The Effects of a Simpler Criminal Procedure on Criminal Case Outcomes: Evidence from Czech District-level Data

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Abstract

The paper estimates the effects of a simpler criminal procedure on case durations and the probabilities that the defendant is charged and convicted. The identification strategy exploits a policy reform in the Czech Republic as a quasi-natural experiment. The reform allowed petty offenses to be prosecuted via a simplified (fast-track) procedure but its actual implementation varied substantially across districts. The fast-track procedure reduced the average duration of the police/prosecutor phase of the criminal procedure by 27 days on average for the petty offenses. It increased the probability that the suspect is charged by 6 percentage points. The fast-track procedure released resources that could potentially be spent on prosecuting serious crimes; I therefore investigate for spillover effects. I find only weak evidence of such spillover effects on the probability that the suspect is charged and no evidence of spillover effects on other case outcomes.

JEL classification: K14, K41, K42

Keywords: criminal procedure, law enforcement

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