



# Cross-national patterns associated with adult learning systems

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# Overview

- What do I mean by adult learning systems?
- Cross-national patterns of participation
- Cross-national patterns of outcomes
- Cross-national patterns of coordination
- Key macro tools for coordinating adult learning systems



What do I mean by adult learning systems?



# Defining adult learning systems

- **Organized adult learning**

Any opportunities undertaken by non-traditional students beyond the age of compulsory schooling
- **ALS refer to mass of learning opportunities available to adults along with their underlying structures and stakeholders that shape their organization and governance**
- **Difficulties**

Identifying adult learnings from first time students attending regular school or college increasingly difficult
- **Degree of formalization and types**
  - Adult Basic (and general) Education (ABE)
  - Adult Higher Education (AHE)
  - Adult Vocational Education (AVE)
  - Adult Liberal Education (ALE)

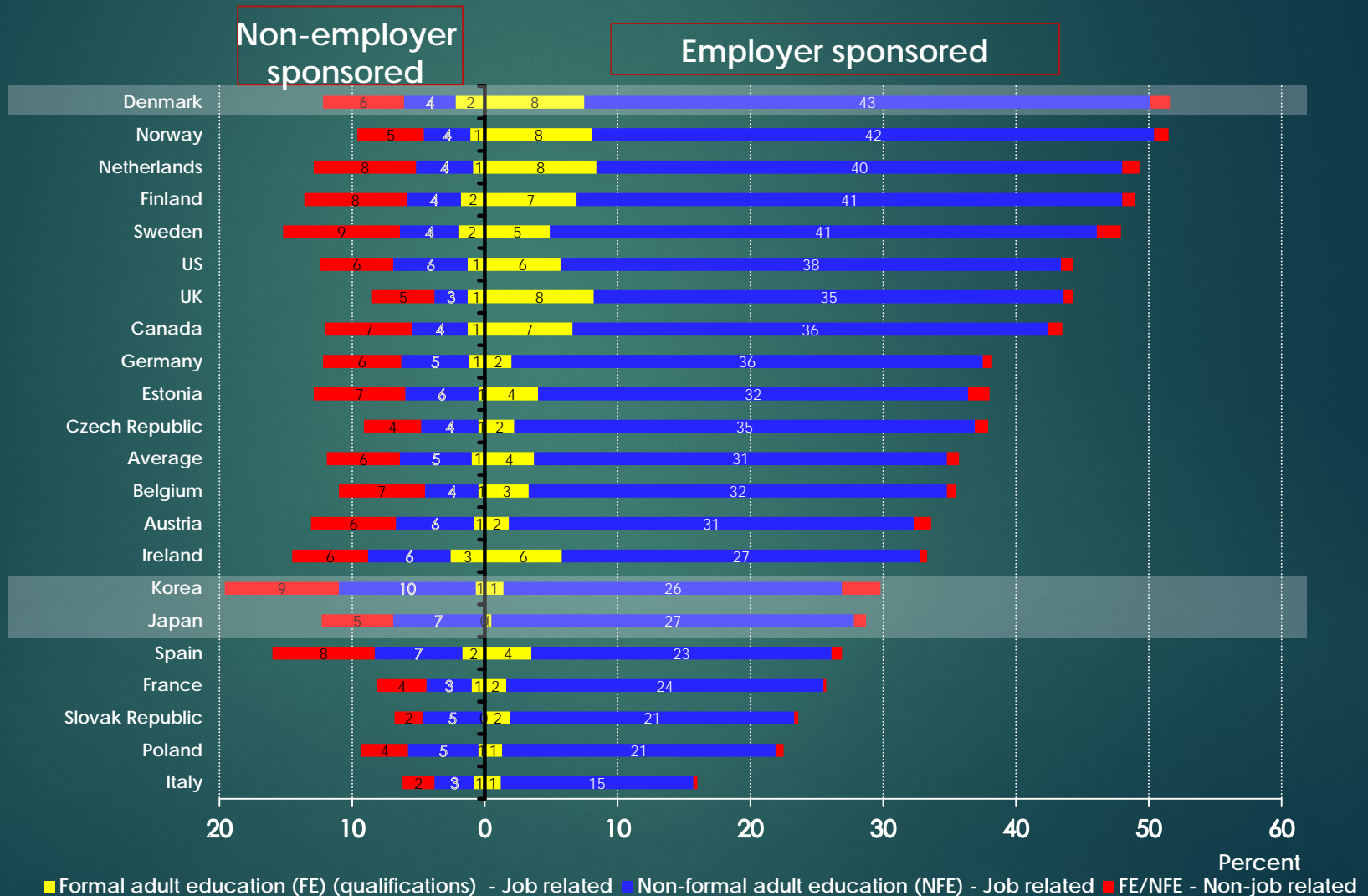


# Cross-national patterns of participation



# Adult education is now common in many advanced industrialised countries

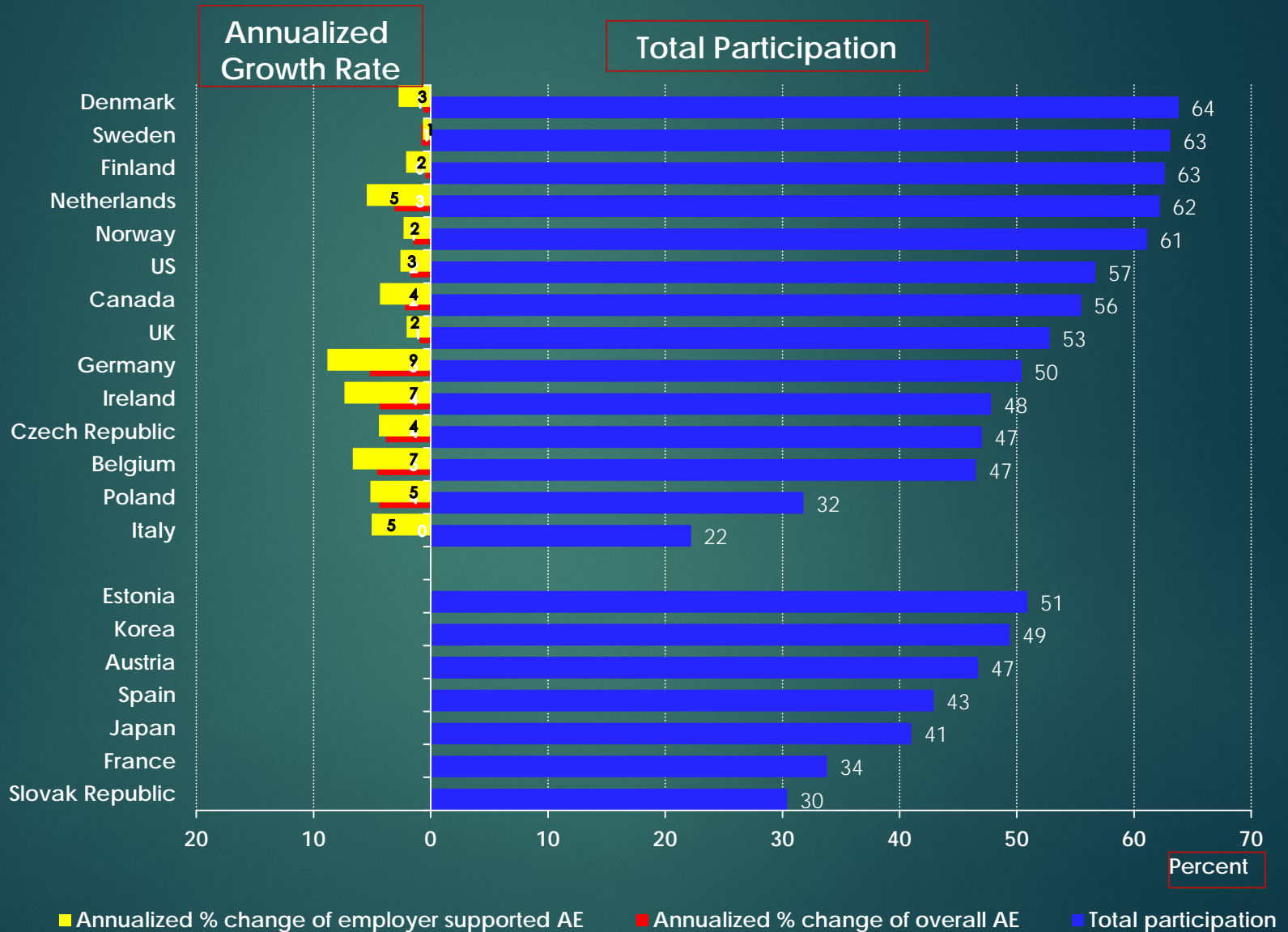
% of adults (16-65) who participate in AE in 12 month period



Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012.



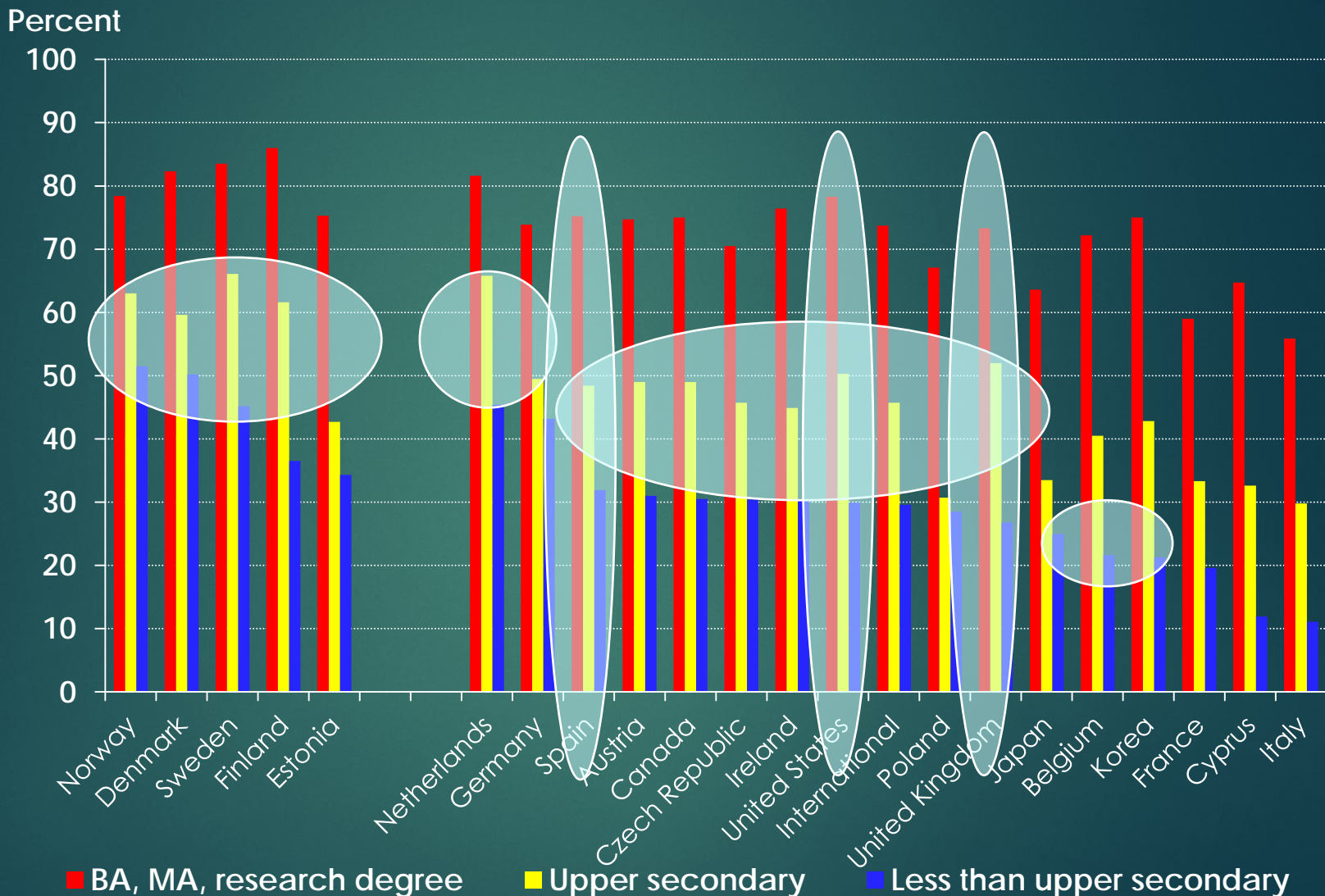
# Adult education is a growing phenomenon - employer sponsored AE is growing faster



Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012; International Adult Literacy Survey, 1990s



# Inequality of access for disadvantaged groups is a driving feature explaining overall rates



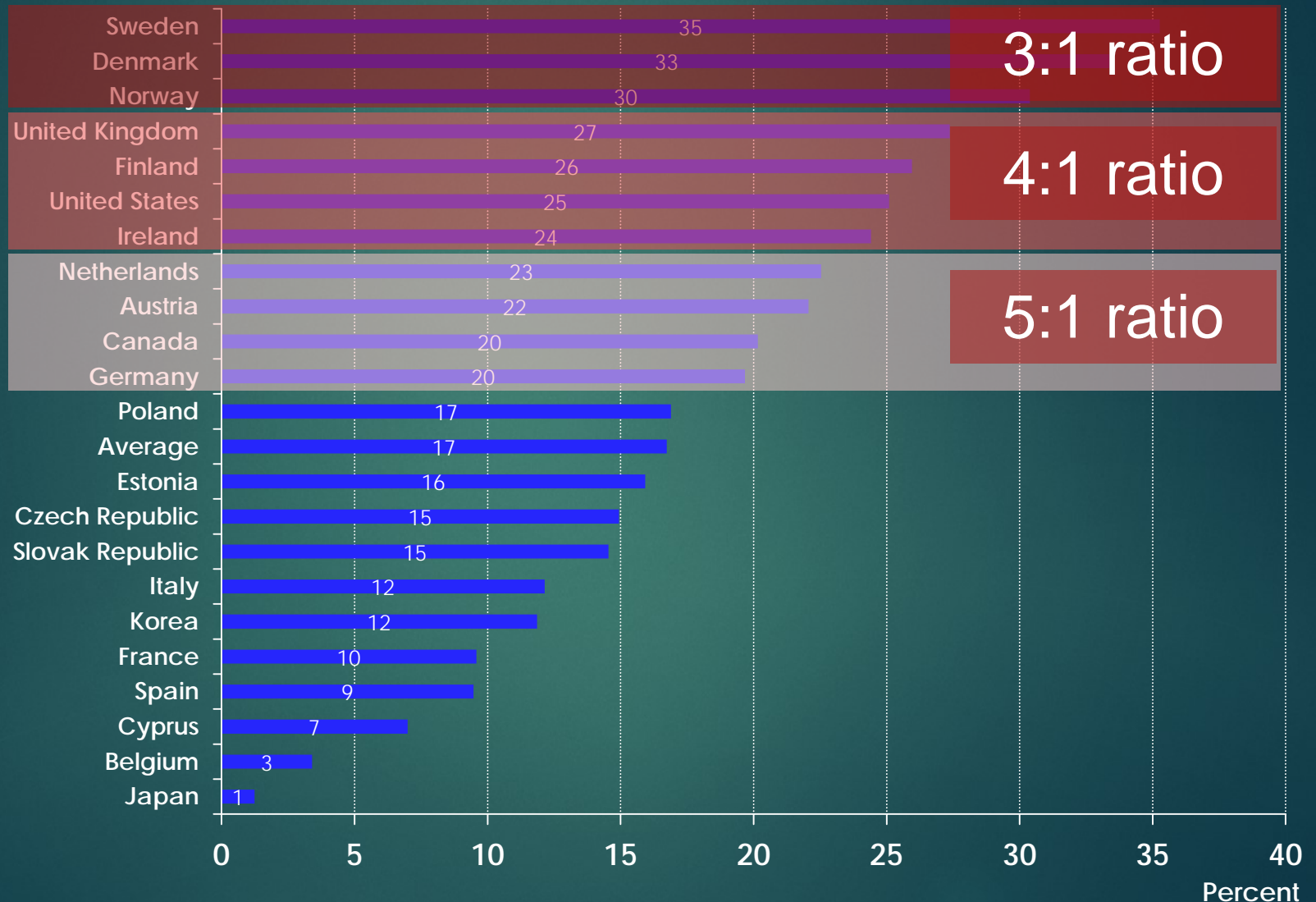
Source: PIAAC, 2012





# Openness of HE systems to adult students is a key feature explaining overall rates

% of adults completing HE at age 31 or over vs those completing at 30 or under

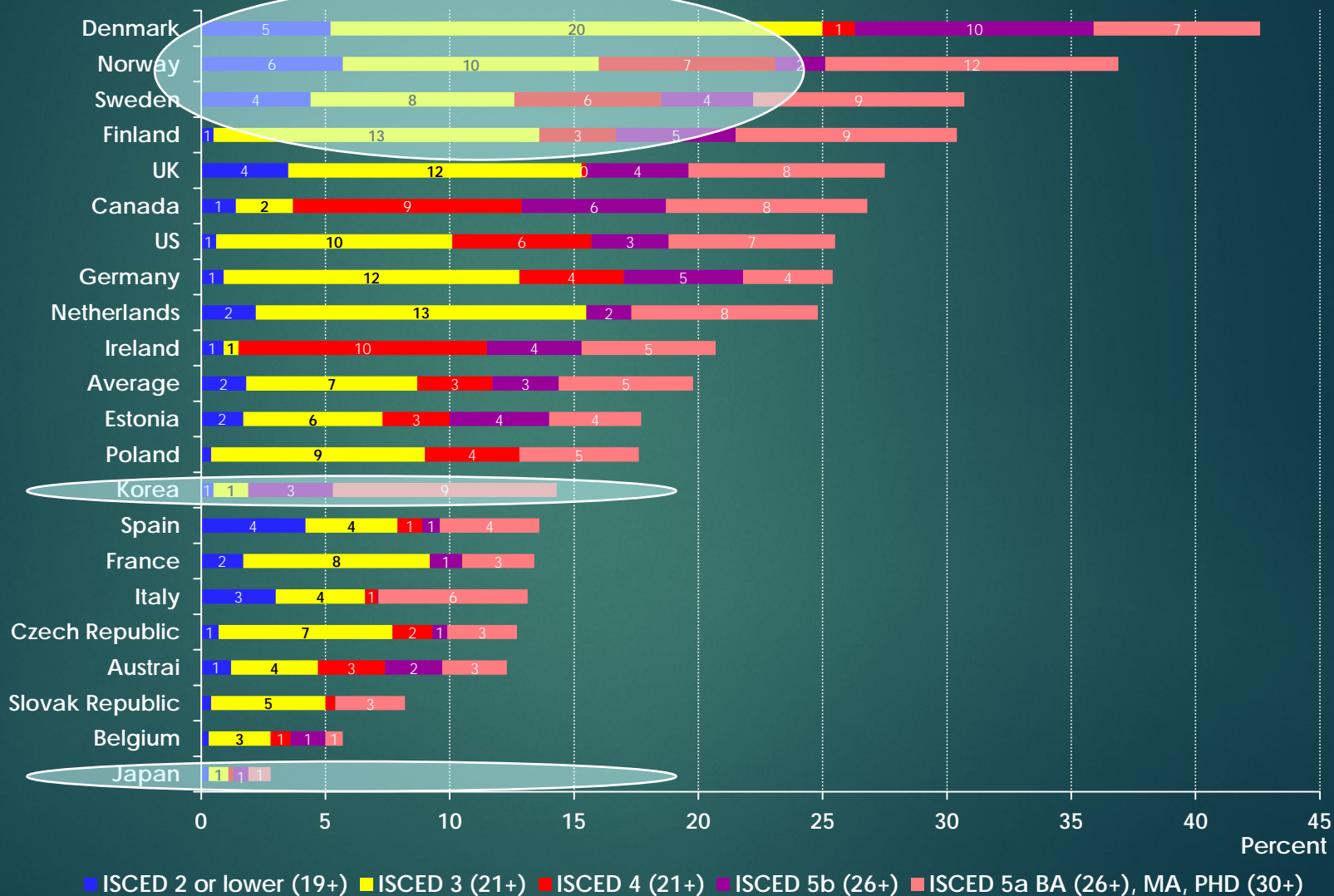


Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012.



# Adaptation of entire formal and qualification system to needs of adults

% of adults who attained their highest qualification beyond the normative age



Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012.



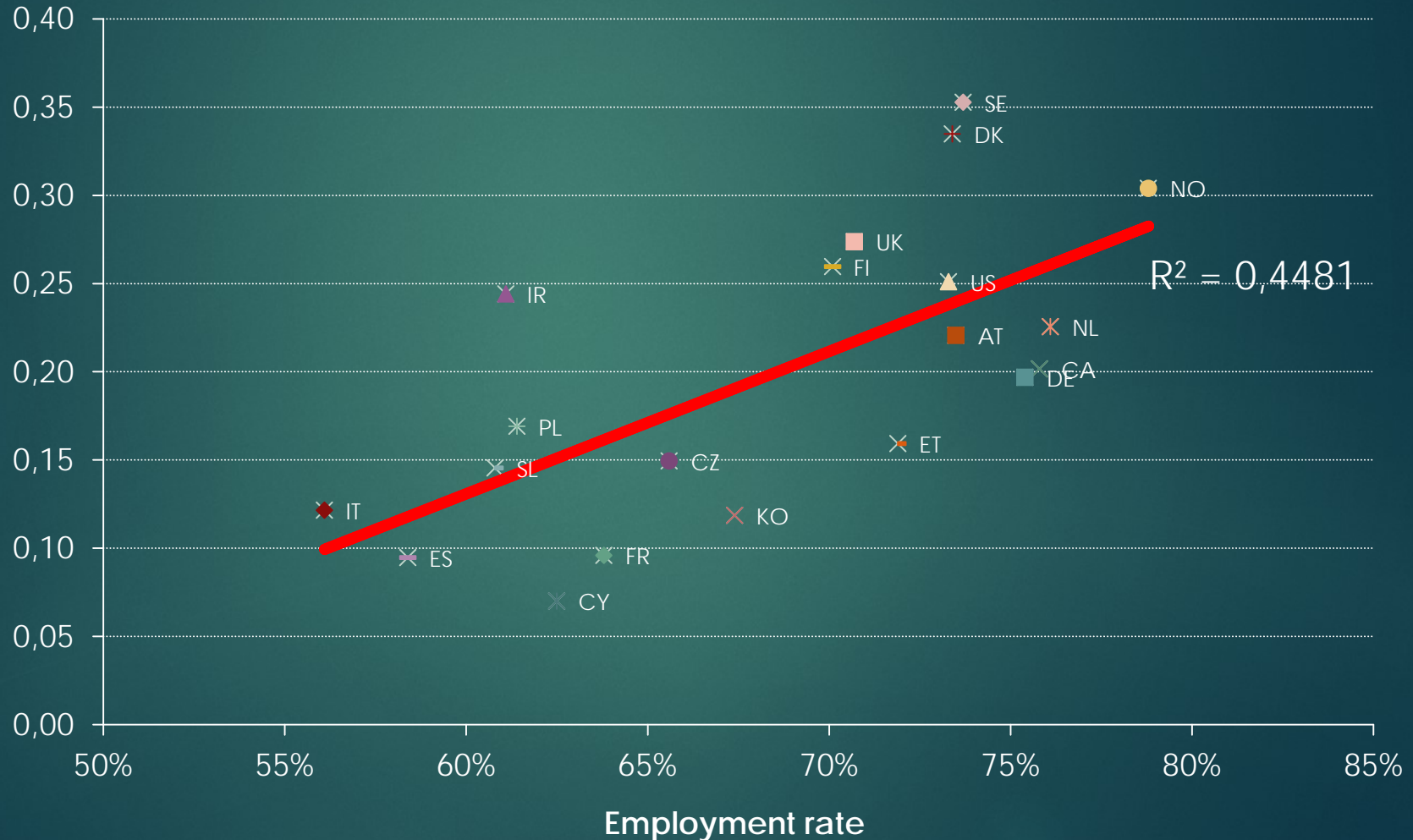
# Cross-national patterns of outcomes



# Openness of HE systems to non-traditional students and employment rate

Correlation between ratio of HE graduates over vs under the age of 30 and employment rate

Ratio of HE graduates at age 31 or over vs those completing at 30 or under



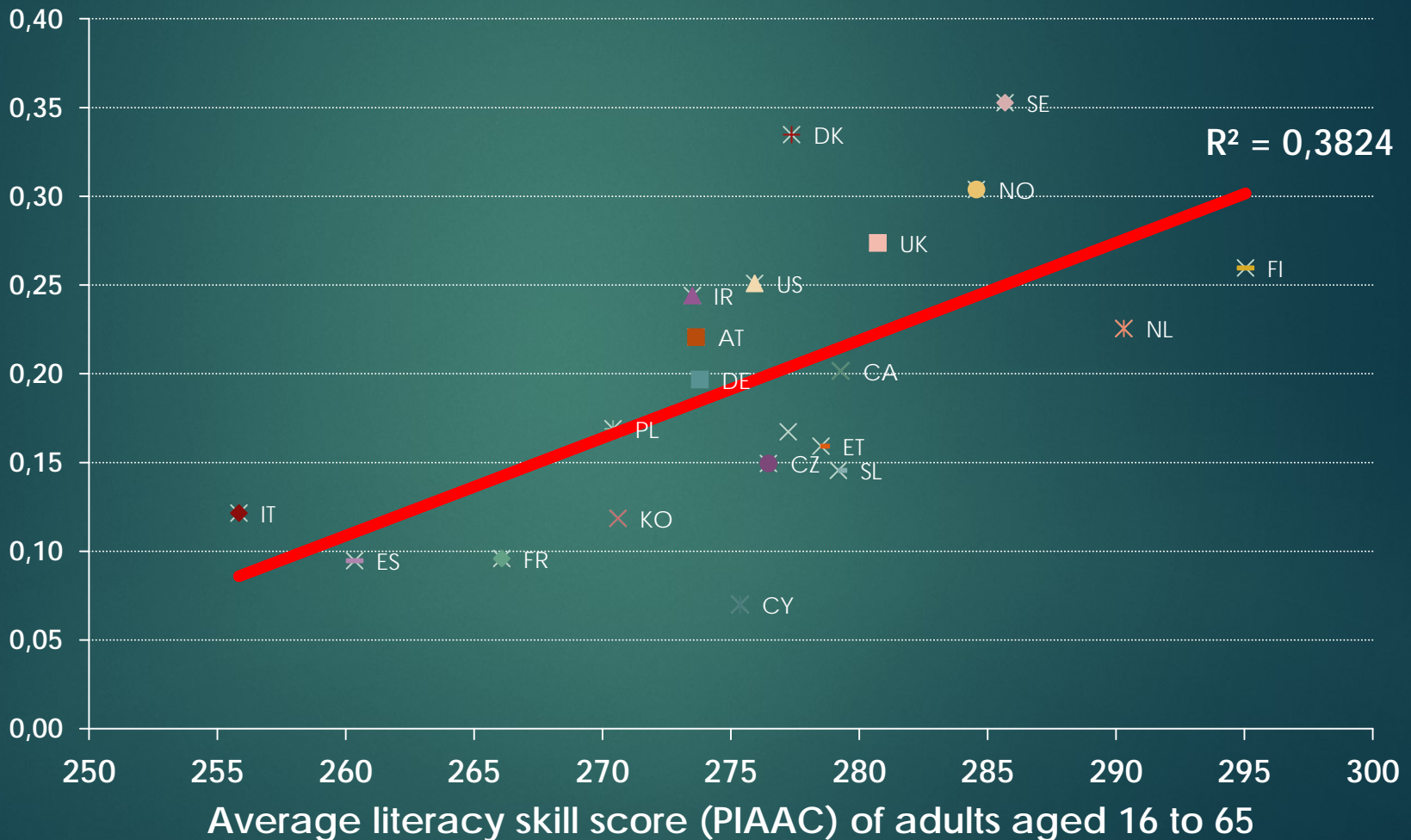
Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012.



# Openness of HE systems to non-traditional students and literacy

Correlation between ratio of HE graduates over vs under the age of 30 and literacy scores

Ratio of HE graduates at age 31 or over vs those completing at 30 or under



Source: Own calculations based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), 2012.

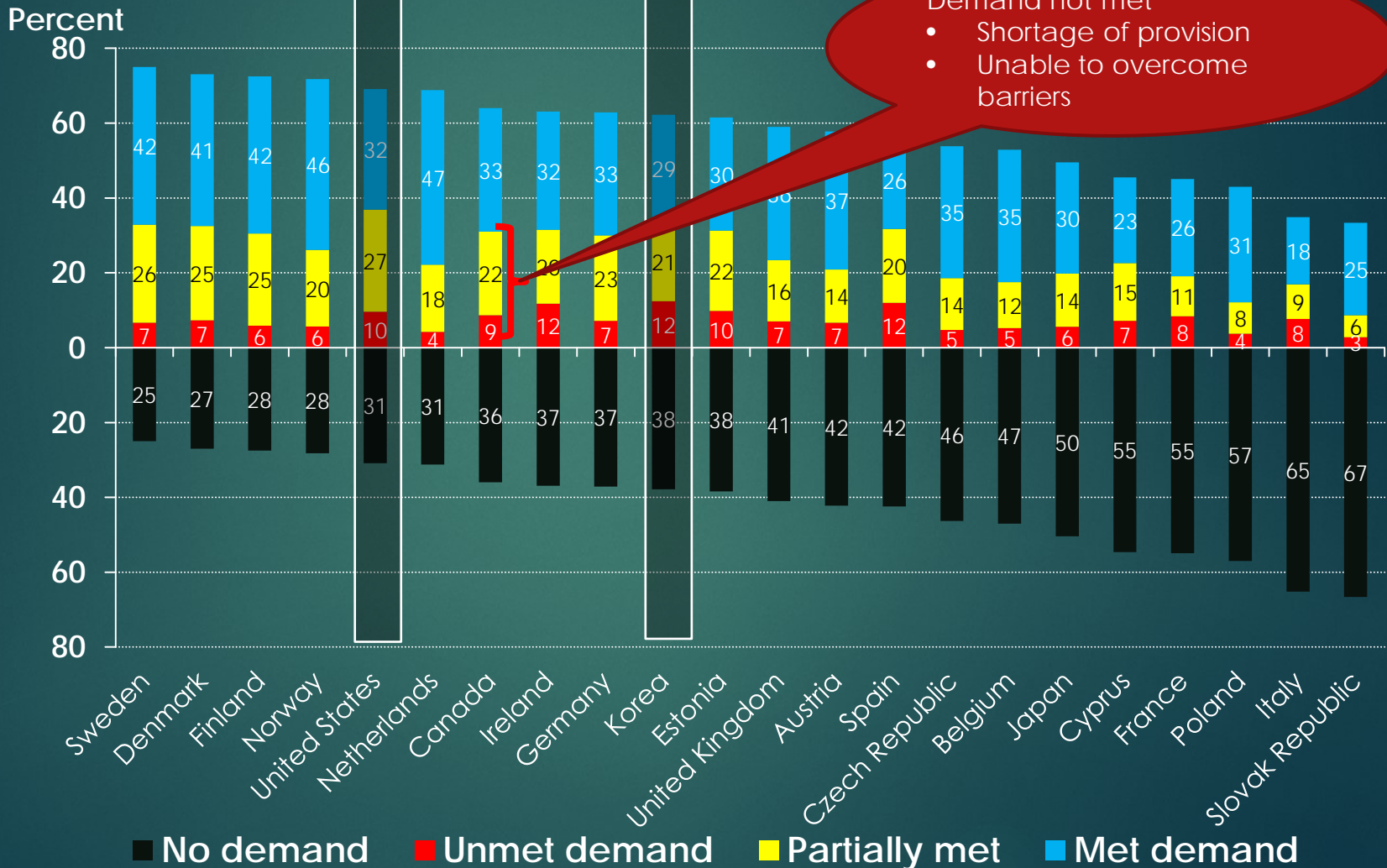


# Cross-national patterns of coordination



# Fostering demand is a key challenge but so is helping citizens overcome barriers

## Coordinating the supply and demand for AE

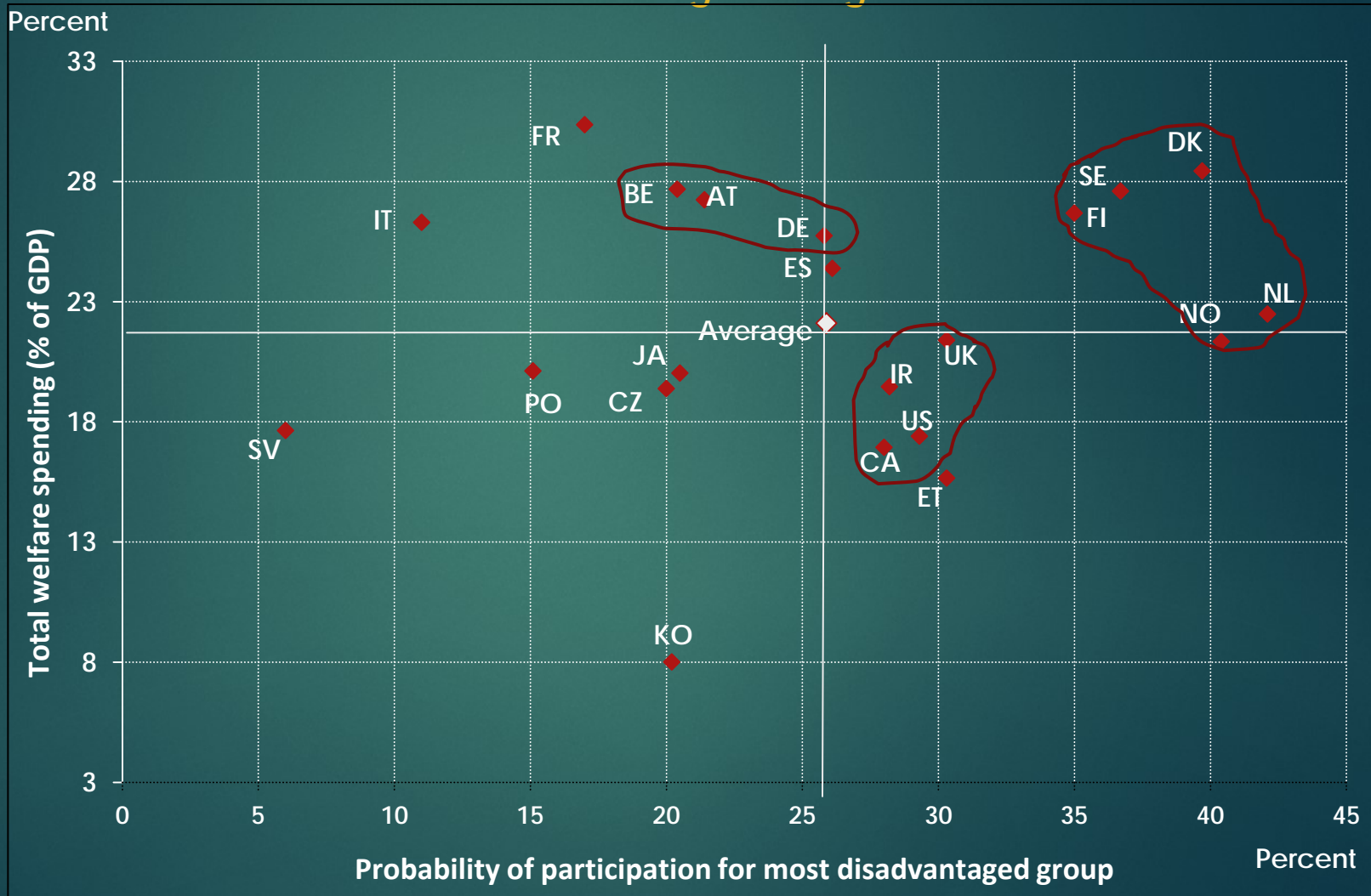


Source: PIAAC, 2012



# Coordinating tools: Total welfare spending unrelated to advancedness to ALS

Important to distinguish between welfare expenditures that are proximal or distal to activating learning

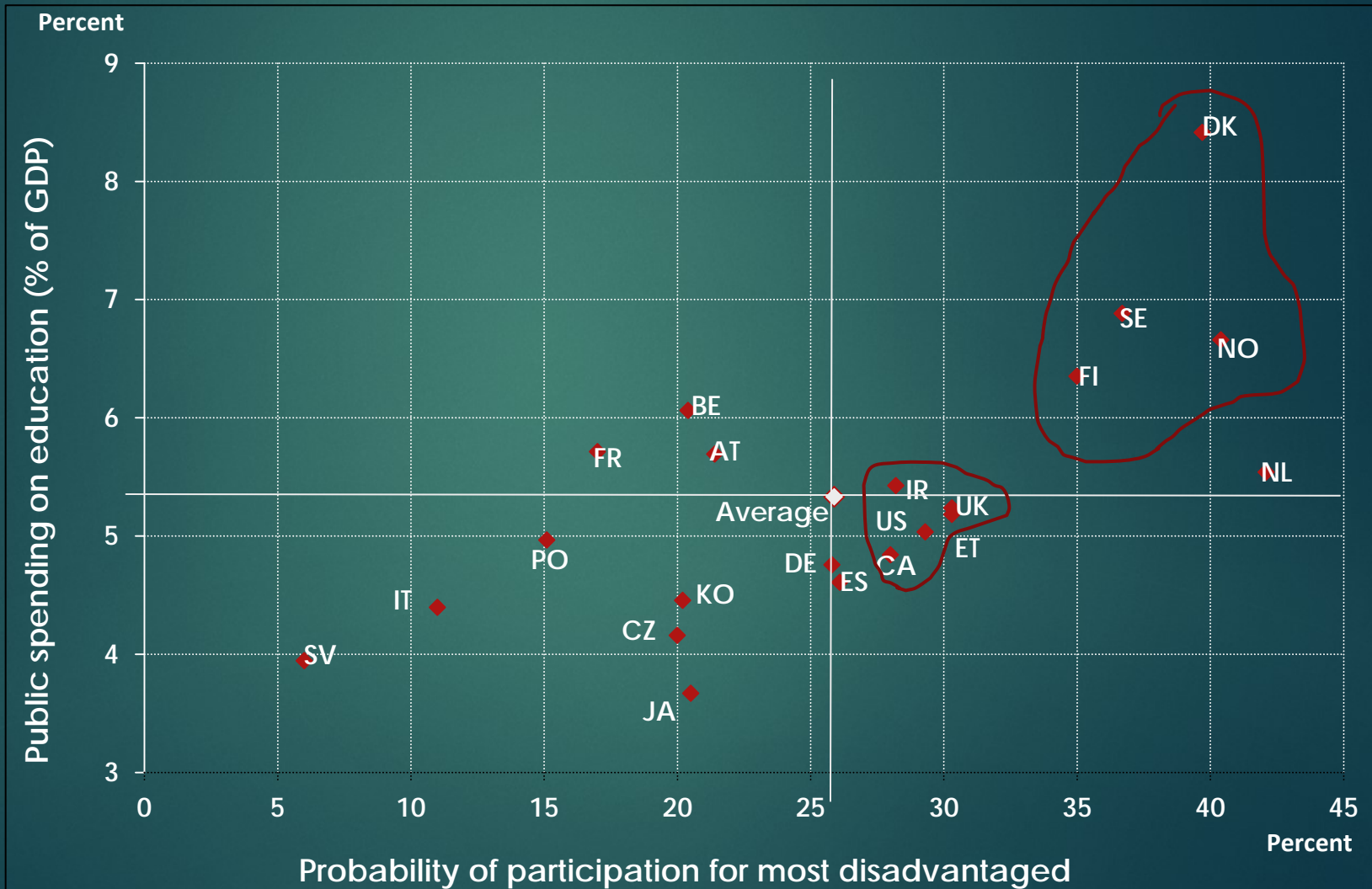






# Coordinating tools: Impact of public education spending largely depends on openness of HE

Higher public education spending does not automatically translate into opportunities for adults, particularly disadvantaged adults

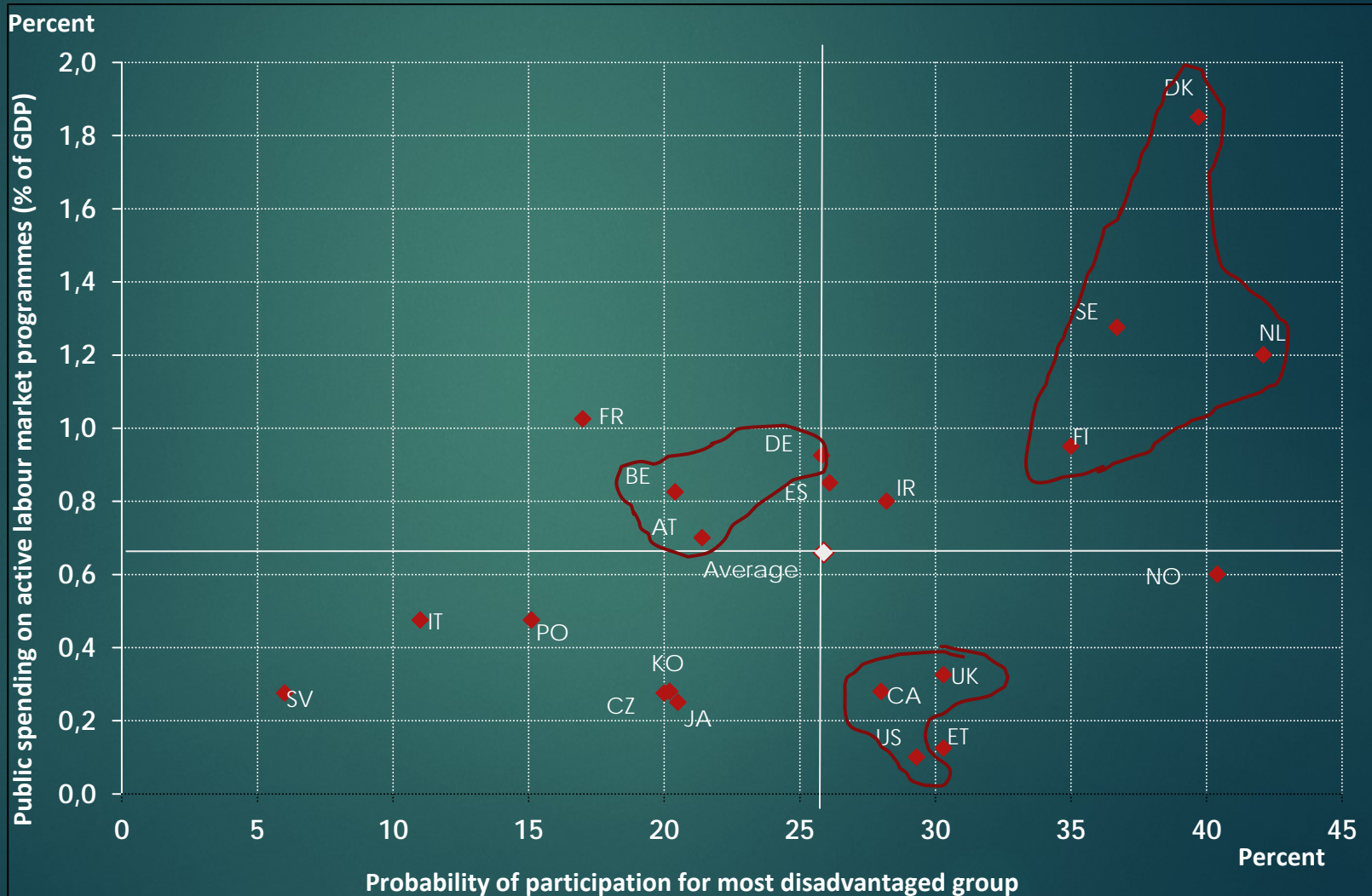


Source: PIAAC, 2012



# Coordinating tools: Impact of ALMPs largely contingent on provision structures that cater to socially disadvantaged adults

Not all ALMPs appear to be effective at reaching socially disadvantaged adults

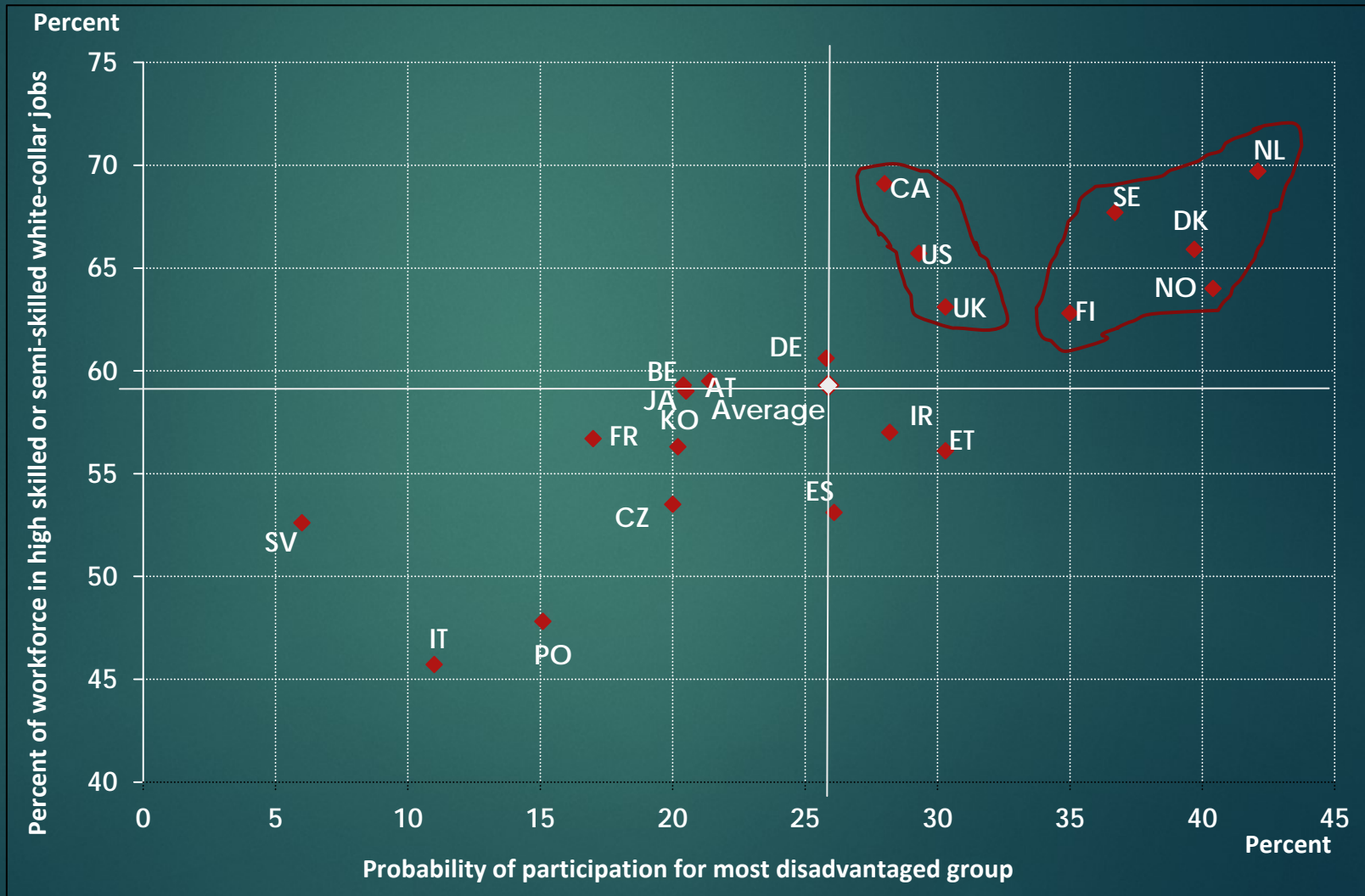


Source: PIAAC, 2012



# Coordinating tools: Market activity and economic policy that foster skilled work boosts access to learning

Some evidence of upskilling among most disadvantaged in select countries



Source: PIAAC, 2012



# Conclusions



# Some implications for improving the coordination of adult learning systems

- **Support broad economic and social policies that**

- Foster demand - Good for citizens' perception of opportunity structure

- Help families and workers overcome situational barriers (e.g. family assistance)

- Maintain affordability (welfare spending related to activation more effective)

- Sustain governance and provision structures (public education spending in connection with a vibrant and flexible provision more effective)



# Some implications for improving the coordination of adult learning systems

- **Foster broad stakeholder coordination that helps to**
  - Share information not so easily shared via the market mechanism and thus compensate for market failures related to information asymmetries
  - Identify local and more specific individualised needs
  - Pool risks associated with uncertainty surrounding investment in adult learning
  - Validate all kinds of learning and integrate opportunities with qualification systems
  - Develop common language to enhance coherence in governance of ALS
- **Design specific policies that target socially disadvantaged adults**
- **Promote adaptation of formal and non-formal provision that is**
  - Open, flexible, customized, and linkable to qualification systems



# Book coming out January 2017

## **Political Economy of Adult Learning Systems**

Comparative Study of Strategies,  
Policies and Constraints

Richard Desjardins

B L O O M S B U R Y