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**Abstract**

Based on a comparative study on recent reforms in Finnish and Portuguese higher education (HE) systems, this article examines the modalities of the political organisation of the Bologna process within these countries. After recognising the role of national backgrounds within the setting of the broad changes that have affected higher education institutions (HEIs) during the last decade, this article analyses the contexts, the processes and the instruments of policy implementation in both settings. It aims to understand how each country's historical and cultural specificities determined national and institutional responses. At the same time, the study sheds some light on the operationalisation of the binary organisation of both HE systems after implementing the Bologna declaration. The course of action in both countries is interpreted according to actors' perceptions of the significance attributed to the Bologna reform. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)