

A New Era for the “Plázastop” Regulation: Leasing and Ownership Transfers May Now Require Approval – Major Changes Ahead in the Commercial Real Estate Market

In August 2025, the Hungarian government adopted a significant amendment to the so-called Plázastop Decree (Government Decree No. 143/2018 (VIII. 13.)). The amendment entered into force on 17 September 2025 and introduces new approval requirements within a narrower scope than before. The new rules apply exclusively to retail units with a sales area exceeding 400 square meters, where the primary business activity is the sale of daily consumer goods such as food, cleaning products, and drugstore items.

Targeted scope of the new rules

The amendment aims to clearly define the domestic and international market players subject to the new approval procedure, narrowing the previously broader interpretation. From now on, only transactions, leases, or ownership transfers involving stores whose main profile remains (or becomes) the sale of daily consumer goods (e.g., hypermarkets, supermarkets, drugstores) will require a construction authority permit. By contrast, transfers, leases, or ownership changes of clothing stores, electronics retailers, or other outlets not engaged in the sale of daily consumer goods fall outside the new rules, meaning transactions in these segments remain flexible and unaffected.

Impact on leasing and operator changes

According to the text of the decree, even a change of tenant or operator may trigger the new permit requirement. This could significantly slow down and complicate transaction processes for large food and drugstore chains, real estate funds, and investors. A notable clarification is that the requirement only applies where there is a change in the actual user and activity: if both remain unchanged, a mere transfer of ownership does not require a new permit. In practice, however, further official guidance and administrative clarifications can be expected on this point.

Practical consequences for market participants

For businesses, the new rules mean greater administrative and legal preparation. Even for ongoing transactions, lease negotiations, or purchase agreements, it may be prudent to seek preliminary regulatory guidance or submit a permit application in advance. While the new regime leaves much of domestic and international retail unaffected, in sectors where it does apply, it brings real legal risks, additional administrative burdens, and heightened regulatory oversight for companies, tenants, and real estate funds.

Summary

The 2025 tightening of the Plázastop rules applies only to large retail outlets primarily engaged in food and daily consumer goods sales. Transactions or leases involving other large stores remain outside the scope of the regulation. Thus, the overall impact is more limited than earlier drafts had suggested, but for the food retail and drugstore sectors, the changes impose significantly higher administrative requirements going forward.