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### What we can learn from college reform in the EU

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## **What we can learn from college reform in the EU**

The European Union (EU) was envisioned as a superstructure that allowed for the free flow of money, goods, and people among its member countries while preserving their individual culture and sovereignty (Lazerson, 2015). It was not promoted as a facsimile of the US federal-states' relationship, but it shares some characteristics (Adelman, 2008, 2009). Although the EU has its ups and downs, it is likely to remain and evolve to meet members' emergent concerns (Corbett, 2018). The education of a workforce for the knowledge- and technology-driven economy is one such concern (Adelman, 2009; European Commission, 2018).

With free movement across borders and the development of multinational enterprise the differences among countries' education systems created obstacles to such things as transferring credits, evaluating credentials, and determining equivalencies (Adelman, 2008; Laurel, 2008). The initiation in 1999 of the Bologna Process focused on articulating, discipline-by-discipline, what each level of education credential should address and describing what completers will know and be able to do at the end of their programs. It now has 48 member-countries representing more than 4,000 institutions working toward "harmonized" degree and credit systems for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Much has been accomplished toward these goals, but much remains to be done in implementing the agreements (European Commission, 2018; Caddick, 2008).

Notwithstanding significant differences between the EU degree structures and those of the US, there are valuable lessons to be learned from the experiences of our EU colleagues as they work through differences within and among disciplines and labor to situate them in degree frameworks (Adelman, 2008, 2009; Adelman et al., 2014; McInerney, 2017). In the US, a group of state systems and individual institutions embarked on a modified version of what the Bologna Process calls "Tuning" (Brett, 2010; Adelman, 2008, 2009; McInerney, 2017). This work, supported by external funding and led by program faculty, aims to adjust curricular content and outcomes across institutions to bring majors into "harmony" (Adelman et al., 2014; Lazerson, 2015; McInerney, 2017).

These related reform efforts have important takeaways for department chairs and other higher education leaders in the US (Adelman, 2009; Adelman et al. 2014). They can provide better context and understanding for evaluating the credentials of both student applicants to programs and candidates for faculty positions on our campuses. The process and the resources it developed can help chairs lead critical academic discussions among program faculty about core knowledge, progressions, and outcomes. They also can provide cautionary signals of quicksand pits that can doom curriculum renewal efforts.

This session will introduce participants to the mechanisms and outcomes of the Bologna Process including the degree qualifications framework as used in the grant-funded work in the US. After a brief overview, participants will work in small groups with guidance to link components to curriculum and assessment goals in their departments and to identify aspects of convergence/divergence in context that might impact an exploratory project using components to improve program articulation. Resources will be shared.