

Press Release from The Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic Studies and Culture

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The '*Salon de Mohabet*' – Spoken Ladino on the Internet

On Sunday, May 13, 2002, at 2:00pm EST, *Ladinokomunita* and the FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SEPHARDIC STUDIES AND CULTURE debuted the first-ever Ladino audio chat to take place over the internet. There were twelve participants from several countries, including Israel, Sweden, Argentina and the United States.

This original concept was originated by Scott Alfassa Marks, of the FOUNDATION, who was also host and technical advisor for the event. Among the participants were Rachel Bortnick, the founder of the worldwide Ladino chat *Ladinokomunita*, and co-founder of the FOUNDATION'S *Ladino Preservation Council*; David W. Siman of the *Sephardic Federation of Palm Beach*, Florida, also co-founder of the *Ladino Preservation Council*; and Moshe Shaul, editor and founder of *Aki Yerushalayim*, the world's only cultural magazine written entirely in Judeo-Spanish.

The participants spent one hour conversing in Ladino, getting to know one another, and familiarizing themselves with the software. For the first time many individuals who have only corresponded with one another in writing, were able to hear each other's voices. As one participant noted, no longer was a Sephardi in the Diaspora verbally isolated from a Sephardi in Israel. Through innovative technology, variations of the spoken dialect, pronunciation, and perception were all experienced and discussed in real time.

Ladino, also known as Judeo-Spanish, is the traditional Castillian language that the Jews from Spain brought with them to the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century. Over the centuries, the language of these eastern Sephardim has evolved naturally, enriching itself with Hebrew and Aramaic elements, as well as from co-territorial languages: Turkish, Greek, Italian, French, etc.

Today, in an age where the Ladino language has been in decline, and on the verge of extinction, the opportunity to converse in spoken Ladino over the internet provides a unique opportunity to preserve vocal aspects of the language, by connecting native speakers from around the world.

Dubbed '*Salon de Mohabet*' by the participants, the Ladino audio chat was considered a huge success, and a future date, as yet to be determined, will be set to further communications in the traditional language of the Sephardim.

Salon de Mohabet
Spoken Ladino on the Internet

Ladinokomunita:
[www.sephardicstudies.com/
komunita.html](http://www.sephardicstudies.com/komunita.html)

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