

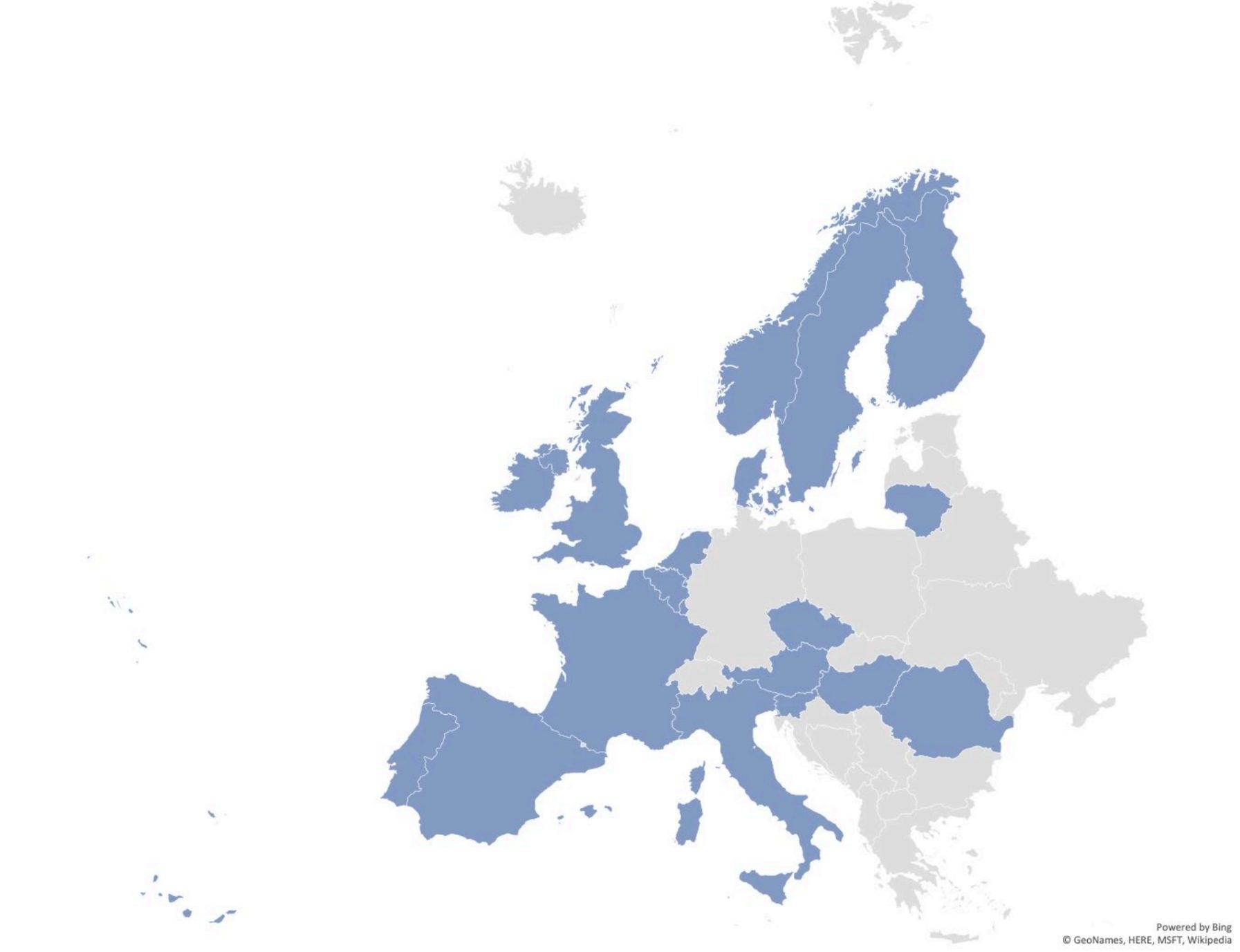
HOUSING FIRST IN EUROPE

An Overview of Implementation, Strategy and Fidelity

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OVERVIEW

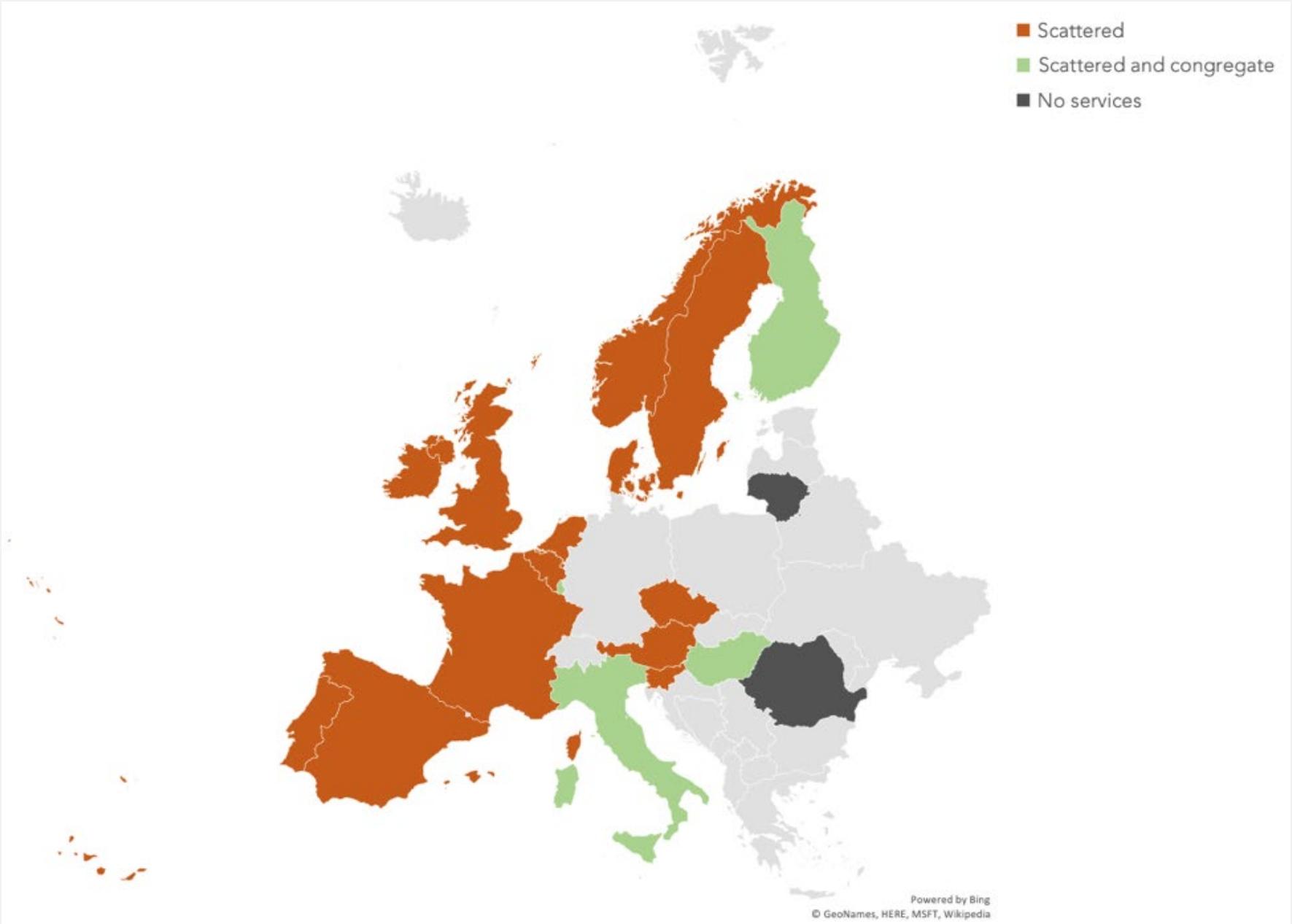
- Used local experts answering a standardised questionnaire to look at the state of Housing First in Europe
- Included Housing First programme leads from several countries
- 19 countries sent a response



DEFINING HOUSING FIRST

- Research used definitions from the *Housing First Guide Europe* [<https://housingfirsteurope.eu/guide/>]
- Housing is a human right; choice and control for service users; separation of housing and treatment; recovery orientation; harm reduction; active engagement without coercion; person centred planning and flexible support for as long as is required
- Based around original Tsemberis model

- Scattered
- Scattered and congregate
- No services



DEFINING HOUSING FIRST

- There was some variation in how Housing First was being provided
- ‘Full Fat’ (high fidelity) French programme *Un chez-soi d’abord*
 - ACT/ICM
 - Psychiatric diagnosis, a mental health intervention
- **Finland, Netherlands, UK**
 - ICM and other versions of intensive support only
 - Broadly targeted, long term and recurrent homelessness

DEFINING HOUSING FIRST

- In practice, there was evidence of variation in how Housing First was being defined and used *within* the different countries
- But some evidence of ambiguity around *housing-led*, lower intensity services and *Housing First*

DEFINING HOUSING FIRST FINLAND

- In Finland, a 'Housing First' philosophy which includes high intensity congregate and scattered site services for long-term homeless people
- But all homelessness services work on the basis of trying to ensure housing need is met first, something that elsewhere might be called 'housing-led'
- Finland has an integrated, housing-led strategy, that includes extensive prevention, supported housing, low intensity floating support and intensive, *Finnish* versions of Housing First
- So not everything is 'Housing First' in the Tsemberis/Pathways sense, both because Finland developed their *own version of Housing First* and because what we think of as 'Housing First' is just *one part* of the wider Finnish integrated strategy.

AMBIGUITY

- Some confusion between housing-led services, i.e. services that are designed to meet housing need as soon as possible and Housing First
- Housing First is designed for homeless people with *high and complex needs*, it is an *intensive support service model*
- Housing-led services pursue the same goals, but are intended for groups with lower and shorter term support needs
- Distinction drawn up by Consensus Conference on Homelessness in 2010, Housing First and housing-led, is useful

PARADIGM/MODEL DRIFT

- Loss of control of how Housing First was defined in the USA
- Sam Tsemberis and others began to produce definitions of fidelity. Some countries have followed this guidance, e.g. Canada and France, others have interpreted Housing First in various ways
- Generally, as was reported in 2013, most of the Housing First in Europe at least follows the core philosophy of Tsemberis/Pathways Housing First
- Some operational differences, but that is inevitable
- Still some risk that low fidelity services calling themselves Housing First will fail and discredit Housing First

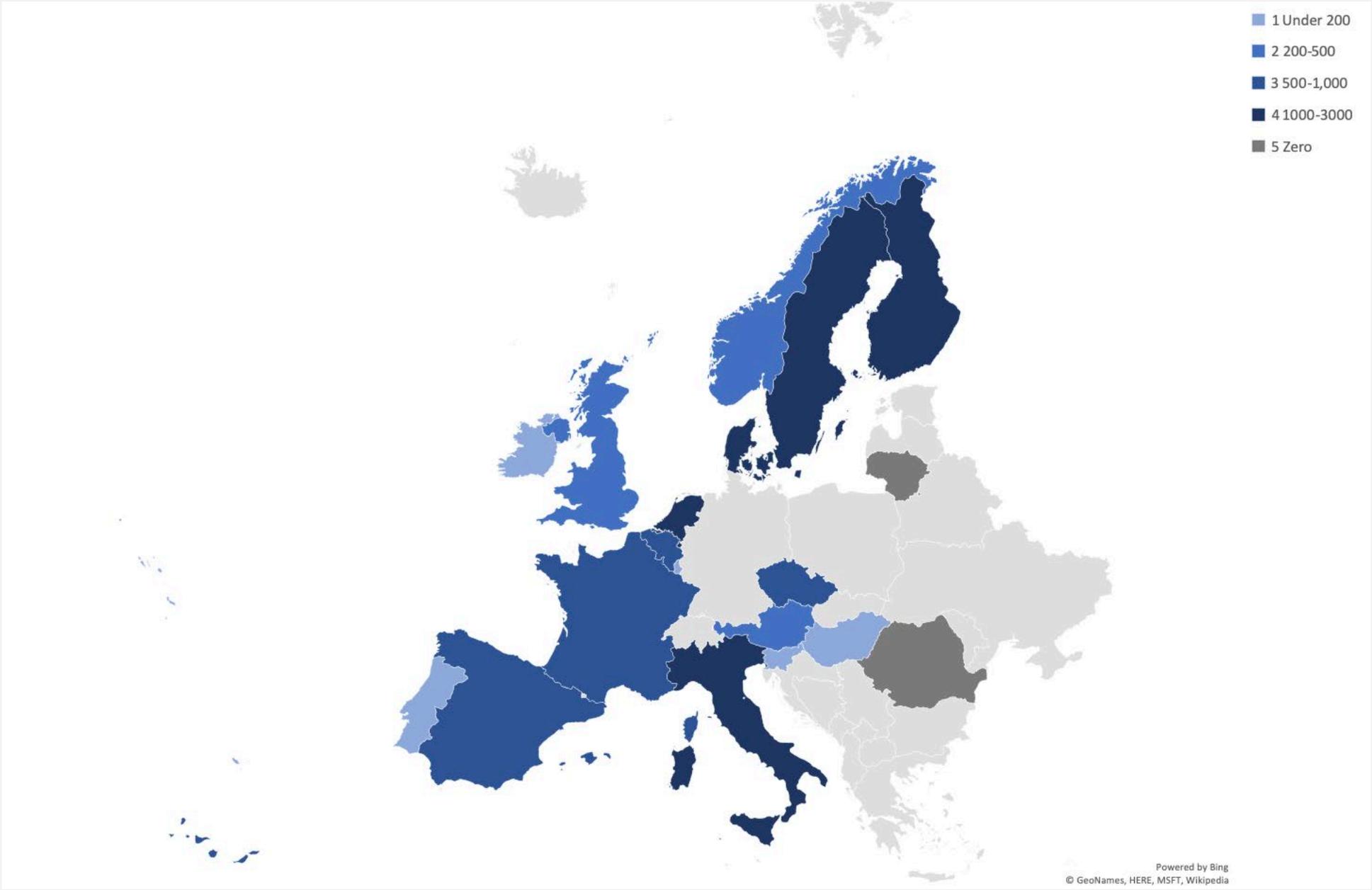
EXTENT

- Remember that Housing First is designed for homeless populations with high and complex needs
- Which is not everyone who becomes homeless
- Homeless populations vary between European countries, probably linked to wider welfare, health and housing systems
- So Housing First may *not need* to become the dominant form of service provision
- It depends what homeless people in each country need

EXTENT

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- 1 Under 200
- 2 200-500
- 3 500-1,000
- 4 1000-3000
- 5 Zero



STRATEGY

- Strategic integration is probably a better guide to how far Housing First is influencing policy
- Housing First is becoming increasingly integral to homelessness policy and strategy
- Housing First is clearly influencing and changing the way we respond to homelessness in Europe
- Almost certainly means better outcomes for homeless people with high and complex needs, including long-term and repeatedly homeless people across Europe

- 1 Very often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Not often
- 4 Rarely or never
- 5 No services
- 6 No regional/local strategies



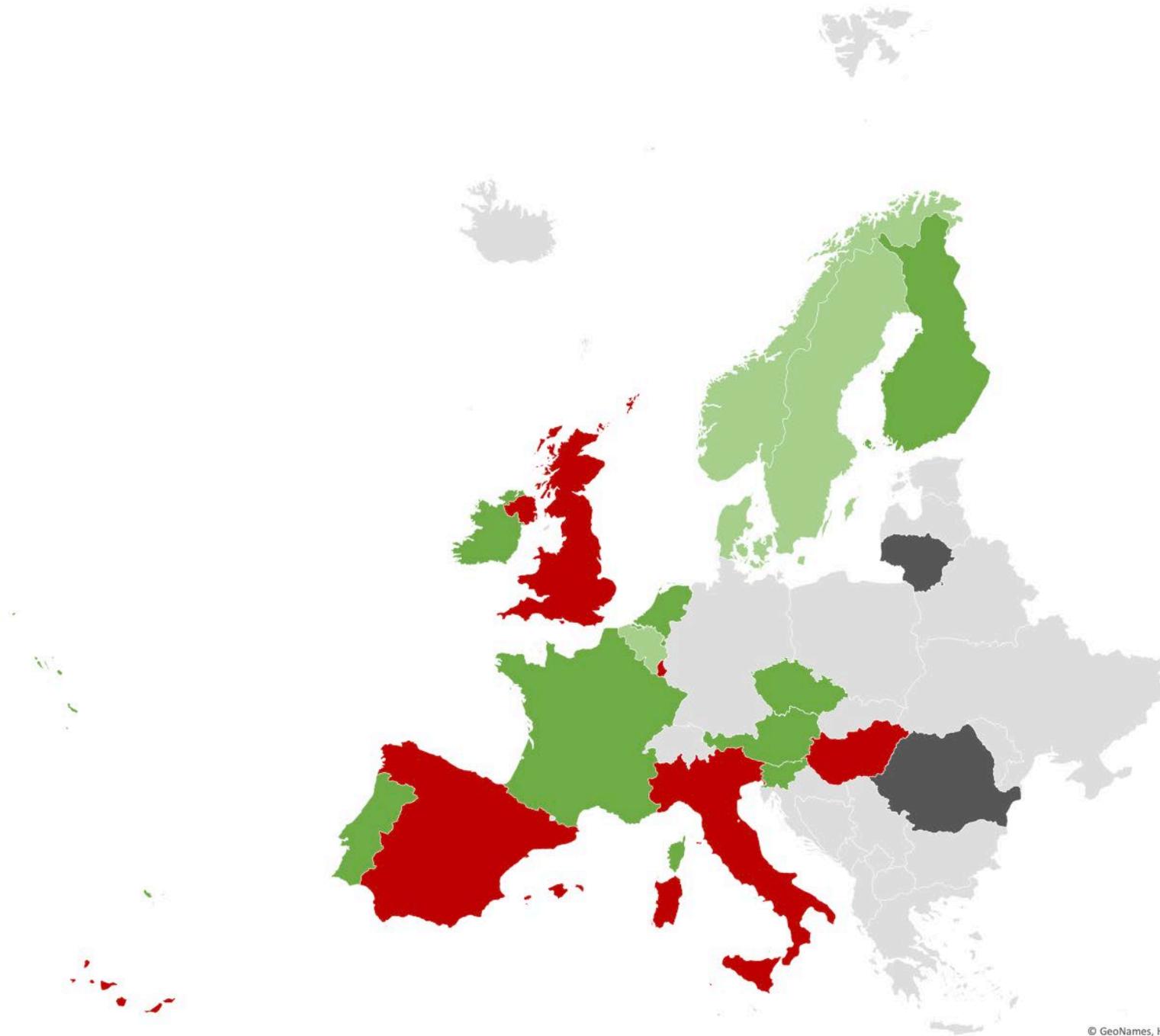
STRATEGY

- Still a situation in which Housing First is sometimes running parallel to other homelessness services rather than as a part of wider strategy
- Quite small scale, experimental services in some countries
- Which are largely confined to cities in some countries
- Countries where Housing First is integrated into wider strategy are still the minority e.g. Denmark, Finland (Finnish version of Housing First)
- But the direction of travel is positive, Housing First is becoming more and more a part of homelessness strategy e.g. Italy, France, UK

FUNDING

- Quite a lot of Housing First is on temporary pilot funding
- Or is precariously financed in other respects
- Serious government spending in Denmark, Finland, France, but the funding is less secure and extensive in countries like Italy and the UK
- Creates risks around quality and can force down fidelity, which might undermine effectiveness

- 1 Reliable
- 2 Quite reliable
- 3 Unreliable
- 4 No services



HOUSING

- Finding affordable, adequate housing with good security of tenure/secure leases a challenge almost everywhere
- Worse in some countries than others
- Worse in some regions or cities than others
- But a barrier to rolling out Housing First across Europe

- 1 Always difficult
- 2 Often difficult
- 3 Not difficult in some areas, difficult in most
- 4 Difficult in some areas, but not most
- 5 No services



DATA

- Lack of consistency around data collection
- Data are not always collected and organised even at national level
- Let alone European level
- Which means that there is not always the information available to show how effective Housing First is being at national or European level
- Need data on effectiveness and cost effectiveness to make the arguments for Housing First clearly
- And to make arguments for Pan-European use

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

- A lot of good signs
- Expanding use and greater strategic integration
- But we need to avoid describing everything as ‘Housing First’ and saying Housing First solves *all* homelessness
- Finland shows us that ‘Housing First’ services are most effective within an integrated housing-led strategy, using *a mix of services* and prevention
- Funding needs to be better and more consistent
- Housing First cannot work without housing

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