
The paper examines comparatively the curricula of six Physics MSc degrees from three countries (England, Portugal and Denmark) in the European policy context driven by the Bologna Process, which advocates degree comparability and student-centred learning. Degree programme descriptions were analysed and interviews were conducted with students and lecturers from the selected degrees, exploring their teaching and learning practices and experiences. Findings reveal predominantly country-based differences in degree curriculum regarding students’ freedom to decide their learning path. Curricular flexibility and student input appear high in the English and Danish degrees and low in the Portuguese ones, despite attempts – so far little feasible in practice – to empower students to tailor learning to their interests. In drawing attention to the force of national pedagogic traditions in shaping curricula, the paper has implications for the degree comparability and student mobility advocated by recent European higher education reforms.