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Abstract

Legalism Versus Diplomacy in Regional Agreements in Western Balkans Given a *Spaghetti Bowl* of Initiatives

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International organizations can play a key role in regional cooperation and integration in order to reach a cooperative equilibrium among countries. The European Commission has come up with many initiatives that were envisaged as a step towards integrating Western Balkans into the European Union (EU). This paper looks at two regional initiatives through the lens of their typology, scope and legalism, taking into account integration ambitions of candidate countries. The paper examines legal and financial implications of two different regional initiatives by focusing on their legal and financial outcomes. The finding is that a legalistic approach does not necessarily provide adequate legal certainty for regional exporters and importers of goods. As a result, this particular legalistic approach to regional trade integration does not seem to have stimulated regional cooperation to enhance preparation and integration into the EU.

Keywords: EU accession, integration, regionalism, trade