Who may settle here?

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Abstract: Over the past ten years, contrary to European practice, the issues of sovereignty and self-identity have become increasingly important in Hungarian constitutional practice. The protection of national self-identity has been given constitutional status as a general duty of all state bodies and has become a key element of political rhetoric in recent years.

In line with these developments, in June 2025, the Hungarian Parliament passed a law on the protection of local identity, which authorized local government representative bodies to adopt local regulations that could restrict migration to the territory of the local government in question. This new regulatory tool appears to be an extension of local government autonomy, but it also creates an opportunity for municipal councils to apply regulatory measures that restrict immigration and exclude people without justification.

The study examines these so-called "identity decrees" within the framework of local governments and analyzes the form and justification of municipal regulations restricting settlement. The study focuses on an empirical analysis based on the processing of identity-based municipal regulations adopted in Hungary in the second half of 2025. The aim of the analysis is to develop a typology of regulatory approaches, paying particular attention to the nature, justification, and intensity of the restrictions introduced.

The empirical results are interpreted on the basis of selected socio-economic characteristics of the municipalities concerned, such as population change and settlement size. We seek to map the main regulatory patterns of municipal ordinances restricting migration and to find an answer to the question of whether the municipal ordinances serve to truly protect the identity of local communities.