# PET-FRIENDLY HOSPITALITY

INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION | BRAIN THINK TANK | PARTICIPANT GUIDE

*Not just pet-friendly. Certified pet-friendly.*

26 November 2026 • Hilton Malta • Networking lunch 13:00, Spinola Foyer • Think Tank 14:30–17:00

## The ambition

Develop a credible, independently assessed international certification standard for pet-friendly hotels and restaurants, with Malta proposed as the first destination to adopt and implement the framework at national level through cooperation with the Maltese Government and the ministry responsible for animal welfare.

This is a proposed first-mover ambition, not a claim that Malta has already adopted the standard or that no comparable standards exist elsewhere. International novelty and the route to official recognition must be verified during project development.

RoyalCert is envisaged as a technical certification partner. The project should define the roles of government, hospitality businesses, animal-welfare specialists and independent assessors before any approval or endorsement is assumed.

## What success looks like

- A clear project brief: purpose, scope, intended beneficiaries and responsibilities.
- A proposed certification architecture for hotels and restaurants, with objective, auditable criteria and appropriate levels or categories.
- A practical route to consultation and possible recognition by the Maltese Government and animal-welfare authorities.
- A pilot programme with participating hospitality establishments, independent audits and measurable results.
- A scalable international delivery model, including training, renewals, governance and market positioning.

## Programme | Thursday 26 November

| Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| **13:00–14:30** | Networking lunch — Spinola Foyer, Hilton Malta |
| **14:30–14:45** | Welcome; vision, proposed standard and scope |
| **14:45–15:25** | Part I — What does trustworthy pet-friendly certification require? |
| **15:25–16:10** | Part II — Malta adoption, pilots and international delivery model |
| **16:10–16:40** | Group proposals and feedback |
| **16:40–16:55** | Prioritise project brief, partners and next steps |
| **16:55–17:00** | Conclusions |

## Facilitation and initial participants

| Name | Role in session | Professional perspective |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Christos Markopoulos** | Facilitator | Chief Executive Officer, RoyalCert — certification and assessment perspective |
| **Vince Degiorgio** | Proposed participant | Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA) — hospitality operator perspective |
| **Ministry responsible for Animal Welfare, Malta** | Institutional stakeholder — representative to be confirmed | Animal welfare, public policy and potential government adoption |
| **Ivan Cassar** | Proposed participant — representing Perit Kevin Fsadni, MTA Deputy CEO | Quality Assurance Manager, Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) — experience in tourism quality standards, quality-assurance schemes and assessment processes |

The list is provisional, not exclusive. Participation may change or expand to include animal-welfare professionals, veterinary experts, hotels, restaurants, destination authorities, accessibility specialists and other interested stakeholders.

## Five discussion workstreams

### 1. Pet welfare and responsible hospitality

Animal wellbeing, appropriate accommodation, water and rest, handling protocols, welfare escalation and clear guest responsibilities.

### 2. Hygiene, health and safety

Cleaning standards, food safety, allergen considerations, incident response, staff safety, emergency planning and risk-based requirements for different premises.

### 3. Guest experience and accessibility

Transparent pet policies, service-animal considerations, non-pet-owning guest comfort, shared spaces, noise, communication and dispute resolution.

### 4. Assessment, training and certification

Evidence-based criteria, staff training, audit methodology, corrective actions, certification validity, renewal, complaints and independent oversight.

### 5. Malta adoption and international expansion

Government consultation, legal alignment, pilot selection, public communications, commercial viability, international recognition and licensing or delivery partnerships.

## Questions to resolve

- What distinguishes a genuinely certified pet-friendly property from a business that merely allows pets?
- Which criteria are mandatory for every certified establishment, and which vary between hotels and restaurants?
- How will animal welfare, guest comfort, food hygiene and accessibility be balanced without conflicting requirements?
- Which public authorities and professional bodies must review the criteria before government recognition is considered?
- What evidence and audit process would make the certificate trusted by guests and operators?
- What would persuade hotels and restaurants to invest in certification, and what pricing model could sustain it?

- What makes Malta a credible pilot destination, and how would international replication work?

## Project development pathway

| Phase | Proposed deliverable |
|---|---|
| **1. Scoping and consultation** | Project charter; stakeholder map; review of existing relevant standards and applicable law |
| **2. Standard design** | Hotel and restaurant criteria; grading or categories; audit protocols; governance and complaints process |
| **3. Malta pilot** | Voluntary participating properties; training; trial audits; findings and refinements |
| **4. Recognition pathway** | Formal engagement with relevant Maltese ministries and authorities; any required approvals |
| **5. Launch and international scaling** | Certification operations, communication, renewals, partnerships and expansion model |

## APPENDIX A — Provisional participant profiles

### Christos Markopoulos — RoyalCert

Chief Executive Officer of RoyalCert and facilitator of this Think Tank. Brings the certification-body perspective to the design of auditable standards, assessment protocols and independent assurance. Specific responsibilities in the proposed initiative remain to be agreed.

### Vince Degiorgio — MHRA

Participant representing a Malta hospitality industry perspective through MHRA. His input can help test the operational feasibility, costs and commercial value of certification for hotels and restaurants. Specific professional title to be confirmed before external publication.

### Ministry responsible for Animal Welfare — Malta

Proposed institutional participant; individual representative and official departmental designation to be confirmed. Its involvement would help align proposed criteria with animal-welfare expectations and establish an appropriate pathway for governmental consideration, without presuming endorsement.

### Ivan Cassar — Malta Tourism Authority

Quality Assurance Manager at the Malta Tourism Authority, participating on behalf of Perit Kevin Fsadni, MTA Deputy CEO. His work in quality-assurance schemes and assessment standards brings an important perspective to the proposed pet-friendly hospitality certification and Malta adoption pathway.

## APPENDIX B — Working worksheets

### Worksheet 1 | Minimum credible standard

What must every certified property demonstrate? _____

What should differ between hotels and restaurants? _____

Which risks or exclusions need explicit treatment? _____

Who should validate each criterion? _____

### Worksheet 2 | Malta first-destination pathway

Government bodies and partners to consult _____

Pilot properties and selection criteria _____

Proposed milestones and responsible owners _____

Evidence needed before official recognition _____

## Worksheet 3 | International product and business model

Who buys or sponsors certification? _____

What are the benefits and proof of value? _____

Assessment, training and renewal model _____

International partners and first potential markets _____

## Five-minute group report

Three most important recommendations _____

Proposed founding partners _____

First 90-day actions _____

Outstanding risks and decisions _____

**Welcoming pets. Protecting standards. Creating new opportunities.**