

From the European and national perspectives the analysis of policy implementation tends to focus on aspects related to the legal framework. At these levels, institutions offer the vision of a triumphant march towards the objectives set for 2010. There are several factors influencing this perspective: policy implementation is viewed as a linear process, which is an outdated perspective and obscures a number of interlocking dimensions; the political time is not aligned with the academic time, preventing a reform in substance and the competitive emulation practices emphasizing the role of performance indicators stress the economic dimension. From the local perspective, the perceptions show that higher education institutions (HEIs) often use alternative interpretations of Bologna that suit their institutional strategies. In this paper, the implementation is analysed using as empirical data the stocktaking exercises and the material collected in two research projects (the UNIMON project and the survey involving all Portuguese higher education institutions that presented new degree programmes or adaptations to the Bologna-type structure). The paper starts by providing the broad context of the Bologna process putting emphasis on the instruments that have been used to steer the agenda. The analysis of policy implementation is based on both the depiction of policy contexts of Southern European countries and on the confrontation of the stocktaking results with those contexts to conclude that the initiative lies at present with the HEIs.