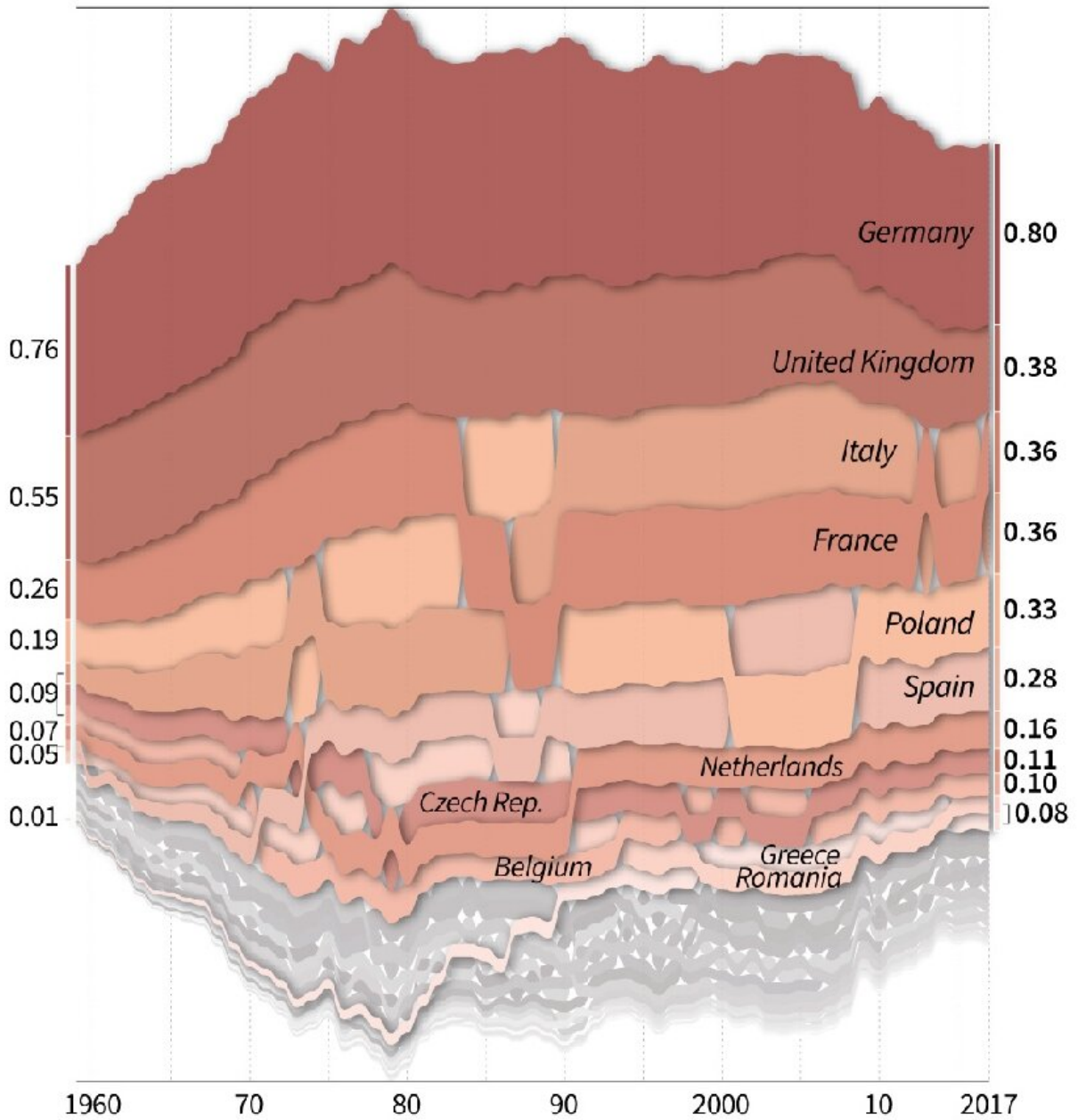


Finland hopes to secure climate pledge as EU leader

June 26 2019

Europe's greenhouse gas emissions

In billion tonnes of CO₂ per year



Source: Global Carbon Budget. In grey: 17 other European Union countries

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Greenhouse gas emissions by European countries from 1960 to 2017, according to the Global Carbon Project.

Finland will use its turn in the EU presidency to seek a pledge that the bloc will produce net zero greenhouse emissions by 2050, Prime Minister Antti Rinne said Wednesday.

Several EU countries have signed up to reduce emissions to net zero, but opposition from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic has prevented a joint mid-century target date.

Finland takes over the six-month rotating EU presidency on Monday and the early weeks will be dominated by haggling over the bloc's top jobs and preparing for Brexit.

But, by the end of the year, Rinne said, the leaders hope the holdout states, which are more dependent on coal than their partners, will have come around to support the 2050 climate target.

"Our presidency's slogan will be 'Sustainable Europe, sustainable future'," he told reporters at his official residence.

"Our optic is to find agreement on the 2050 strategy by the end of this year. The time for a 'yes, but' policy for combating climate change is over now."

Rinne denied that the sceptical EU members were "blocking" the target date, and said they were just taking the time to seek more information about how Europe can help them transition to greener energy.

Last week, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said Polish business would not be able to shoulder the cost of building a low-carbon economy, having earlier asked for a "detailed compensation package."

As president of the European Union, Finland will host several meetings over the next six months and help to set the member states' agenda.

But much of the political and institutional energy expended in Brussels will concern the hunt for a new president of the European Commission and preparations for the latest Brexit deadline.

EU leaders will meet again on Sunday to haggle over the top job.

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