



# INSOLVENCY REGIMES, ZOMBIE FIRMS AND CAPITAL REALLOCATION

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# Motivation: *productivity growth has slowed, what can policy do?*

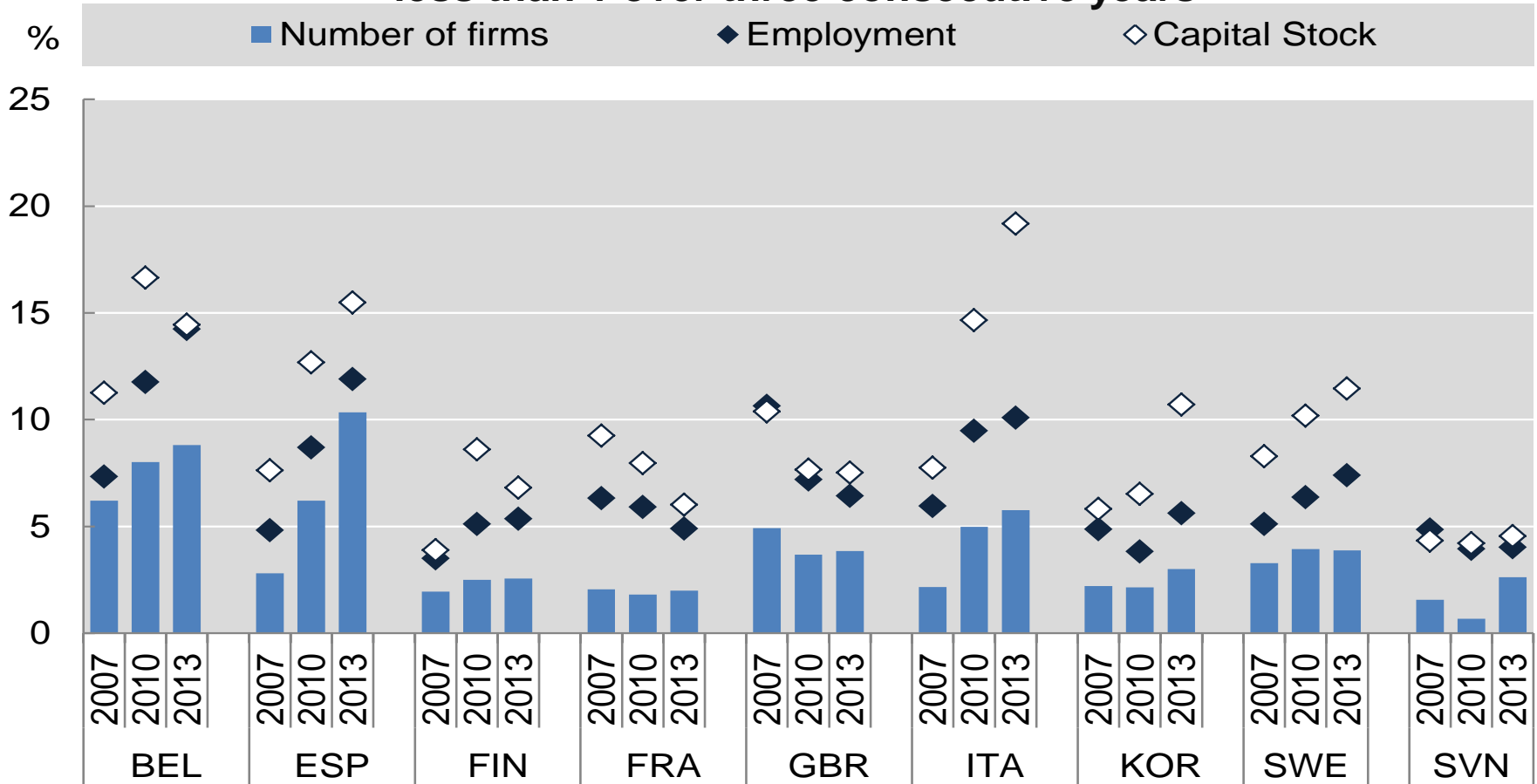
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- Productivity growth has slowed across the OECD.  
***What can policy do?***
- Micro dimensions to the aggregate slowdown suggest that **insolvency regimes** may be relevant:
  - **Rising productivity dispersion** (Andrews et al, 2016; Decker et al, 2017)
  - **Declining efficiency of reallocation** (Gopinath et al; 2017; Decker et al 2017)
  - **Declining business dynamism**: less entry (Decker et al 2014; Criscuolo et al 2014) and more **zombie firms** (Acharya et al 2016; Adalet McGowan et al 2017).



# Motivation: *The rise of zombie firms*

**Firms aged  $\geq 10$  years and with an interest coverage ratio\* less than 1 over three consecutive years**



Interest coverage ratio = (EBIT/Interest Payments)

Source: Adalet McGowan, M., D. Andrews and V. Millot (2017), "The Walking Dead? Zombie Firms and Productivity Performance in OECD countries", OECD Economics Department Working Paper No 1372.



# Motivation: *zombie firms and aggregate productivity*

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- Key paper: Caballero, Hoshi and Kashyap (2008), “Zombie Lending and Depressed Restructuring in Japan,” *American Economic Review* 98(5).
- In a companion paper, we apply and extend this methodology to 13 countries. Controlling for cyclical shocks, a higher **share of industry capital sunk in zombie firms** is associated with:
  - Weaker investment and employment growth by the “typical” non-zombie firm, especially young firms
  - Higher productivity dispersion and barriers to entry
  - Weaker dynamic capital reallocation: the responsiveness of capital growth to (lagged) firm MFP (Decker et al 2017)
- **Insolvency regimes** can bring debtors and creditors to the table to deal with financial distress in an orderly fashion. *Do they matter for zombie congestion?*



# Our contribution: *new policy indicators that are relevant for productivity*

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- Insolvency regimes + productivity: cross-country research is constrained by the limitations of insolvency regime indicators.
- New OECD indicators show that **insolvency regime design varies**, implying cross-country differences in:
  - Personal costs associated with entrepreneurial failure
  - Barriers to corporate restructuring
  - Preventative and streamlining measures
- Insolvency regime design is **relevant** for understanding cross-country patterns in two sources of productivity weakness:
  - Capital stock sunk in zombie firms
  - Dynamic capital reallocation
- Policy implication: corporate restructuring as a means to higher productivity growth?

# **NEW OECD INDICATORS OF INSOLVENCY REGIMES**



# Existing indicators of insolvency regimes

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## World Bank Doing Business

- Only refer to corporate insolvency and formal proceedings
- Outcome-based indicators (“cost to close a business”) are based on a stylized case study → hotel as debtor, tangible assets, only one creditor. **No clear policy lever.**

## OECD questionnaire and indicators

- Corporate & personal insolvency: *entrepreneurs often use personal finances prior to incorporation or lenders require them to post personal collateral*
- Based on international best practice and existing literature
- Focus on specific design features → clear policy levers
- Focus on ex-post efficiency; abstracts from quality of resolution
- **Increasing in the extent to which the regime delays the initiation of and increases the length of proceedings**



# New cross-country indicators of insolvency regimes

Key design features of corporate and personal insolvency regimes

## Aggregate insolvency indicator (Insol-13)

| A. Treatment of failed entrepreneurs | B. Prevention and streamlining            | C. Restructuring tools                                | D. Other factors  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1. Time to discharge                 | 3. Early warning mechanisms               | 6. Creditor ability to initiate restructuring         | 11. Degree of court involvement                         |
| 2. Exemptions                        | 4. Pre-insolvency regimes                 | 7. Availability and length of stay on assets          | 12. Distinction between honest and fraudulent bankrupts |
|                                      | 5. Special insolvency procedures for SMEs | 8. Possibility and priority of new financing          | 13. Rights of employees*                                |
|                                      |   | 9. Possibility to "cram-down" on dissenting creditors |   |
|                                      |   | 10. Treatment of management during restructuring      |   |

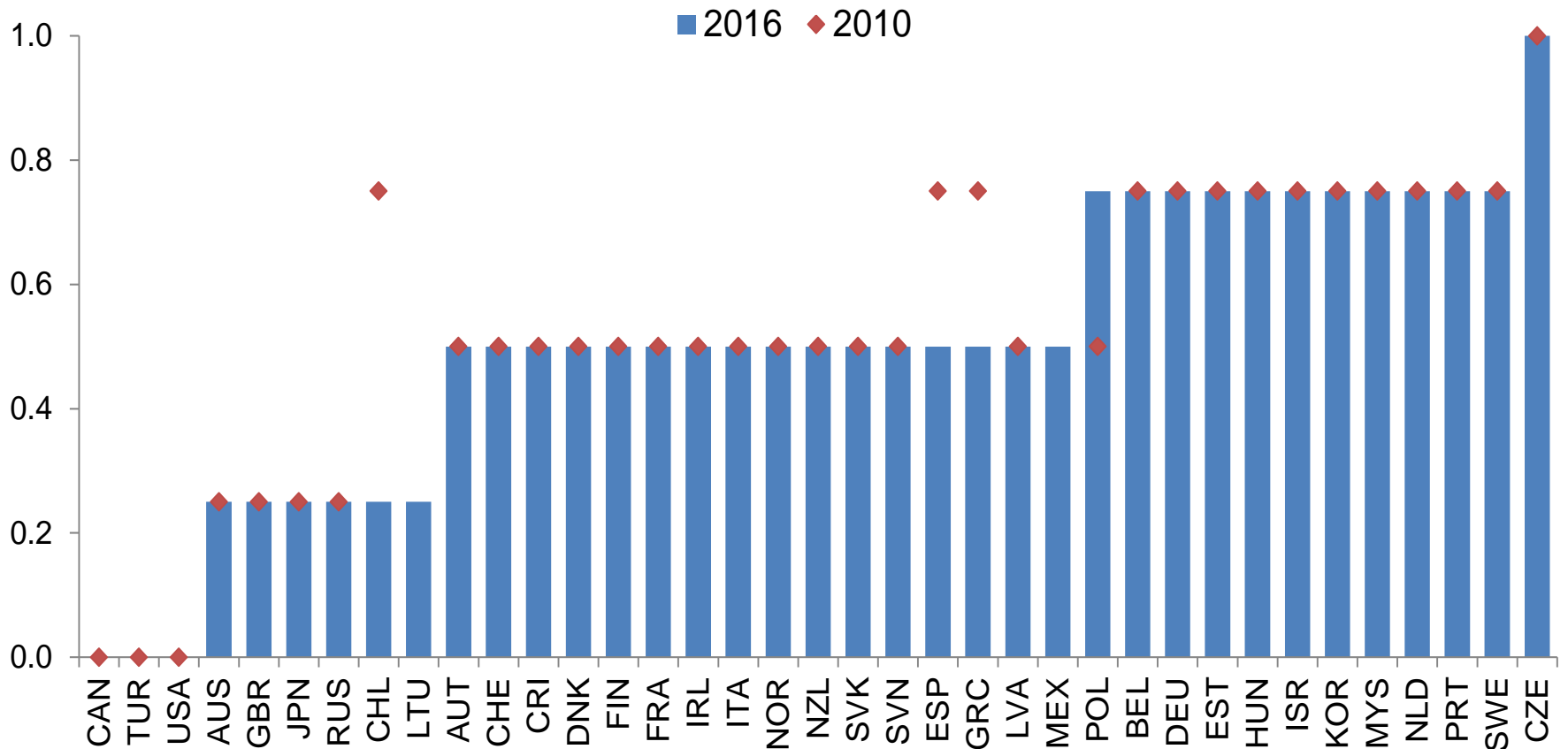
Equal weights assigned to each feature for the composite indicators





# Cross-country differences in the design of personal insolvency regimes

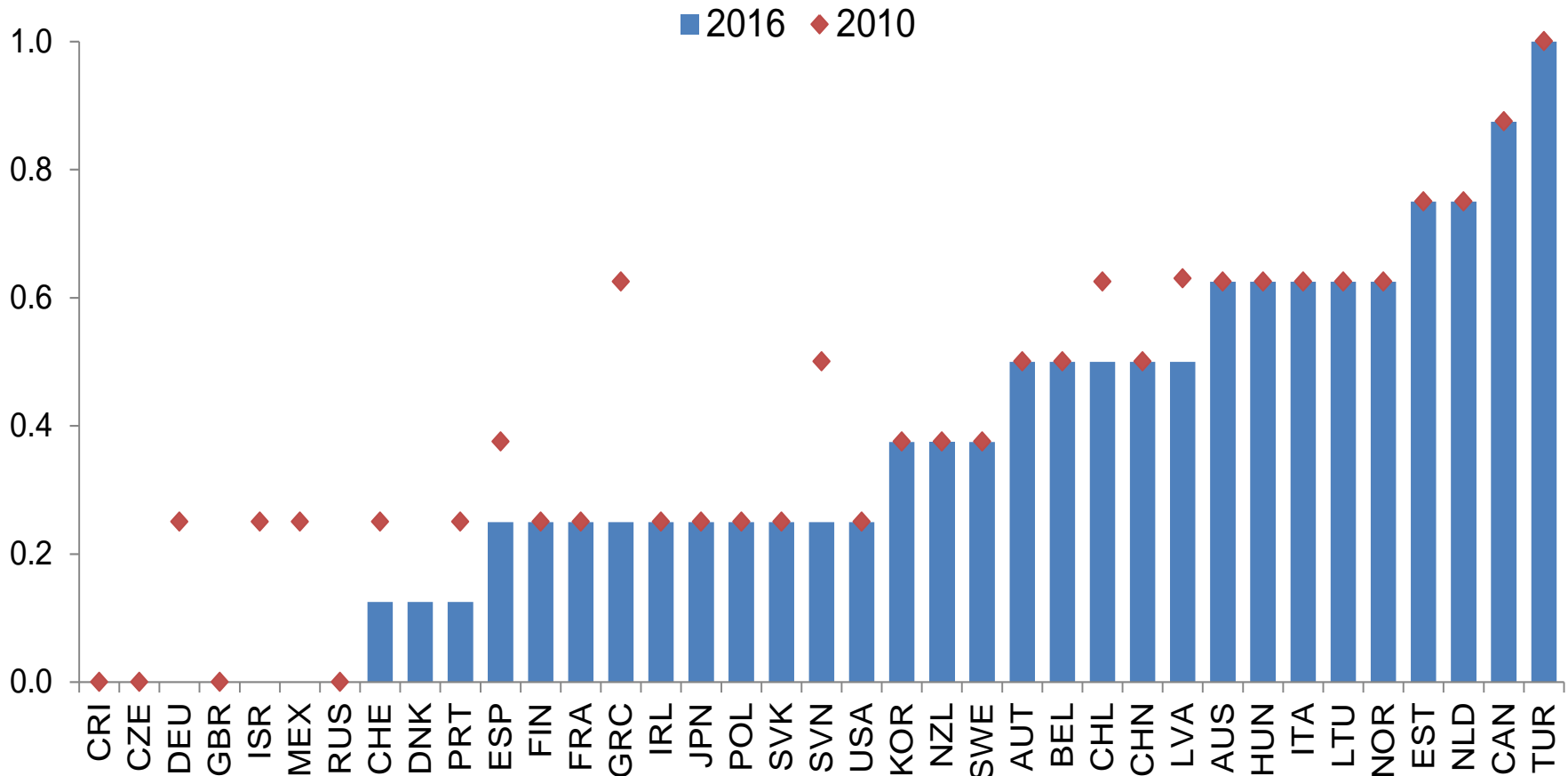
## Personal costs to failed entrepreneurs





# Barriers to corporate restructuring also vary significantly across countries

## Barriers to corporate restructuring



**INSOLVENCY REGIMES,  
ZOMBIE FIRMS AND CAPITAL  
REALLOCATION**



# Firm level dataset – ORBIS

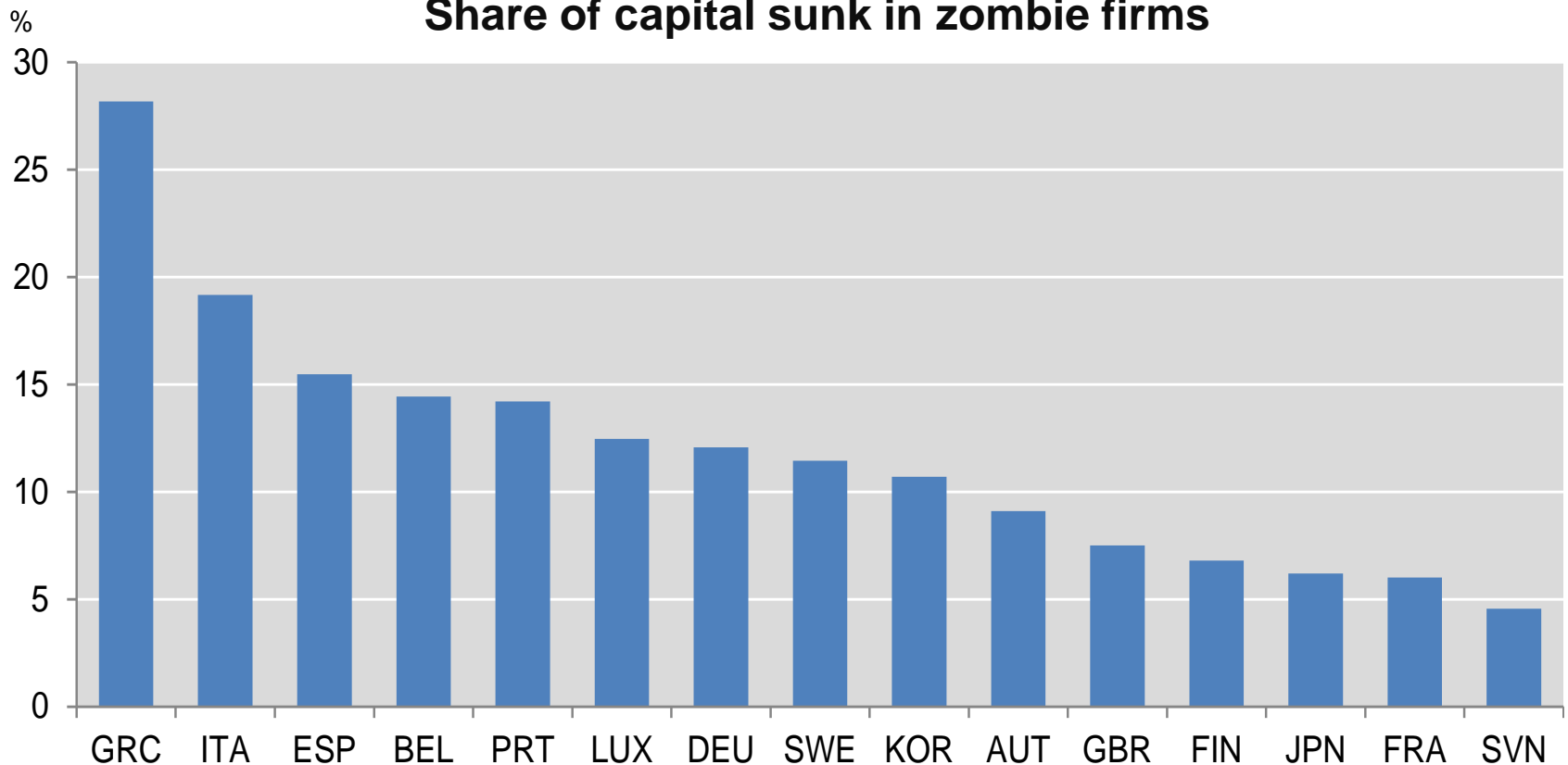
- Largest firm-level dataset of firms worldwide; revenue, employment, assets, profits and financial conditions
- Cleaning & filtering following Kalemli-Ozcan et al (2015) and Gal (2013); representativeness checks (i.e. apply weights based on business register;  $cty*ind*year*size$ )
- Capital stock (book values, implied gross investment then applying PIM); revenue MFP – Solow and Wooldridge (2009)
- Unconsolidated accounts → lowest level of aggregation
- Sample restricted to 14 countries with best coverage in 2013: AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IT, JP, KR, PT, SE, SI; NACE Rev 1.1 15-74, exc. 65-67



# Zombie congestion varies significantly across countries

Firms aged  $\geq 10$  years and with an interest coverage ratio  $< 1$  over three consecutive years, 2013

Share of capital sunk in zombie firms





# Methodology

- Rajan & Zingales (1998): firms operating in industries with “naturally” higher firm turnover should be more exposed – and thus disproportionately affected – by insolvency regimes.

$$ZKS_{cs} = \alpha + \sum_j \beta_1^j Insol_c^j * Exp_s + \sum_k \beta_2^k Pol_c^k * Exp_s + \delta_c + \delta_s + \varepsilon_{cs}$$

- $ZKS$  is the share of capital sunk in zombie firms in industry  $s$  and country  $c$  in 2013
- $Insol$  refers to different features of the insolvency regime in 2010
- $Exp$  is the industry exposure to policies (firm turnover rates for the US)
- $Pol$  refers to other national level policies (PMR, EPL, Rule of Law)
- $\delta_c$  and  $\delta_s$  are country and industry fixed effects

Predictions:  $\beta_1 > 0 \rightarrow$  High barriers to restructuring should disproportionately raise zombie congestion in industries with higher firm turnover relative to low firm turnover industries



# Zombie capital shares and insolvency regimes

Dependent variable: zombie capital shares

|   | (1)                   | (2)                 | (3)                   | (4)                   | (5)                   |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Personal costs to failed entrepreneurs*Turnover | 0.01420***<br>(0.004) |                     |                       | 0.01095***<br>(0.004) | 0.01426***<br>(0.004) |
| Lack of prevention and streamlining*Turnover    |                       | 0.00418*<br>(0.002) |                       | 0.00095<br>(0.003)    | 0.00012<br>(0.002)    |
| Barriers to restructuring*Turnover              |                       |                     | 0.01296***<br>(0.004) | 0.00745*<br>(0.004)   | 0.00879*<br>(0.005)   |
| Number of observations                          | 558                   | 558                 | 558                   | 558                   | 558                   |
| AdjR2   | 0.319                 | 0.306               | 0.314                 | 0.321                 | 0.320                 |
| Administrative burdens on start-ups*Turnover    | NO                    | NO                  | NO                    | NO                    | YES                   |
| Rule of Law*Turnover                            | NO                    | NO                  | NO                    | NO                    | YES                   |
| EPL including CD*Turnover                       | NO                    | NO                  | NO                    | NO                    | YES                   |
| Country Fixed Effects                           | YES                   | YES                 | YES                   | YES                   | YES                   |
| Industry Fixed Effects                          | YES                   | YES                 | YES                   | YES                   | YES                   |

14 countries (AUT, BEL, DEU, ESP, FIN, FRA, GBR, GRC, ITA, JPN, KOR, PRT, SWE and SVN) in 2013



## Results are robust to:

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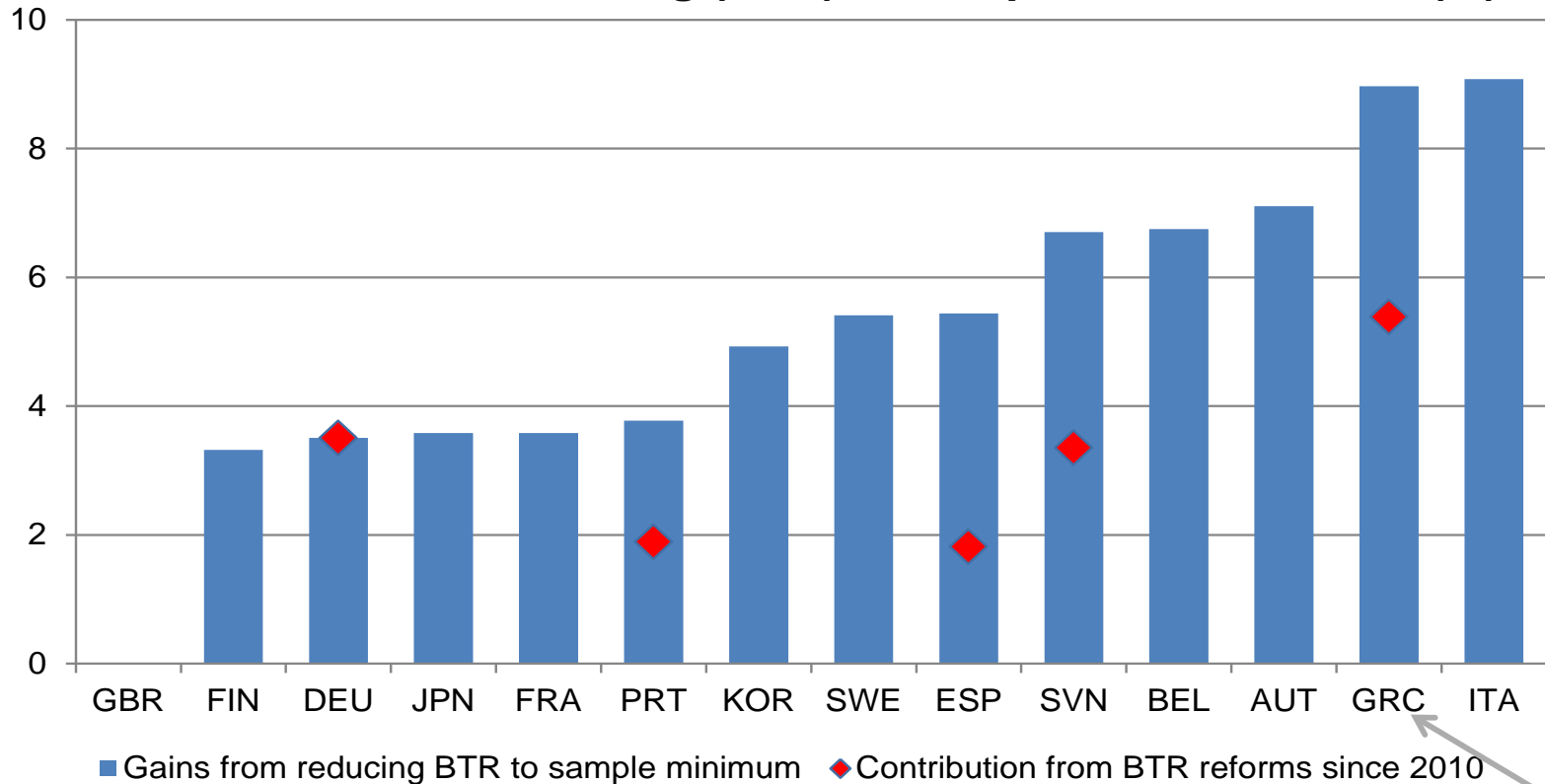
- Outlier & leverage control: dropping **one country at a time** and using the Stata **robust regression** routine
- Using **different definitions** of zombies based on interest coverage ratio (different age and persistence thresholds).
- Using **more exogenous** measures of zombie firms in a smaller sample of countries; i.e. firms receiving subsidised credit (Caballero et al, 2008).
- Using SDBS weights to address ORBIS **representativeness issues**.
- Using **2016** insolvency regime indicators
- Excluding firms which are part of a **multinational group**





# Reforms to insolvency regimes can reduce zombie congestion

Reduction in zombie capital share (ZKS) associated with reducing barriers to restructuring (BTR) to sample minimum level (%)



In 2013, the ZKS in Greece = 27%. Reforming BTR to best practice could reduce the ZKS by 9%pts, with recent reforms potentially accounting for 5%pts of these gains.



# Other results: channels and extensions

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## Corporate restructuring as a key channel

- Higher barriers to restructuring are associated with a lower likelihood that zombies subsequently return to better financial health and (marginal) non-zombies avoid turning into zombies

## Insolvency regimes & dynamic capital reallocation

- Canonical models of firm dynamics predict that conditional on firm size, firms with higher (lagged) MFP should grow more quickly (see: Foster et al 2016; Decker et al 2017).
  - On average, we find that more productive firms attract more capital.
  - But higher barriers to restructuring are associated with a lower likelihood that capital flows to more productive firms in industries with high firm turnover relative to other industries

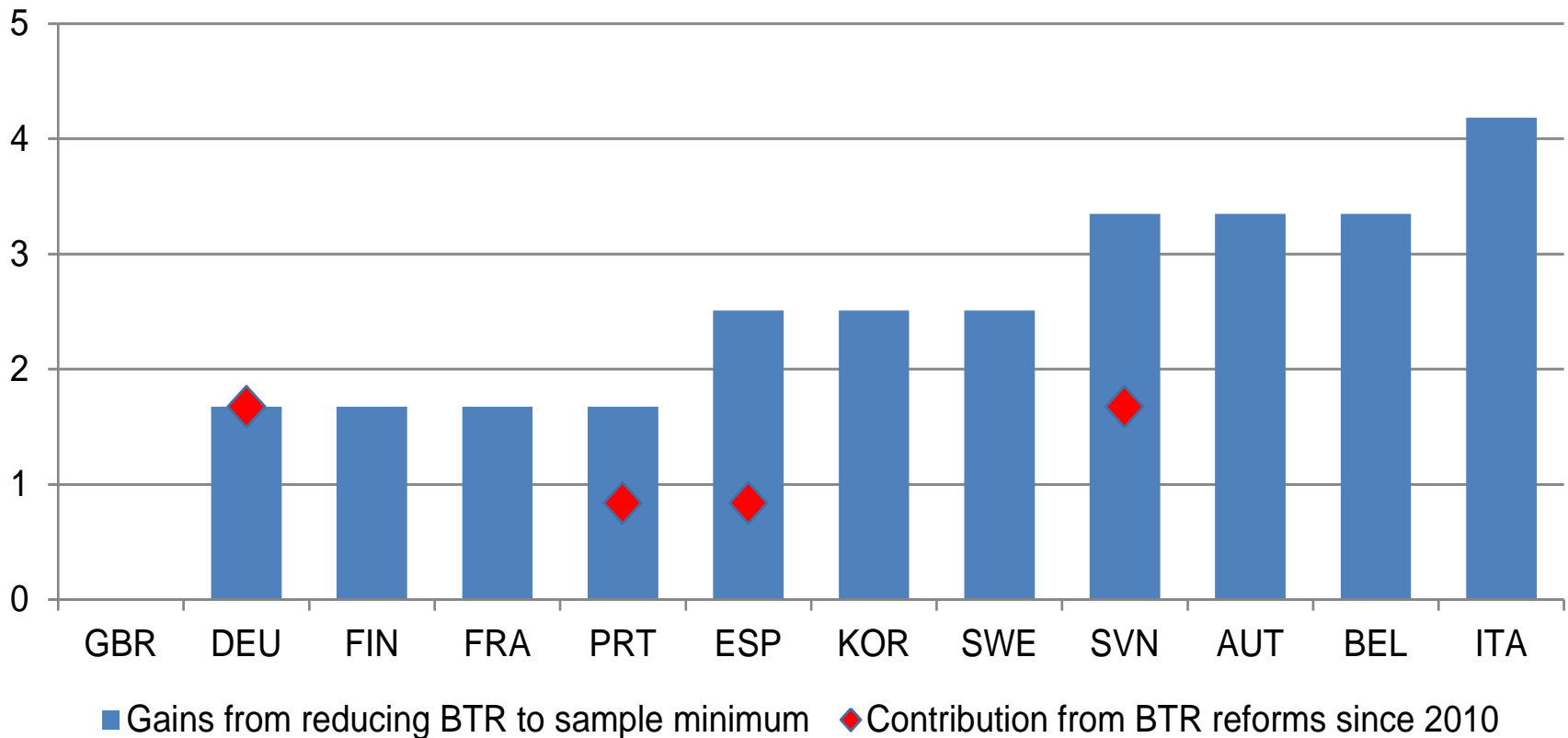
**SPARES**



# Efficient insolvency regimes can foster productivity-enhancing capital reallocation

**Gain to the efficiency of capital reallocation associated with lowering barriers to restructuring (BTR) to sample minimum level**

Diff. in capital growth between high & low MFP firms; high *minus* low turnover industries

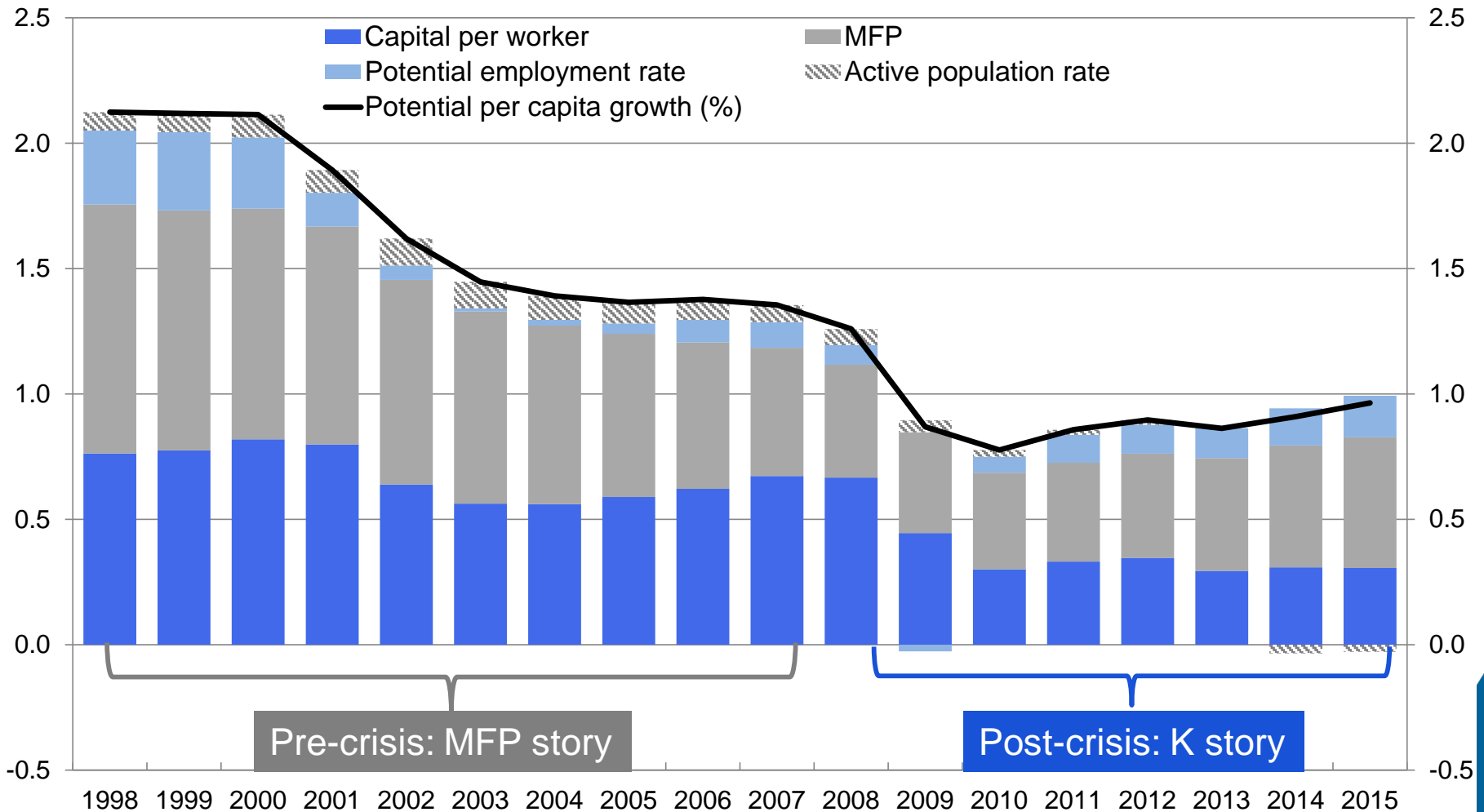


**In Spain, reforming BTR to best practice could improve capital reallocation by 2.5%pts, with recent reforms potentially accounting for 0.8%pts of these gains**



# Weak labour productivity underpins the collapse in OECD potential growth

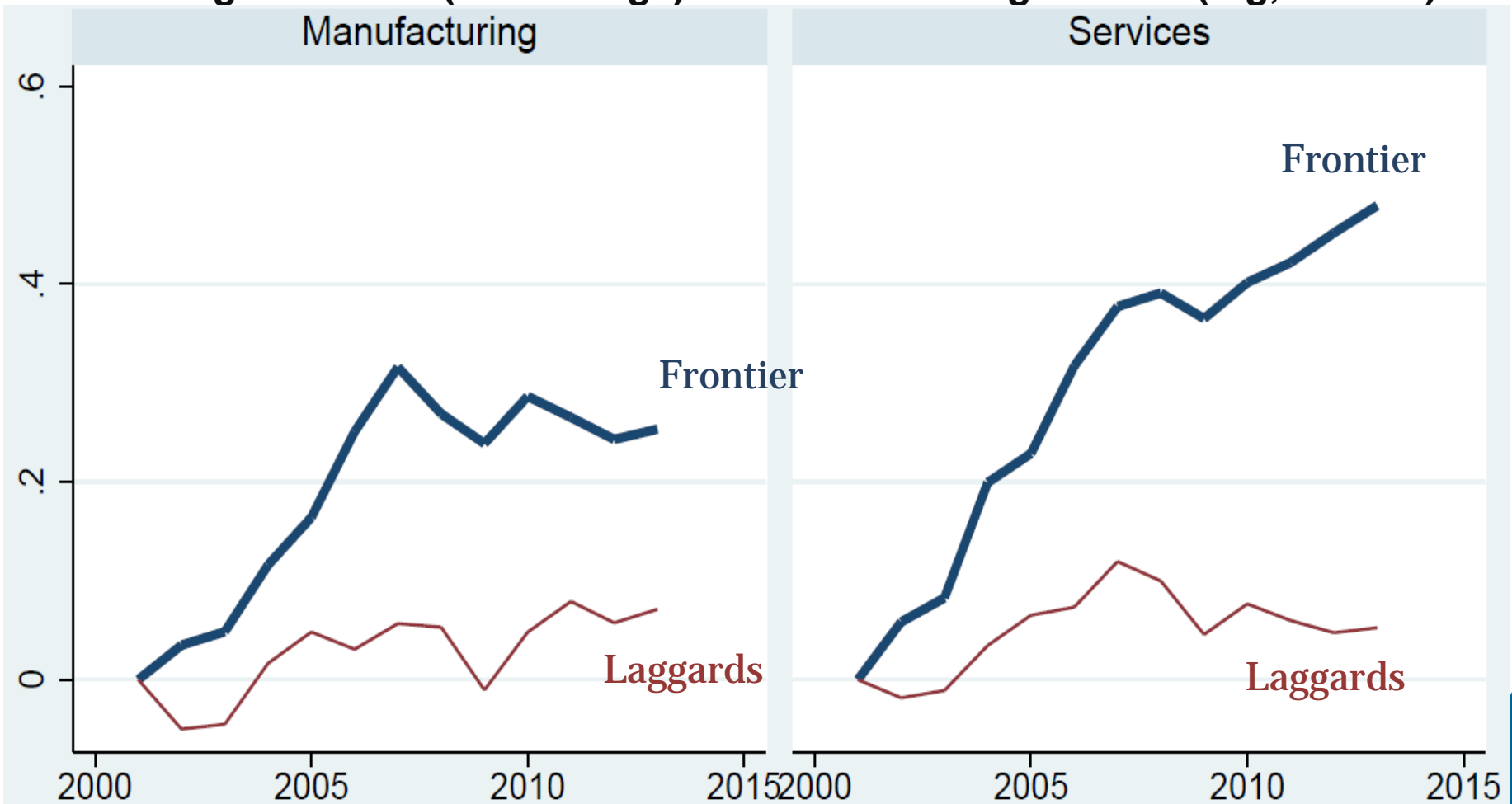
Contribution to potential per capita output growth (% pts unless otherwise noted)





# Productivity dispersion is rising

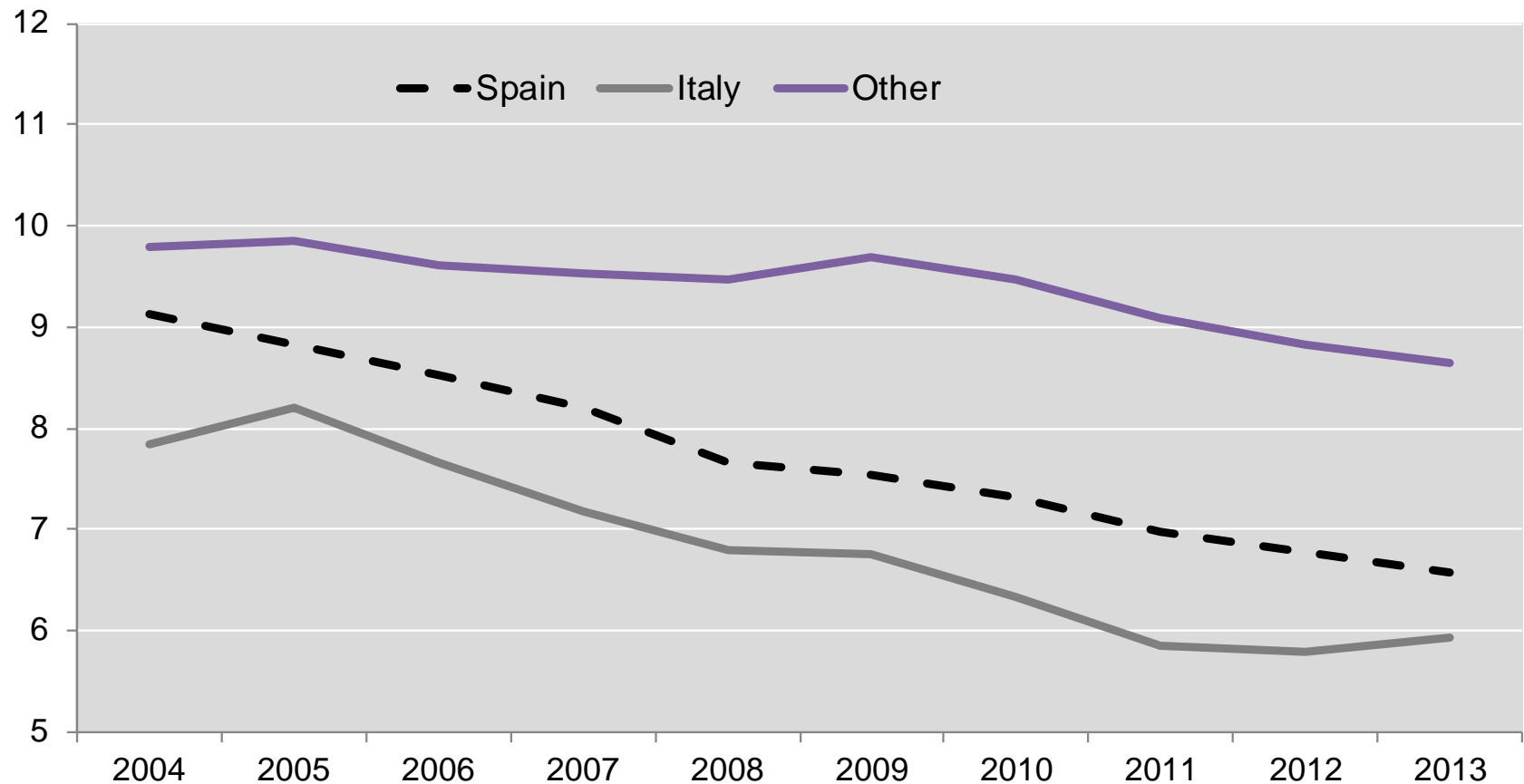
Average of MFPR (Wooldridge) across each 2-digit sector (log, 2001=0)





# Rising productivity dispersion, but declining reallocation

Difference in capital growth between high and low productivity firms (%pts)



Source: Adalet McGowan, M., D. Andrews and V. Millot (2017), "The Walking Dead? Zombie Firms and Productivity Performance in OECD countries", OECD Economics Department Working Paper No. 1372.



# Insolvency regimes: rationale, goals and trade-offs

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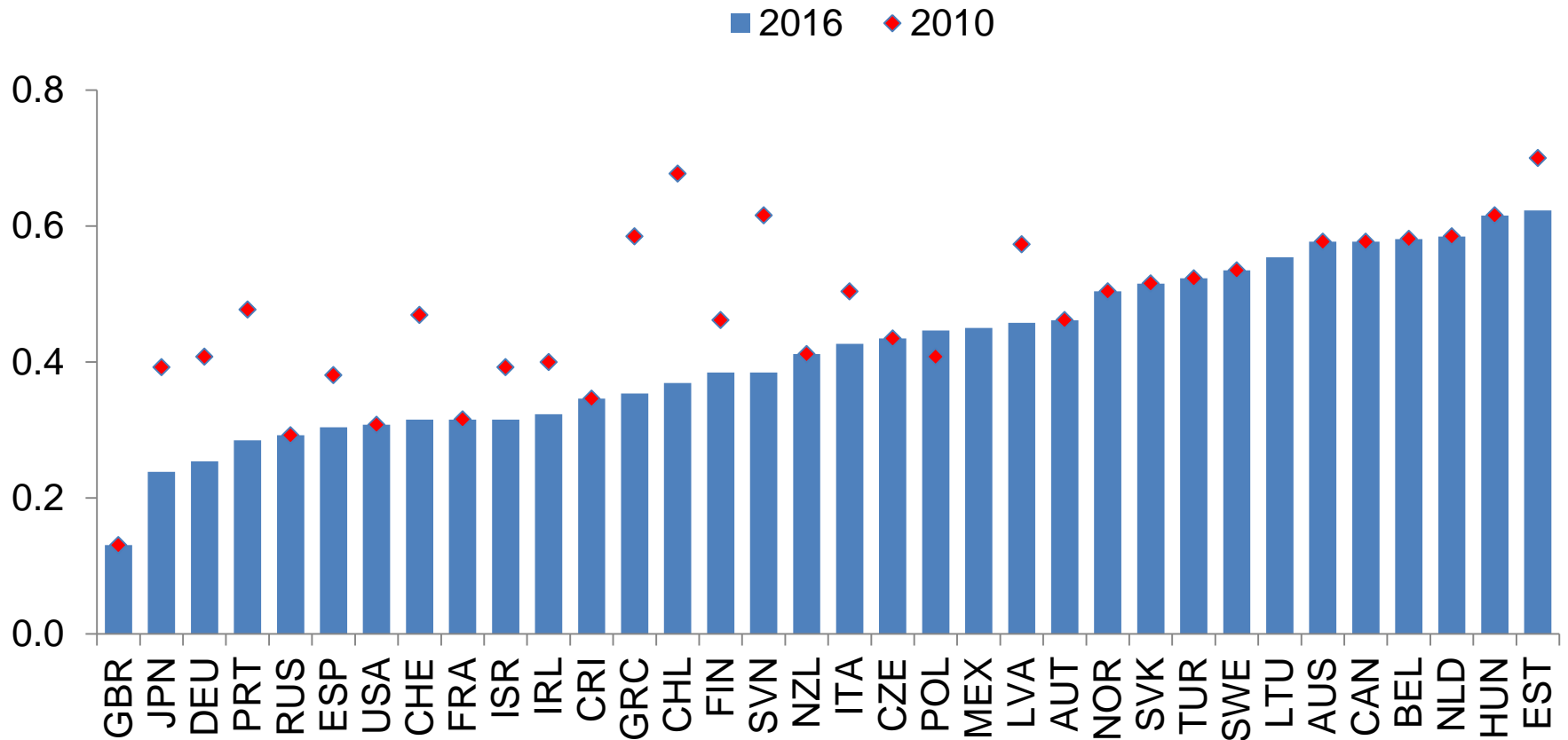
- Rationale: market imperfections prevent the orderly exit of failing firms
- Goals: insolvency regimes can restructure viable firms and liquidate non-viable ones
  - In practice, correctly distinguishing between viable and non-viable firms can be difficult.
- Trade-offs: insolvency regimes need to balance providing incentives for experimentation by entrepreneurs with lending by creditors.





# Cross-country differences in insolvency regimes are significant

## Composite indicators of insolvency regimes

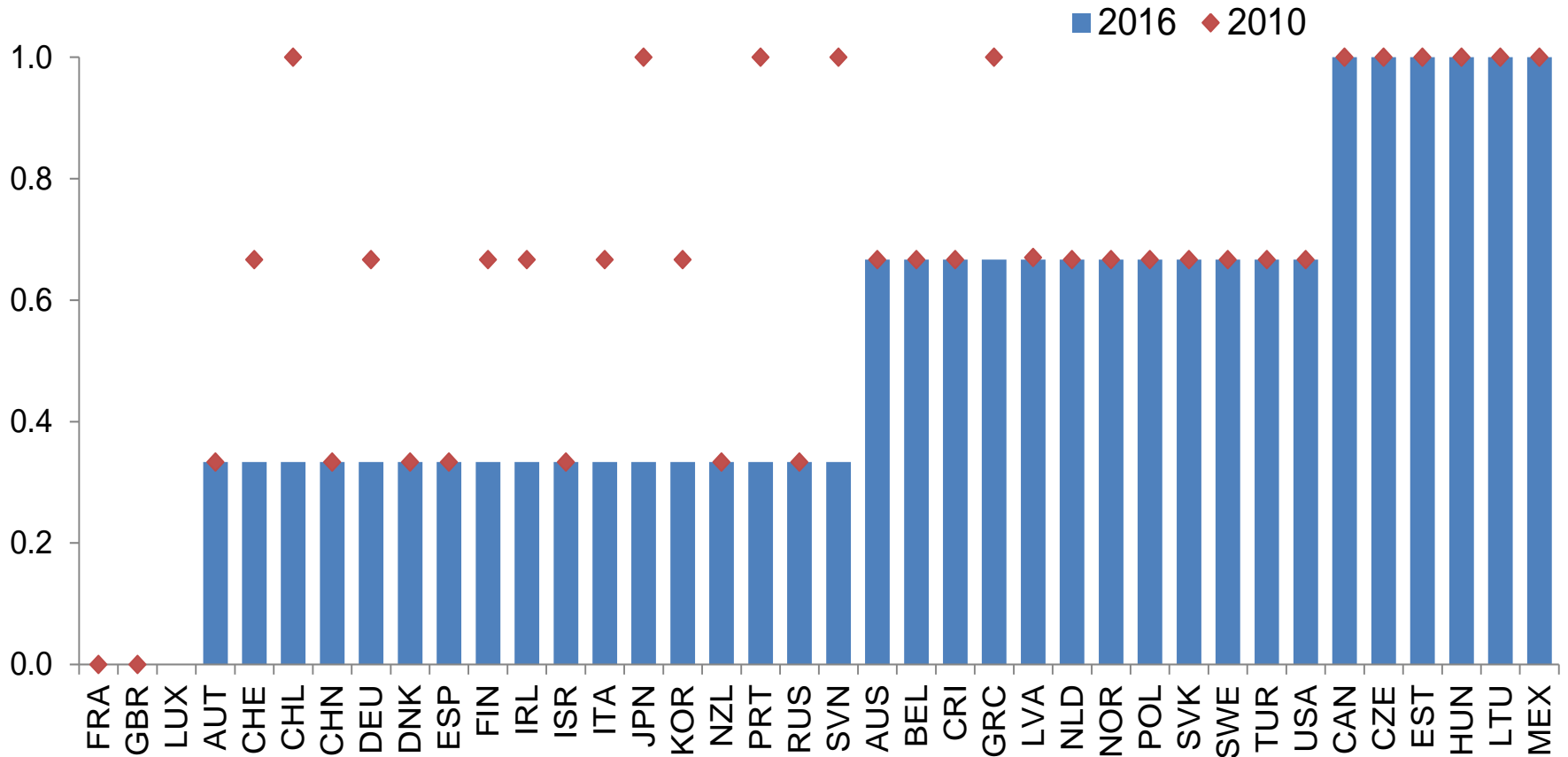


Useful for EDRC and GFG, given much scope to reform insolvency regimes in some countries



# ... and preventative and streamlining tools

## Lack of prevention and streamlining





# Operationalising insolvency reform

## Insol-13

| Insol-13                               |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
|--|------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|-------|
| Treatment of failed entrepreneurs      |            | Prevention and streamlining |                        |                             | Restructuring tools                        |   |   |  |  | Other factors               |                     |   |       |
| Time to discharge                      | Exemptions | Early warning systems       | Pre-insolvency regimes | Special procedures for SMEs | Creditor ability to initiate restructuring | Availability and length of stay on assets | Possibility and priority of new financing | Possibility to "cram-down" on dissenting creditors | Treatment of management during restructuring | Degree of court involvement | Rights of employees | Distinction between honest and fraudulent bankrupts |       |
| AUS                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| AUT                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| BEL                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| CAN                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| CHE                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| CHL                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| CHN                                    | N/A        | N/A                         |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| CRI                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| CZE                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| DEU                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| DNK                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             | N/A                 |   |       |
| ESP                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| EST                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| FIN                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| FRA                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| GBR                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| GRC                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| HUN                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| IRL                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| ISR                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| ITA                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| JPN                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| KOR                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             | N/A                 |   |       |
| LTU                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| LUX                                    | N/A        |                             |                        |                             |  | N/A                                       |   | N/A  |  |                             | N/A                 |   |       |
| LVA                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             | N/A                 |   |       |
| MEX                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| MYS                                    |            |                             | N/A                    | N/A                         | N/A  | N/A                                       | N/A                                       | N/A  | N/A  | N/A                         | N/A                 | N/A   |       |
| NLD                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| NOR                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| NZL                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| POL                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| PRT                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| RUS                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| SVK                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| SVN                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| SWE                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| TUR                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| USA                                    |            |                             |                        |                             |  |   |   |  |  |                             |                     |   |       |
| Number of countries with best practice | 8/38       | 8/37                        | 15/38                  | 27/38                       | 13/38                                      | 24/38                                     | 20/37                                     | 21/38  | 20/37  | 34/38                       | 1/37                | 11/35   | 29/38 |



# Methodology: *how do we identify zombie firms?*

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## Approach 1: Persistent financial weakness:

- A. Firms with interest coverage ratio  $< 1$  for 3 consecutive years (Bank of Korea)
- B. Firms with negative profits (Bank of England)
- C. Firms with negative value added

→ *We focus on incumbent firms aged  $\geq 10$  years*



# Methodology: *how do we identify zombie firms?*

**Approach 2:** Firms receiving subsidized bank credit (Caballero et al., 2008):

- Actual interest repayments are less than an estimated benchmark  $R^*$  based on the firm debt structure and market interest rates

$$R_{i,t}^* = rs_{t-1}BS_{i,t-1} + \left( \frac{1}{5} \sum_{j=1}^5 rl_{t-j} \right) BL_{i,t-j}$$

where  $BS_{i,t}$  = short-term loans (less than one year) of firm  $i$  at the end of year  $t$

$BL_{i,t}$  = long-term debt (more than one year) of firm  $i$  at the end of year  $t$

$rs_t$  = average short-term prime rate year  $t$

$rl_t$  = average long-term prime rate year  $t$

- Pros: more directly linked to “evergreening” or “forbearance”; more exogenous?
- Cons: data availability is more challenging relative to (1)

*Baseline analysis is based on Approach (1A) but our results hold in a smaller sample based on Approach (2). 1A and 2 highly correlated.*



# Excluding MNEs

Dependent variable: zombie capital shares

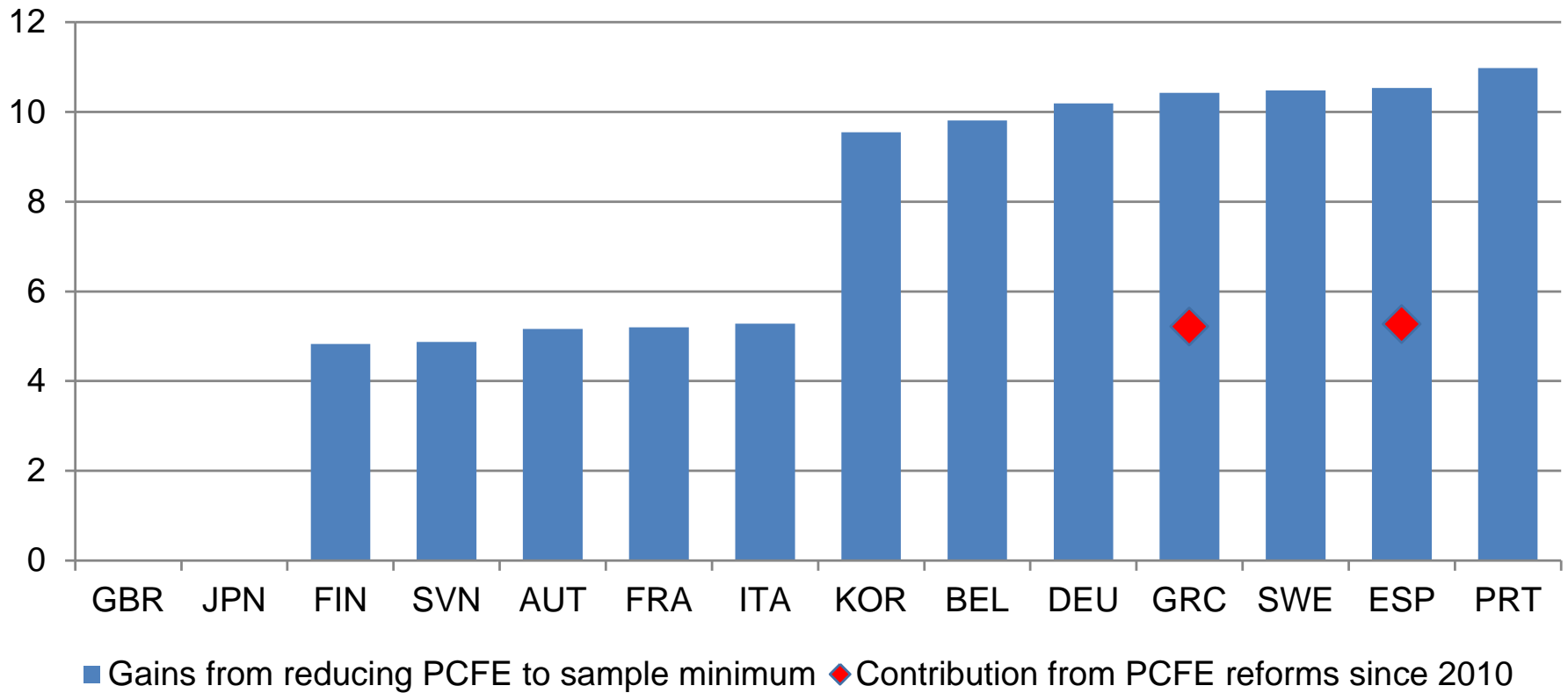
| Panel A: <b>Composite insolvency indicators</b> | <b>Insol-12</b>                     | Personal costs to failed entrepreneurs | Lack of prevention and streamlining     | Barriers to restructuring                      |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Insolvency*Turnover                             | 0.01171***<br>(0.004)               | 0.00998***<br>(0.003)                  | 0.00375**<br>(0.002)                    | 0.00747**<br>(0.004)                           |
| Number of observations                          | 515                                 | 515                                    | 515                                     | 515  |
| AdjR2   | 0.350                               | 0.353                                  | 0.347                                   | 0.347  |
| Panel B: <b>Individual features</b>             |                                     | <i>Time to discharge</i>               | <i>Lack of early warning mechanisms</i> | <i>Creditors cannot initiate restructuring</i> |
| Insolvency*Turnover                             |                                     | 0.00335***<br>(0.001)                  | 0.00271**<br>(0.001)                    | 0.00121<br>(0.001)                             |
| Number of observations                          |                                     | 515                                    | 515                                     | 515  |
| AdjR2   |                                     | 0.348                                  | 0.348                                   | 0.343  |
| Panel C: <b>Other policies</b>                  | Administrative burdens on start-ups | Rule of law                            | EPL including CD                        |  |
| Policy*Turnover                                 | 0.00363**<br>(0.001)                | -0.00336***<br>(0.001)                 | 0.00404***<br>(0.001)                   |  |
| Number of observations                          | 515                                 | 515                                    | 515                                     |  |
| AdjR2   | 0.348                               | 0.351                                  | 0.350                                   |  |
| Country Fixed Effects                           | YES                                 | YES                                    | YES                                     | YES  |
| Industry Fixed Effects                          | YES                                 | YES                                    | YES                                     | YES  |





# Reforms to insolvency regimes can reduce zombie congestion

Reduction in zombie capital share (ZKS) associated with reducing personal cost to failed entrepreneurs (PCFE) to best practice level (%)







# Insolvency regimes and corporate restructuring

Transition status of firms between 2010 and 2013

|                             | (1)                 | (2)                       | (3)  |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
|                             | <b>Insol-12</b>     | Barriers to restructuring | <i>Creditors cannot initiate restructuring</i> |
| Estimation by OLS           |                     |                           |  |
| Insolvency*Turnover         | -0.00344<br>(0.003) | -0.00399**<br>(0.002)     | -0.00132*<br>(0.001)                           |
| Estimation by Ordered Logit |                     |                           |  |
| Insolvency*Turnover         | -0.03783<br>(0.035) | -0.04463**<br>(0.019)     | -0.01442**<br>(0.007)                          |
| Country Fixed Effects       | YES                 | YES                       | YES  |
| Industry Fixed Effects      | YES                 | YES                       | YES  |
| Observations                | 787,466             | 787,466                   | 787,466  |

$$Status_{icst} = \alpha + \sum_j \beta_1^j Insol_c^j * Exp_s + \sum_k \beta_2^k Pol_c^k * Exp_s + \sum_k \beta_3^k X_{icst-1}^k + \delta_c + \delta_s + \varepsilon_{icst}$$

# **INSOLVENCY REGIMES AND CAPITAL REALLOCATION**



# Methodology

- Foster, Grim & Haltiwanger (2016): models of firm dynamics predict that conditional on size, firms with higher MFP grow more quickly (Cooper et al., 2007)

$$\Delta K_{icst} = \alpha + \beta_1 MFP_{icst-1} + \sum_j \beta_2^j MFP_{icst-1} * Insol_c^j * Exp_s + \beta_3 MFP_{icst-1} * C_c + \beta_4 MFP_{icst-1} * S_s + \sum_k \beta_5^k X_{icst-1}^k + \delta_{cs} + \varepsilon_{icst}$$

- Cross-section, t = 2013
- Firm MFP is the deviation from country-industry-year averages
- Exp is the industry s exposure to policies (firm turnover rates for the US)
- X denotes a vector of firm age and firm size
- C<sub>c</sub> and S<sub>s</sub> are country and industry fixed effects
- Standard errors clustered at country\*industry level

Predictions:  $\beta_1 > 0$  and  $\beta_2 < 0$

High barriers to restructuring should disproportionately reduce the efficiency of capital reallocation in industries with higher firm turnover



# Capital reallocation and insolvency regimes, 2013

Dependent variable: growth in the real capital stock

| Panel A: Composite insolvency indicators |  | Insol-13               | Insol-12               |
|--|--|------------------------|------------------------|
| Insolvency*Lagged MFP*Turnover           |  | -0.02007***<br>(0.007) | -0.01614***<br>(0.006) |
| Number of observations                   |  | 870,865                | 890,527                |
| AdjR2                                    |  | 0.0193                 | 0.0207                 |

| Panel B: Insolvency indicators | Personal costs to failed entrepreneurs | Stringent exemption of assets | Lack of prevention and streamlining | Lack of early warning mechanisms |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Insolvency*Lagged MFP*Turnover | -0.00471<br>(0.004)                    | -0.00980***<br>(0.003)        | -0.00180<br>(0.003)                 | -0.00231**<br>(0.001)            |
| Number of observations         | 890,527                                | 890,527                       | 890,527                             | 890,527                          |
| AdjR2                          | 0.0207                                 | 0.0208                        | 0.0207                              | 0.0207                           |

| Panel C: Insolvency indicators | Barriers to restructuring | Creditors cannot initiate restructuring | Indefinite length of stay | Priority of new financing |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Insolvency*Lagged MFP*Turnover | -0.01038***<br>(0.003)    | -0.00238***<br>(0.001)                  | -0.00260***<br>(0.001)    | 0.00010<br>(0.001)        |
| Number of observations         | 890,527                   | 890,527                                 | 890,527                   | 890,527                   |
| AdjR2                          | 0.0208                    | 0.0207                                  | 0.0207                    | 0.0207                    |
| Firm age and size controls     | YES                       | YES                                     | YES                       | YES                       |
| Country Dummies*Lagged MFP     | YES                       | YES                                     | YES                       | YES                       |
| Industry Dummies*Lagged MFP    | YES                       | YES                                     | YES                       | YES                       |
| Country*Industry Fixed Effects | YES                       | YES                                     | YES                       | YES                       |

12 countries: AT, BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, GB, IT, KR, PT, SE, SI

Robust standard errors clustered at country\*industry level



# Future work

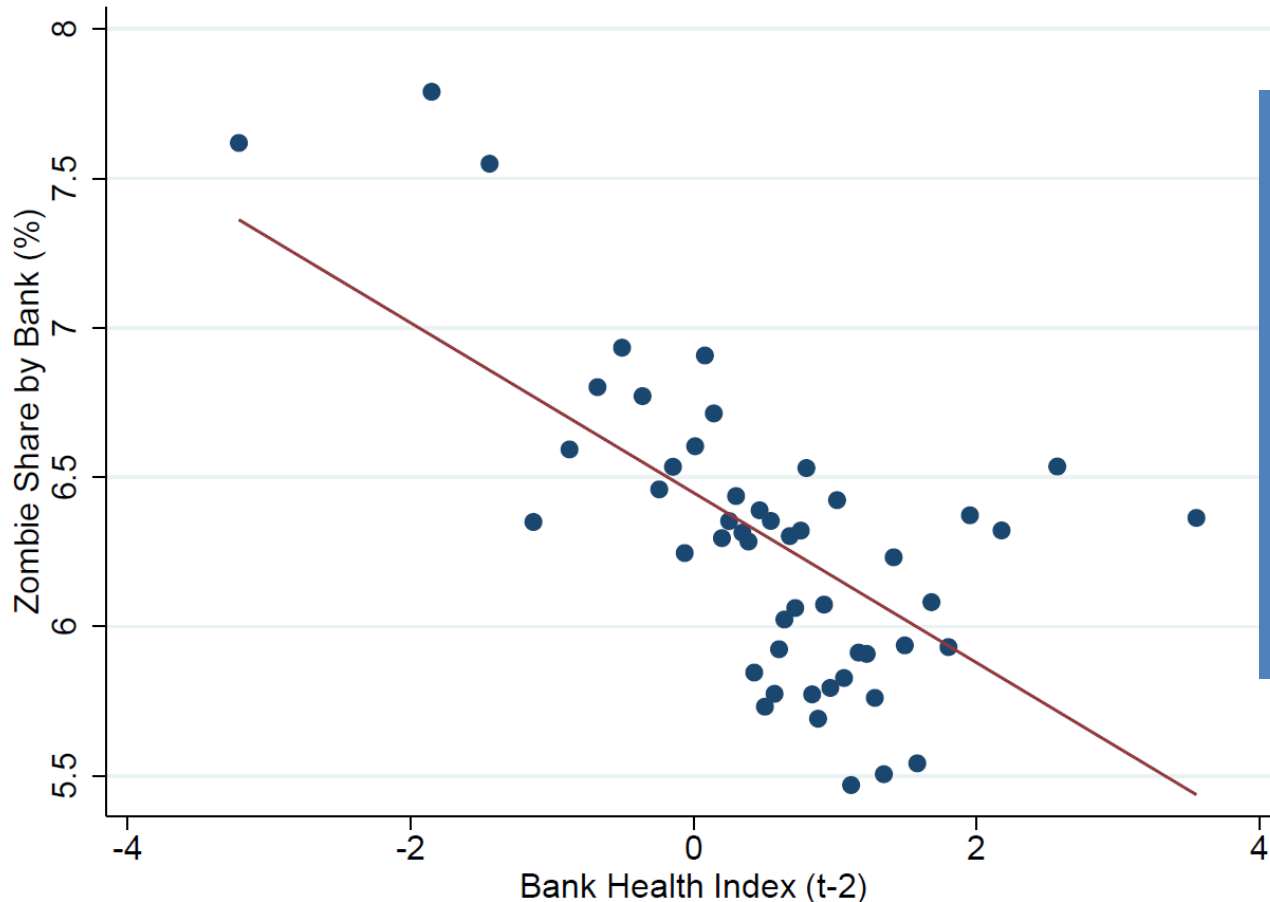
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- Insolvency regimes and **within-firm** productivity growth – i.e. innovation and adoption
- Connection between **zombie firms & weak banks**, and how this link is shaped by insolvency regimes.



# Banks matter: *zombie firms are more likely to be connected to weak banks*

Average zombie share for each bin of bank health  
Purged of country-industry-year fixed effects



And improvements in bank health translate into larger reductions in the zombie firm share in countries where insolvency regimes do not unduly inhibit restructuring



# Channels: *key features from model in Caballero et al (2008)*

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- In a world without zombies, incumbents hit by unfavourable shocks exit, and are replaced by new entrants hit by favourable productivity draws.
- In a world with zombies, subsidised incumbents don't exit when hit by unfavourable shocks ("sclerosis"). In turn:
  - **Congestion**: non-zombies must compete with zombies for scarce resources; zombies may even  $\downarrow$  prices &  $\uparrow$  wages to compete aggressively
  - **Non-zombies bare all the adjustment to shocks**: potentially productive entrants decide not to enter and healthy incumbents scrap expansion plans
  - **Entrants** must clear a higher productivity threshold to compensate for lower profitability caused by congestion



# Methodology: zombies and “average” non-zombie performance

Baseline specification taken from Caballero et al (2008):

$$Y_{icst}^k = \beta_1 nonZ_{icst} + \beta_2 nonZ_{icst} * Z_{cst} + \beta_3 X_{icst-1} + \delta_{cst} + \varepsilon_{icst}$$

- Y (k=3): 1-investment, 2-employment growth; 3-MFP
- nonZ is dummy=1 if firm is a non-zombie; =0 if zombie firm
- Z is the share of industry capital sunk in zombie firms
- X: Firm level controls (firm age, size etc)
- Country-industry-year fixed effects: cyclical shocks
- Standard errors clustered at country\*industry\*year level

Predictions:  $\beta_2 < 0$  for K & E |  $\beta_2 > 0$  for MFP

- The presence of zombie will generate distortions for non-zombie firms: depress K & E growth + widen the MFP gap





# Zombie congestion and “average” non-zombie firm performance

**Zombie measure: interest coverage ratio < 1 over the past three years and firms older than 10 years old**

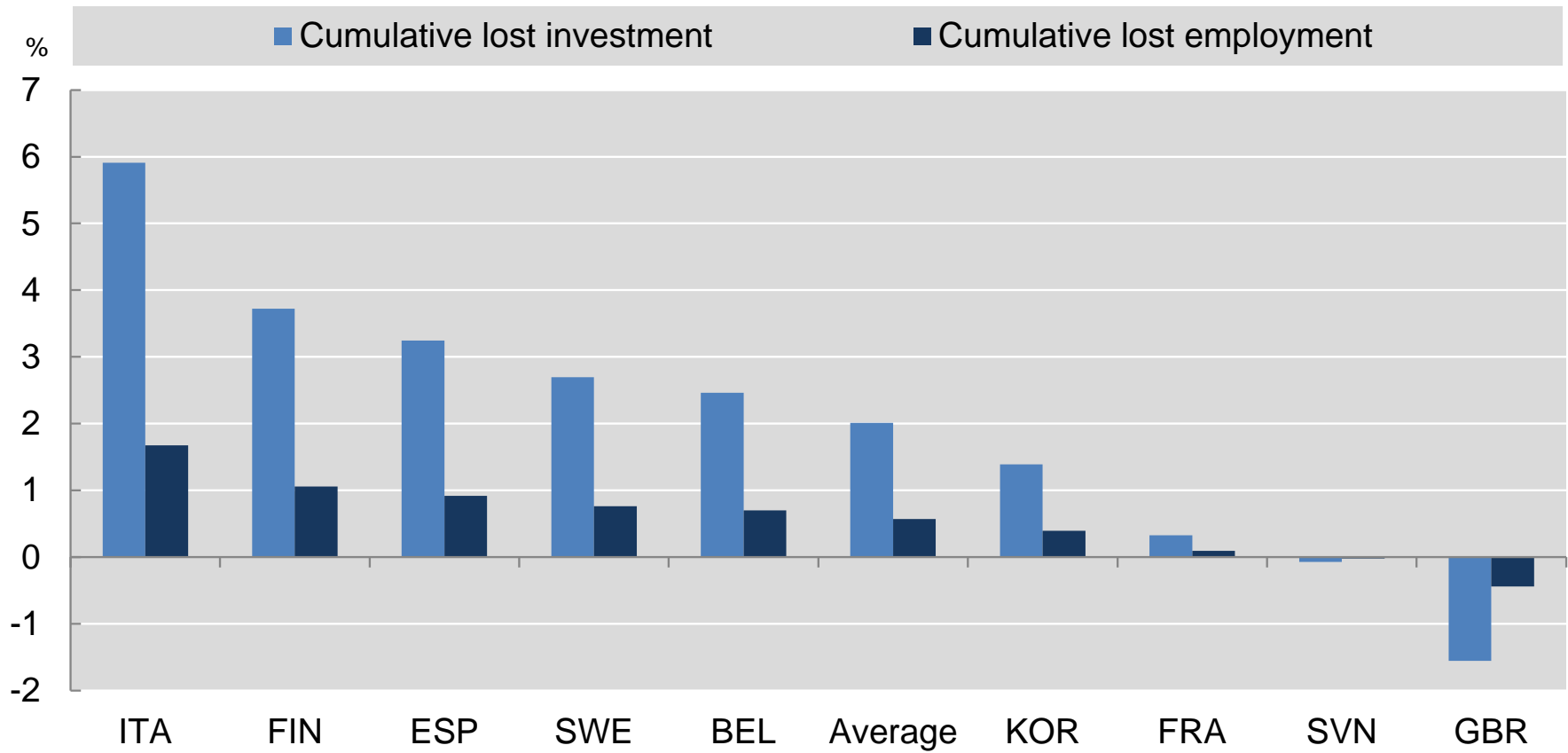
|  | (1)                                       | (2)                      | (3)                     | (4)                                     | (5)                     | (6)                     |
|--|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
|  | <i>A: Panel of 9 countries, 2003-2013</i> |                          |                         | <i>B: Cross section of 13 countries</i> |                         |                         |
| VARIABLES  | <i>log(I/K)</i>                           | <i>dLog Emp</i>          | <i>MFP</i>              | <i>log(I/K)</i>                         | <i>dLog Emp</i>         | <i>MFP</i>              |
| Non-zombie dummy <sub>i,t</sub>  | 0.07372***<br>(0.00288)                   | 0.06943***<br>(0.00172)  | 0.52738***<br>(0.01198) | 0.06342***<br>(0.00794)                 | 0.08335***<br>(0.00479) | 0.57842***<br>(0.02918) |
| Non-zombie dummy <sub>i,t</sub> X Industry<br>zombie shares <sub>s,t</sub> | -0.13257***<br>(0.01752)                  | -0.03759***<br>(0.01197) | 0.47019***<br>(0.10471) | -0.07791**<br>(0.03752)                 | -0.04757*<br>(0.02490)  | 0.49190***<br>(0.17904) |
| Firm Age and Size Controls   | YES                                       | YES                      | YES                     | YES                                     | YES                     | YES                     |
| Industry*Country Fixed Effects   | NO  | NO                       | NO                      | YES                                     | YES                     | YES                     |
| Industry*Country*Year Fixed Effects  | YES                                       | YES                      | YES                     | NO                                      | NO                      | NO                      |
| Observations   | 10,121,532                                | 10,121,532               | 7,956,552               | 1,234,596                               | 1,234,596               | 1,030,477               |
| AdjR2  | 0.0193                                    | 0.0244                   | 0.832                   | 0.0152                                  | 0.0218                  | 0.815                   |

Source: Adalet McGowan, M., D. Andrews and V. Millot (2016), “The Walking Dead? Zombie Firms and Productivity Performance in OECD countries”, OECD Economics Department Working Paper No. 1372.



# CF2: Zombie congestion and non-zombie performance

Investment and employment loss of a typical non-zombie firm due to a rise in the zombie capital share after 2007





# The “average” firm is tenuous, given widespread firm heterogeneity

Within-industry MFPR distribution moments, 2013  
Log points; Unweighted average across industries

| Within-industry moment | Mean  | Std. Dev. | IQ range |
|------------------------|-------|-----------|----------|
| <b>All firms</b>       |       |           |          |
| Median                 | 5.785 | 1.841     | 2.258    |
| IQ range               | 0.917 | 0.443     | 0.439    |
| 90-10 percentile range | 1.844 | 0.778     | 0.867    |
| 95-5 percentile range  | 2.477 | 1.008     | 1.180    |

*Widespread heterogeneity in firm productivity creates scope for productivity-enhancing reallocation*

*What if zombie congestion disproportionately constrains the growth of more productive firms?*



# Methodology: zombie congestion and reallocation

- Canonical models of firm dynamics predict that conditional on size, firms with higher MFP grow more quickly (Foster et al., 2016; Decker et al., 2016; Cooper et al., 2007)

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Capital growth}_{isct} &= \delta_1 MFP_{isct-1} + \delta_2 MFP_{isct-1} * Z_{sct} \\ &+ \delta_3 \text{Firm controls}_{isct-1} + \delta_{sct} + \epsilon_{isct} \end{aligned}$$

where:

- Firm MFP is the deviation from country-industry-year averages
- Z is the share of industry resources sunk in zombie firms
- Firm controls are firm age and size
- Country-industry-year fixed effects
- Standard errors clustered at country\*industry level



# Zombie congestion and capital reallocation

**Zombie measure: interest coverage ratio < 1 over the past three years and firms older than 10 years old**

| VARIABLES  | (1)<br><i>A: Panel of 9 countries, 2003-2013</i> |                        | (3)<br><i>B: Cross section of 13 countries,</i> |                        |
|--|--|------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | <i>Zombie measure</i>                            |                        | <i>Zombie measure</i>                           |                        |
|  | K-share  | L-share                | K-share   | L-share                |
| MFP <sub>i,t-1</sub>   | 0.07819***<br>(0.002)                            | 0.08241***<br>(0.002)  | 0.06458***<br>(0.006)                           | 0.06588***<br>(0.004)  |
| MFP <sub>i,t-1</sub> X Industry zombie shares <sub>s,t</sub> | -0.14017***<br>(0.018)                           | -0.26720***<br>(0.026) | -0.09088***<br>(0.034)                          | -0.15578***<br>(0.034) |
| Firm Age and Size Controls                                   | YES  | YES                    | YES   | YES                    |
| Industry*Country Fixed Effects                               | NO   | NO                     | YES   | YES                    |
| Industry*Country*Year Fixed Effects                          | YES  | YES                    | NO  | NO                     |
| Observations   | 6,405,339  | 6,405,339              | 902,271   | 902,271                |
| AdjR2  | 0.0308   | 0.0310                 | 0.0211  | 0.0211                 |

**Zombie congestion slows down productivity-enhancing capital reallocation – i.e. more productive firms are particularly harmed**