURO 6**

We believe that **automakers** in **Europe** can **meet the Euro 6 air pollution limits**, even under **real-world driving conditions**...

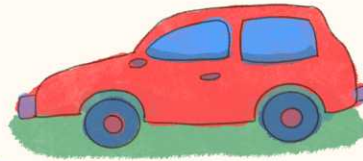
...even though they claim the technical upgrades will cost too much.

But why? They already meet standards in the U.S. that are twice as strict as those in the EU!



So what we  
can do is...

...take a diesel car...



...which is sold both in



and the



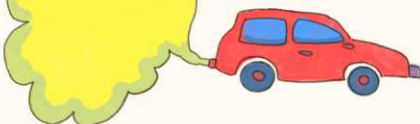
We will **test** in  
the **lab** first...



...and then on  
the **road**.

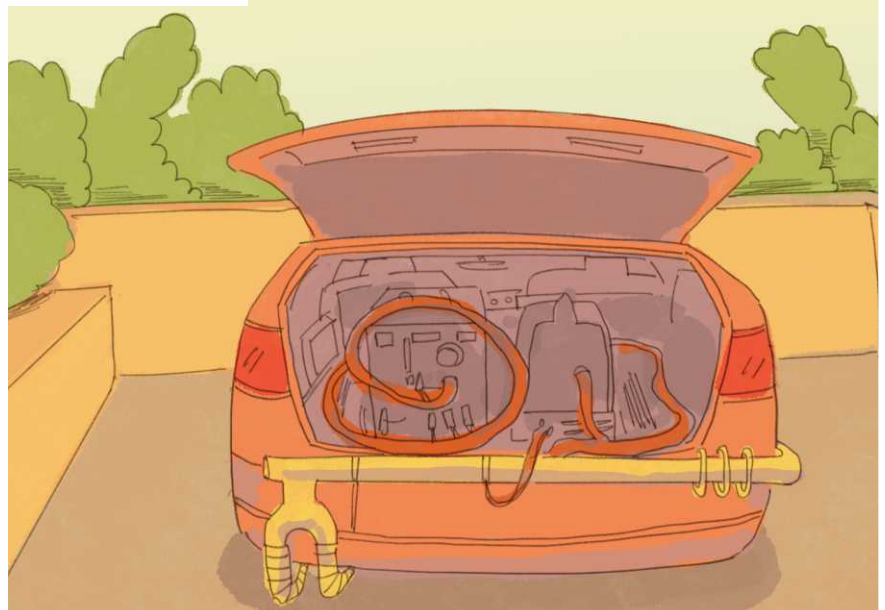
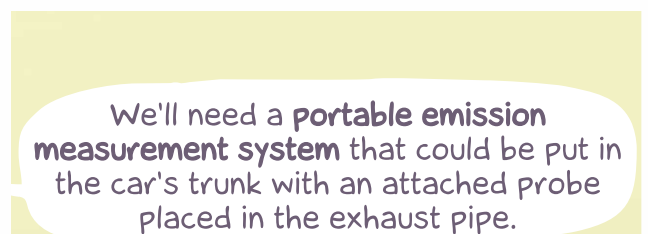
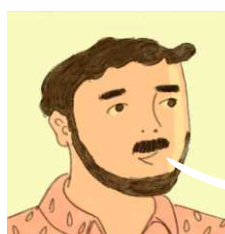
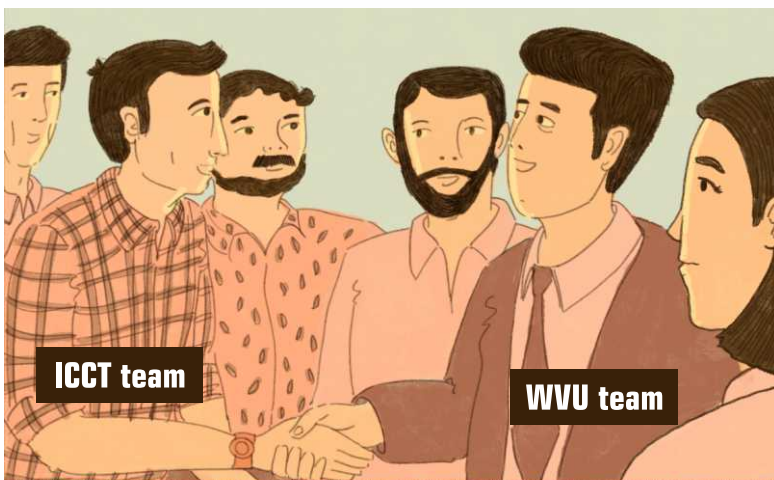


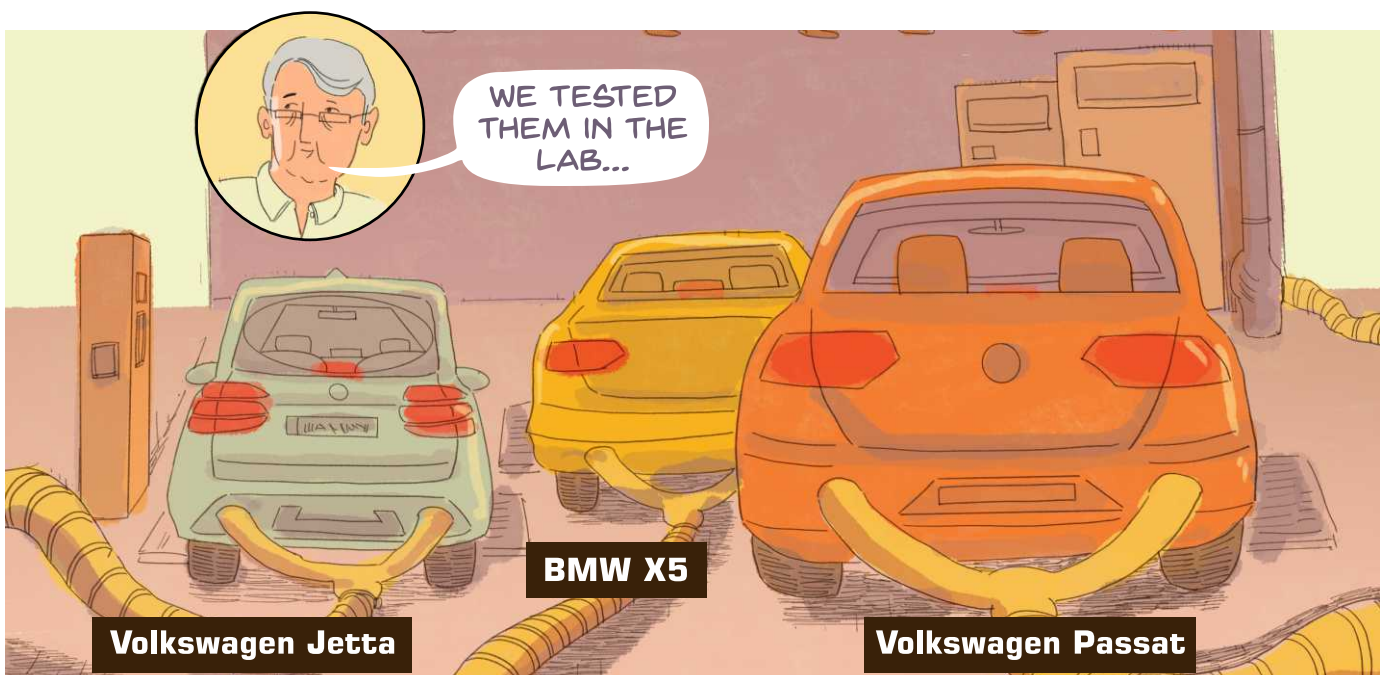
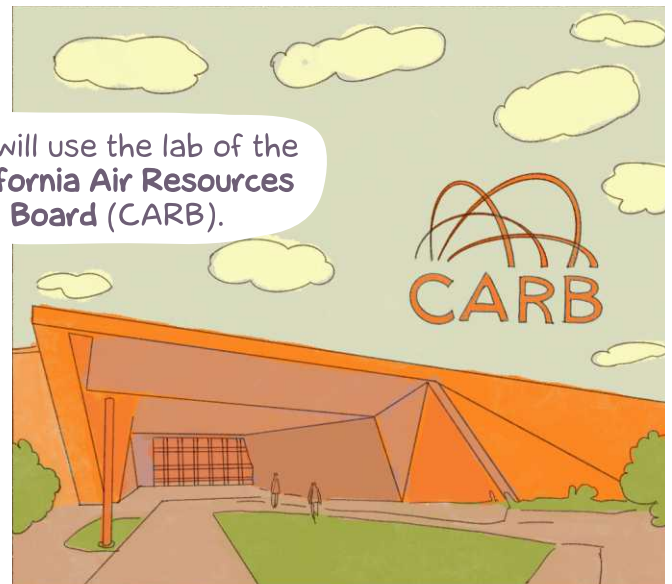
And then  
compare the  
results.



This would answer the  
question of **whether**  
or not diesel cars can  
meet strict **emissions**  
**standards** once and  
for all.

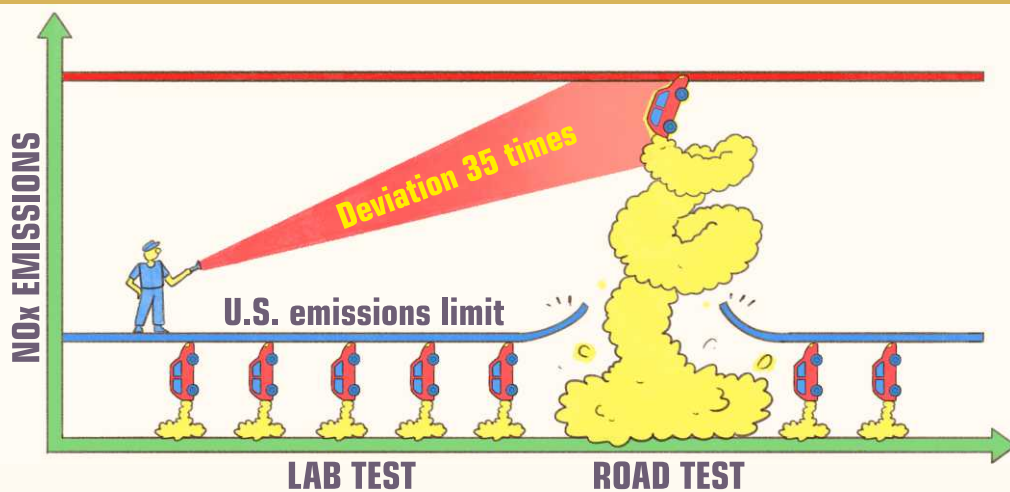
I think I  
know who to  
call!







Washington DC, ICCT Office, 2012





USUALLY A  
**SOFTWARE**  
IN THE CAR  
THAT  
**DETECTS**  
OFFICIAL  
EMISSIONS  
TESTS...

...AND  
**TEMPORARILY**  
**TWEAKS** THE  
ENGINE TO  
**PRODUCE**  
**LOWER**  
**EMISSIONS.**

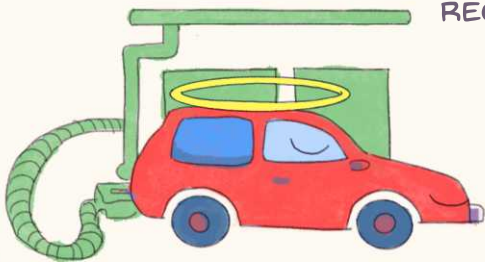
THAT'S WHEN  
THE IDEA OF  
A **DEFEAT**  
**DEVICE**  
FIRST CAME  
TO MIND.

SOME **ONBOARD**  
**TECHNOLOGY**  
CAN ALTER HOW  
DIESEL ENGINES  
RUN.

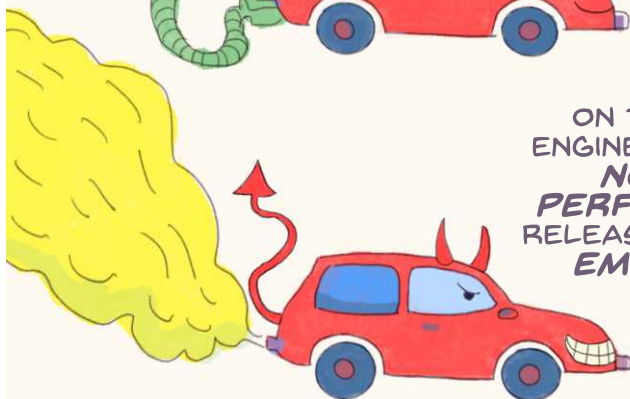


# HOW A DEFEAT DEVICE WORKS...

DURING LAB TESTS:  
ENGINE BEHAVES  
**CLEAN** TO PASS  
REGULATIONS.



ON THE ROAD:  
ENGINE REVERTS TO  
**NORMAL**  
PERFORMANCE,  
RELEASING **HIGHER**  
EMISSIONS.



...AND  
PRESENTED  
OUR RESULTS  
AND FINDINGS  
TO **EVERYONE**.



BUT THE REACTION  
WAS  
**UNDERWHELMING**.



Scientists



Regulators



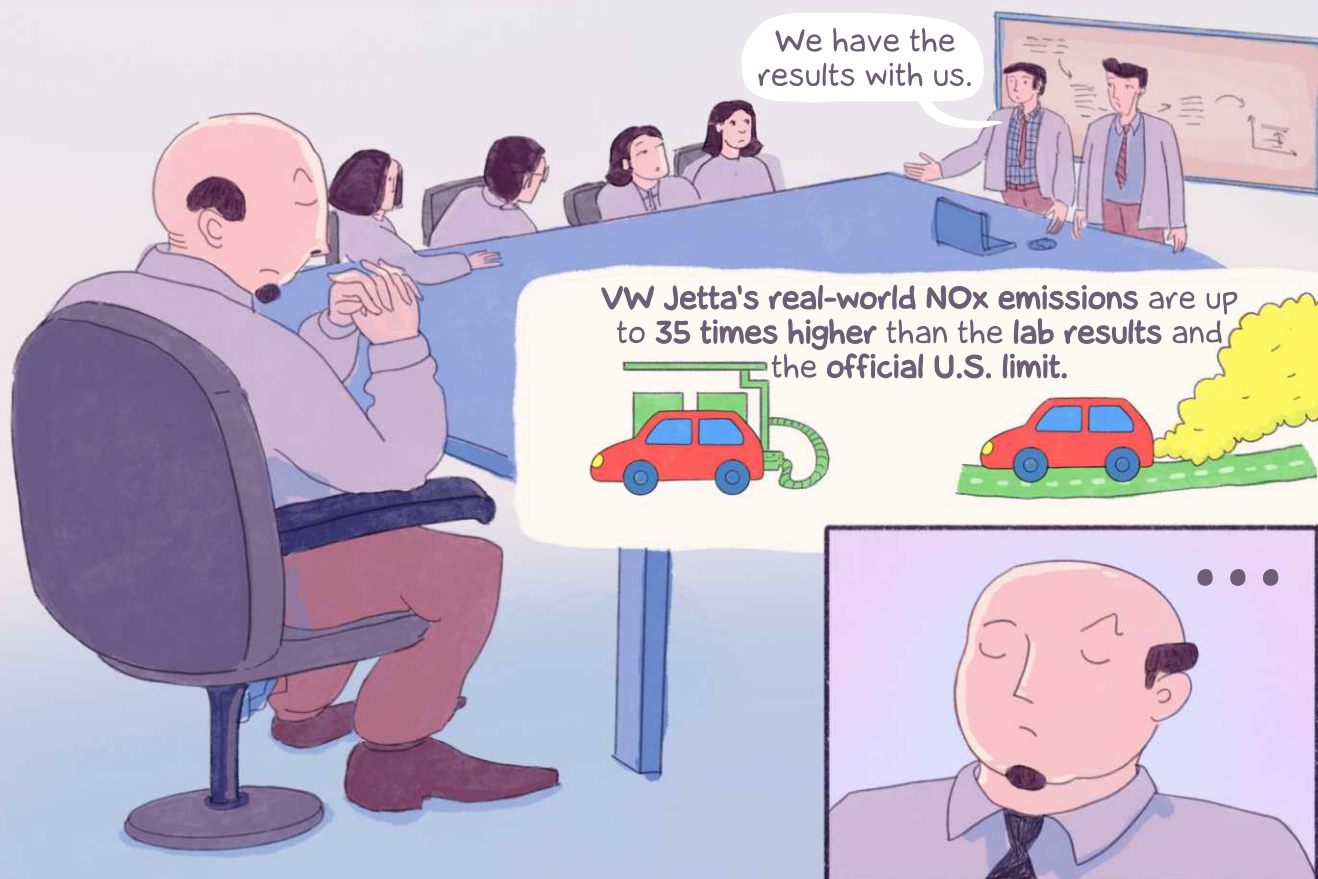
Auto industry

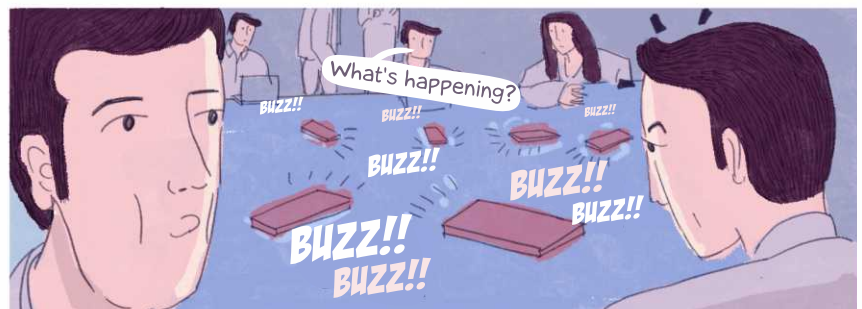
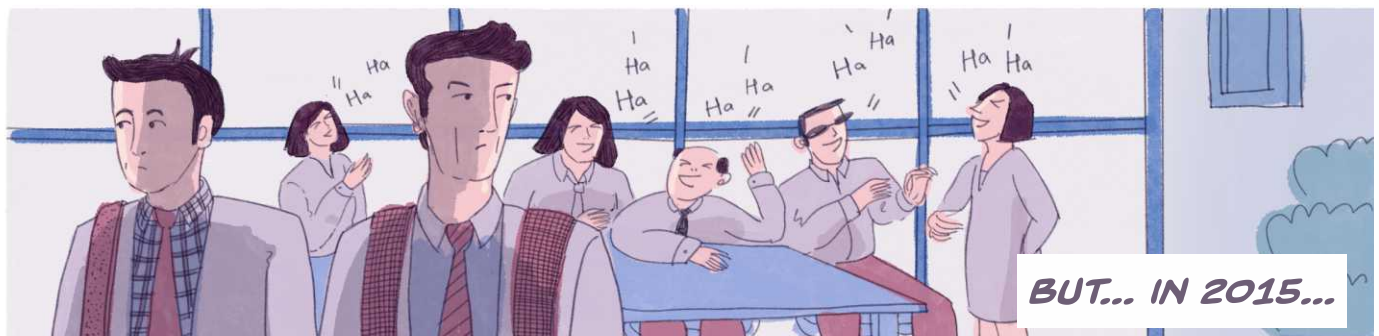
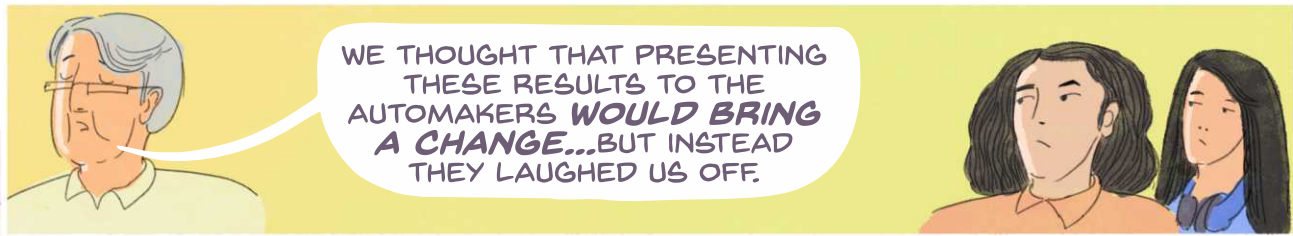


WE EXPECTED ANSWERS,  
CONCERN, OR AT LEAST A  
**HINT OF CHANGE...** BUT NO  
ONE SEEMED TO CARE.



## ICCT Office, Berlin, 2014

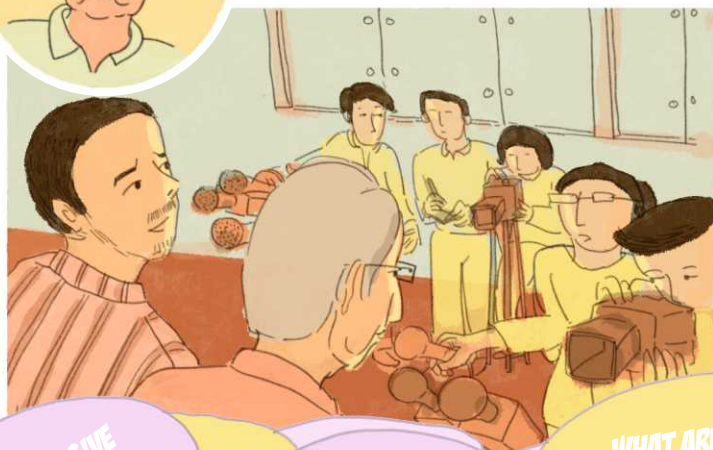






NEWS SPREAD LIKE  
WILDFIRE...

...WE WERE INVITED FOR INTERVIEWS...

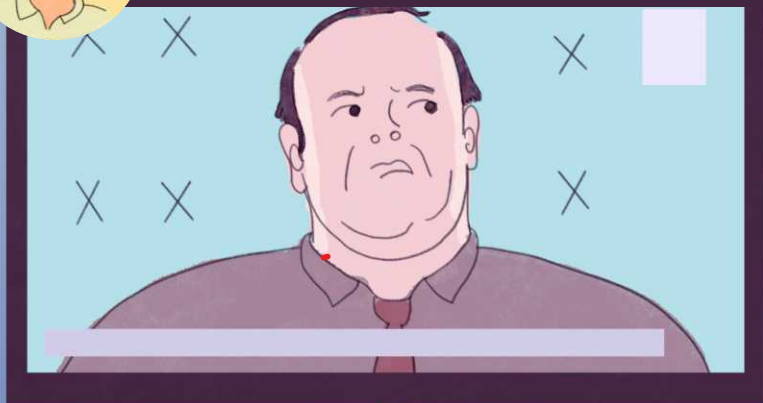


## BREAKING NEWS

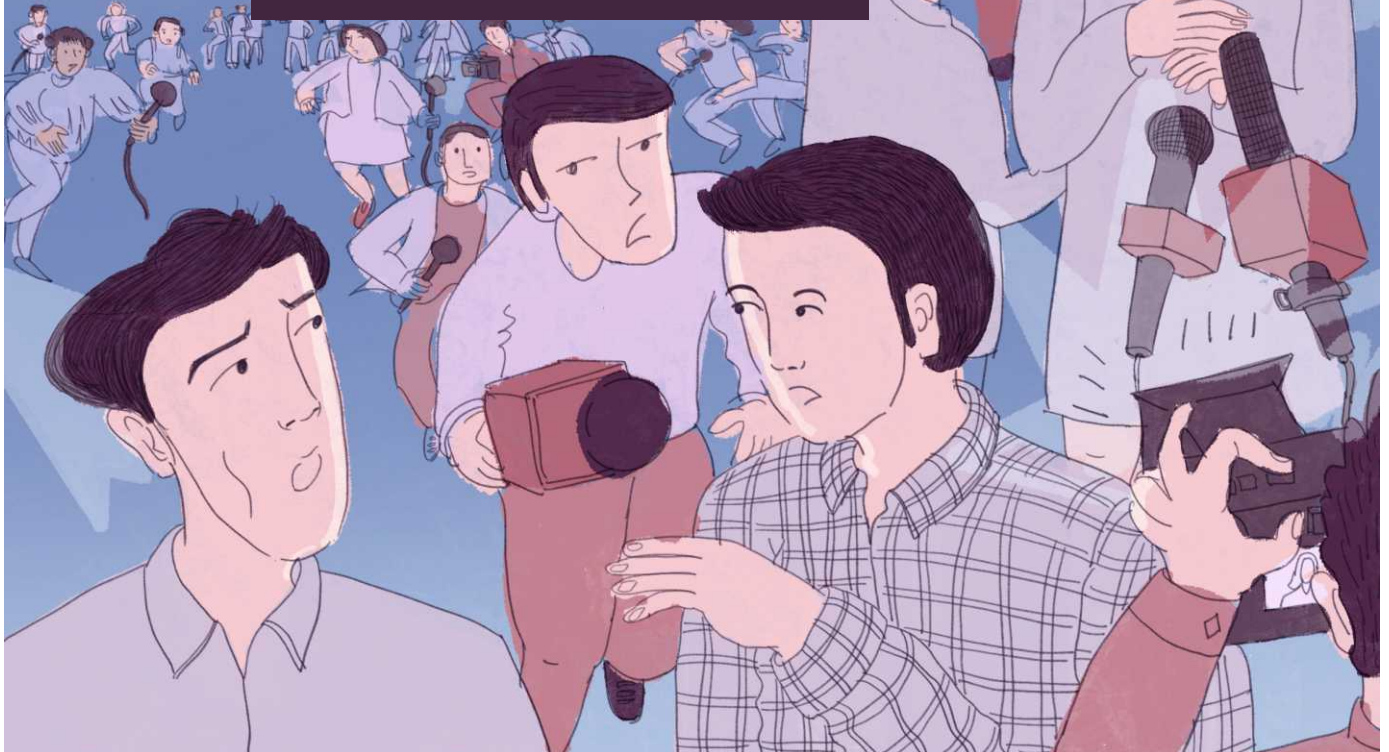




THE VOLKSWAGEN CEO  
**APOLOGIZED** IN A VIDEO STATEMENT  
AND **RESIGNED**.



**IT WAS A COMPLETE MESS.**



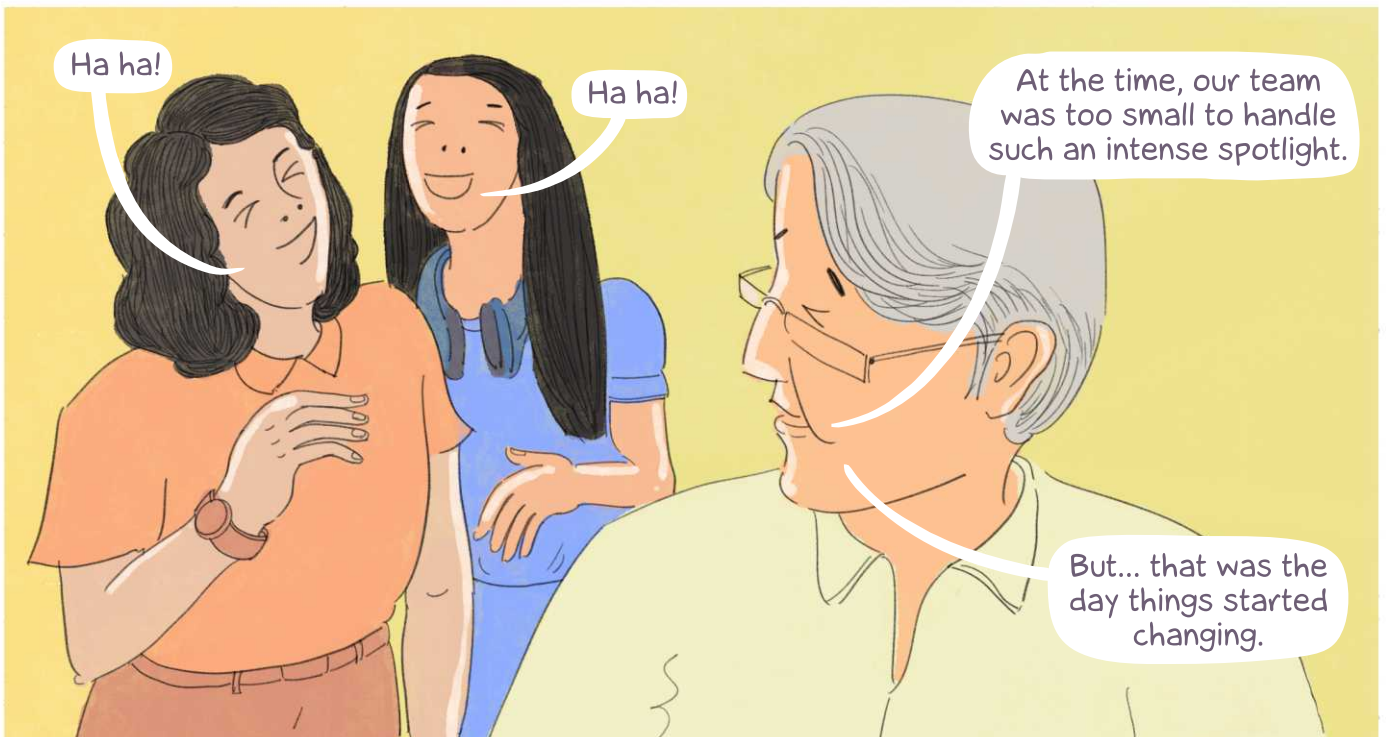
ONE DAY EVEN A TV CREW  
BARGED IN AND STARTED FILMING.



**WE WERE OVERWHELMED!**

We're only  
**researchers**, this  
is not what we  
signed up for!





**June 2016**

**Volkswagen agrees to pay U.S. diesel owners total of \$15 billion.**

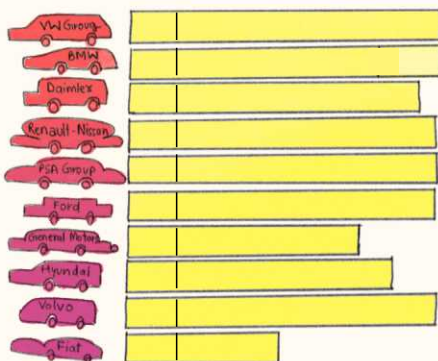


**January 2017**

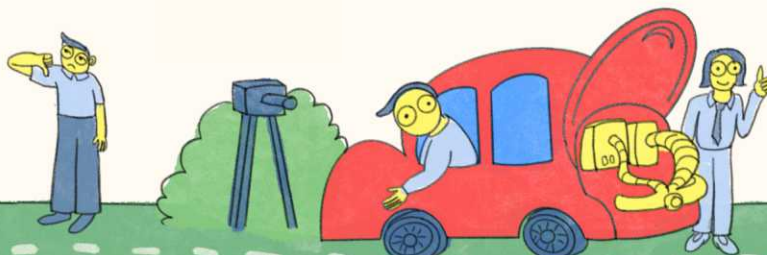
**Senior VW executive arrested and jailed for seven years.**



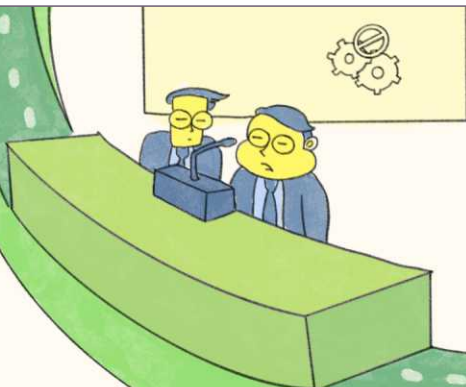
**2018 - TRUE reveals that no brand produced clean diesel cars in the EU, with some models showing levels up to 18 times the NOx limit.**



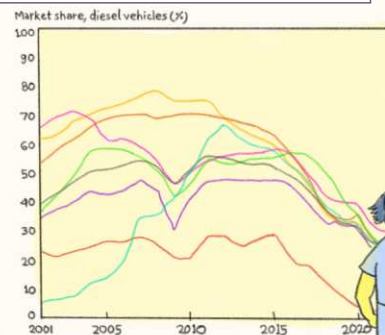
**In 2017, ICCT and FIA Foundation launch the TRUE Initiative to measure millions of vehicles' exhaust in real-world conditions.**



**In June 2021, VW announces it will end sales of combustion engine vehicles in Europe by 2035.**



**Eventually, diesel sales started to plummet across Europe.**



**2016-20**

European authorities start investigating other major carmakers.



**2016**

VW launches electric vehicle campaign to introduce 30 new electric vehicle models.

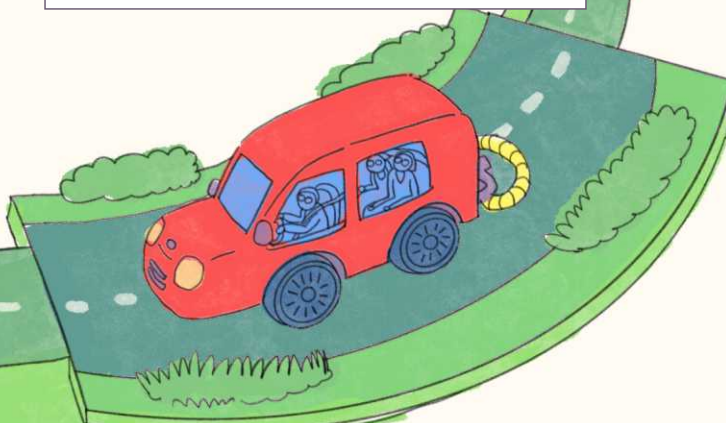


*WE LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES.*

The focus shifts to other parts of the world.

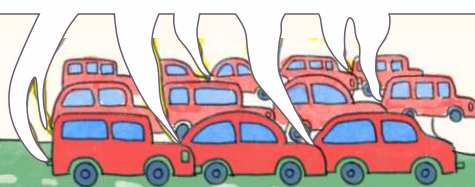


Real-driving tests are introduced to complement lab-only testing, expanding to more countries.



But in 2025, many diesel cars remain on the road...

Our study shows 16 million diesel vehicles with suspicious emissions still on the road in Europe.



Even after all this work, the **health impacts are still being felt**. In the **EU and UK**, there are still **16 million diesel vehicles** with **suspicious emission levels** on the road.



From 2009 to 2024, these vehicles have caused:  
**124,000 premature deaths**  
**98,000 new cases of asthma in children**

But **diesel's days are numbered**.

Every day, we're **moving faster toward a future driven by electric cars and other cleaner transport solutions**.

Wow! Thank you for sharing this story.

And yes, to answer your question to why I joined ICCT...

This story was exactly the reason!  
The story behind **Dieselgate**...



...was enough for me  
to believe that I can  
contribute to a cleaner  
future.

**THE END!**



## Organizations:

### About the International Council on Clean Transportation



The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) is an independent research organization providing first-rate, unbiased research and technical and scientific analysis to environmental regulators. Our mission is to improve the environmental performance and energy efficiency of road, marine, and air transportation, in order to benefit public health and mitigate climate change. Founded in 2001, we are a nonprofit organization working under grants and contracts from private foundations and public institutions.

Find us at: [www.theicct.org](http://www.theicct.org)

### About Leewardists



Leewardists is a communication design studio that uses comics, graphic novels, and visual storytelling to simplify complex ideas about architecture, cities, and the environment. We translate research, data, and urban issues into engaging narratives that are relatable to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Since 2014, Leewardists has been working with universities, NGOs, government bodies, and global institutions to create educational comics, workshops, and campaigns that spark dialogue and inspire action. Our mission is to make the built environment accessible and exciting, bridging the gap between experts and the public through clear, creative communication.

Graphic novel written and edited by:  
Shreya Khandekar and Anuj Kale, Leewardists

Illustrations by:  
Aditi Purwar, Leewardists

Cover by:  
Aditi Purwar and Anik Abdullah, Leewardists

Project concept and story development by:  
Peter Mock, Susana Irlles, and Sophie Ehmsen

Contributors from ICCT:  
Francisco Posada, Yoann Bernard, Kelli Pennington,  
Sarina Katz, Michael Doerrler, Felipe Rodríguez, and  
Amy Smorodin

Disclaimer: This work is based on real events and people. While minor details have been adapted or condensed for clarity and dramatic effect, every effort has been made to preserve the accuracy and integrity of the original experiences. For references and further details on the events, please visit our website at: [theicct.org/dieselgate-emissions-scandal](https://theicct.org/dieselgate-emissions-scandal)

Copyright ©2025 International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT)



