**Saijo Tour project**

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1. **Significance of the name Saijo**

**Saijo Sensei** is a famous Japanese professional player that taught Go at the

European Go Congress and other European events over the span of a decade.

His light personality and **unique teaching method** made him extremely popular and loved. Also he is the teacher of Catalin Taranu 5 dan professional player whom he helped travel to Japan and become the first European player that was granted the title of professional player by the Nihon Kiin (Japanese Association of professional Go players) along with Hans Pietsch from Germany, who unfortunately died at a very young age after an incident in Guatemala during a teaching trip.

We chose Saijo as the name of our project because he is the symbol of **the ultimate teacher**.

1. **Objectives and benefits of the project**

**Saijo project** aims at bringing its contribution to the **education** of youth in Europe through:

* teaching them the magnificent game of Go
* travel and foreign exchange
* friendly and fun atmosphere at the events
* combat computer games and social networks addiction by providing a healthy alternative of spending the free time

Generally speaking, **Saijo project** aims at promoting the game of Go among youth in Europe.

As the uncontested king of mind games, Go is widely recognized as a means to achieve a solid mental education, improve both creativity and logical thinking.

Legend says the game was invented in order to help the son of a Chinese emperor improve his leadership skills. Indeed, the game polishes skills and abilities that are very useful in real life.

In ancient China Go was **one of the four arts** that stood at the foundation of a solid education along with calligraphy, painting and music.

One of the biggest challenges of a modern European society is the fight against corruption and poverty.

 In many eastern European countries that have joined the European union or intend to in the near future, corruption is a plague that succeeds through manipulation of uneducated masses. By supporting and motivating youth from those countries to travel and meet people from other countries we help them to get a more **realistic** and **informed opinion** about the world they live in.

At the opposite pole, many youths from advanced western countries are somewhat drifting without a clear **purpose**, due to a life that sometimes is too secure and easy. For them as well practicing Go and travelling to other countries will be an experience that sharpens the focus and changes **perception** on life.

Sometimes adults tend to forget that children are still children. Providing a **fun and motivating atmosphere** at our events through side events and parties, showering participants with prizes and rewards. encouraging youth to study together and teach each other are some of the goals that we want to achieve with **Saijo project**.

Internet, globalization, amazing computer games and social networks changed our world but sometimes come with a price.

Many children get trapped in an isolated world where they play, talk and interact in front of a screen. By motivating them to travel to our events and have real interactions with other youth we bring our small contribution in a fight for a **healthier environment** for our kids.

**3. Practical goals**

* promoting at grassroots level
* strengthen the infrastructure
* reward hard work and volunteers
* improve the general image of the game and the relationship between Go organizations and other institutions
* dissemination of one year of activity as well as other useful info through a yearbook distributed in thousands of copies all over Europe
* ***Promoting at grassroots level***
* prior to each tour event the local instructor/s will visit **new schools** and teach children the rules of the game. The children who graduated those classes will then play in the beginner tournament that will be held without exception at each of our events. This has also the effect of creating new and stronger bonds with the local schools. We believe that is important that new children can meet and watch the advanced children play Go. This motivates them and helps set their goals, also shows them how far they are from these goals.
* at each of our event we will set **a beginner corner** where anyone who visits the event can ask questions about the game or about the Go community
* Saijo project aims at creating a strong network of **teachers**. This can be achieved by encouraging communication between the current teachers, working together with the Go Associations in order to implement Go as an official school matter, provide the motivating environment for new teachers.
* ***Strengthen the infrastructure***

In order for someone new to the game to learn but also to continue playing Go some **basic requirements** are needed:

* access to information about the game and related aspects
* playing materials
* local club where to play and interact
* online playing and studying
* available teacher
* plenty of motivating events
* general motivation, generated by travel possibilities, friendship bonds, teaming up, professional player models

As such we can define **the infrastructure** needed for a coherent activity:

* informational platforms
* existing material base and providers/ distributors of Go materials
* organizations (local, regional, national, international)
* online Go playing platforms
* teachers, instructors and coaches
* professional system, players and top amateur players
* event network (it could be included in the organizations tab, but it's so important that we want to treat it separately)

A quick evaluation of the **current state** of the infrastructure at European level:

- Informational platforms - WEAK

Most existing associations have their own website but the available information is lacking.

One of the main goals of the Saijo project is to develop a **centralized database** of information at European level. containing reports from each European country about the current status for youth development, promote **working models** already implemented by various instructors, develop **tutorials** for beginners, attractive **promotional materials**, instructor guides and event organizer **guides**. This database will be hosted by the website of the Saijo project which is currently in development.

- Current material base - GOOD

Each club or organization has developed a **material base** which is enough to provide Go playing materials for the current number of players. The strong organizations from Asia have contributed a lot in the past and still strive to provide materials for the European organizations.

There are a few Go shops in Europe that can quickly ship materials anywhere in Europe. If the population increases dramatically solutions for mass distribution of Go playing materials are always easy to find and implement.

- Organizations - WEAK

In most cases in Europe, including the case of EGF, Go organizations have **no employed personnel**. They tend to be weak and unfocused. Because of this the overall level of growth of the Go game in Europe is very slow.

Saijo project aims at **strengthening** this essential aspect of **the infrastructure** in two ways:

1. Becoming **an organization** in itself. By creating an international team of organizers for its events, the project is basically founding a new organization. The difference from other organizations is made by the fact that

Saijo project attracts the people interested in developing Go at youth level from all around Europe. With a clear focus and motivated people, it is a matter of time until the project can overcome the financial challenges.

2. By providing a constant flow of **new players**, Saijo project will gradually help change the status of organizations in Europe. With enough supporters an organization can quickly cross from an amateur status to a professional one.

- Online platforms - VERY STRONG

There are many online Go playing platforms available for players of all levels, there is no goal at the moment for Saijo project in this direction

- Teachers - VERY WEAK

This is the essential ingredient for a healthy development at grassroots level. Saijo project will spare no effort in order to improve this aspect. At the moment **teaching** activity is scarce and weakly supported.

Initially Saijo project will contribute by providing **events** for the Go playing children and youth. By creating a strong **communication network** for Go teachers from all over Europe and by disseminating the results of our activity through the yearbook and the website (database, Saijo tour announcements) we aim at making the current teaching activity more efficient, also at motivating new people to become teachers.

As a medium term goal, we aim at defining clear methods for **supporting teacher activity** and also at working together with the national associations in order to implement Go in the **school program**.

Professional system and players, top amateur players - STRONG

Recently EGF has founded a new professional system in Europe. All new pro players are very young and come from the top youth. With an online EGF Academy training and study sessions in China, Europe is doing well at top level.

Saijo project aims at **rewarding** the efforts of our **top youth** and promote them through our website and yearbook. Having the spotlight on the top has a beneficial effect on the motivation of the other players, including beginners

- Event network - VERY WEAK

Currently there is only one tournament for youth at a European scale. The organizational standards and overall quality is also lacking.

Saijo project will provide the missing events and also stress the highest possible level of organizational quality.

Each year the number of events is expected to increase, after 5 years of activity Saijo tour is expected to host hundreds of tournaments of various sizes, encompassing all European country that are a member of the EGF.

* ***Reward hard work and volunteers***

Saijo project aims at **rewarding**:

* the international team of organizers
* teachers and instructors with outstanding results
* top youth players
* talented beginner players
* key contributors from the organization and generally from the Go comunity

The rewards will depend on the financial state of the project, from diplomas and trophies to prize money, gadgets and so on. Sometimes all a volunteer needs is a **public recognition** of his efforts.

* ***Improve relationship with other organizations and institutions***

By generating the events in the Saijo tour the project will directly help **improve** the **local situation** in each of the town/country where the event is held. We aim at having **traditional events** that span over decades, generating **trust** and **support** from the local community. Partnerships with local city halls and local media, as well as local schools are a priority on our list.

We aim also at integrating Saijo project into the **Erasmus sports** EU project category and also at national level projects where possible.

European Go has traditional strong bonds with China, Japan and Korea. **Partnership** and joint events with the embassies of those countries, Confucius Institutes or Cultural Centers are also on our goal list.

At the same time a strong **cooperation** with the existing Go organizations in Europe is essential.

* ***Dissemination***

At the end of each year **a yearbook printed** in thousands of copy will be the main tool for dissemination of that year's activity.

The yearbook will contain **reports** from each European country about current youth activities and general status, a complete coverage of the Saijo tour events, with the **spotlight** on sponsors and partners, volunteers and teachers, top youth and promising newcomers. **Games** from each tournament commented by professional players will add to the knowledge base and promote our talented players.

Aside from the year book, the online promotion will be done mainly through our centralized **website**, but also through **social networks** like face book and so on.

**Communication** is essential, our goal is that the results of the project activities reach every child and youth, Go club and organization from Europe.

**4. Expected results over the span of two decades.**

For the year **2019** Saijo project has very clear **goals**:

* Define the **international team** of organizers, identify skills, set tasks and deadlines
* Organize **5 events** of the Saijo tour in: Romania (Vatra Dornei), Croatia (Adriatic sea side resort), Austria (Vienna), Holland (Amstelveen) and Switzerland (Geneva). Despite the challenges created by the novelty of the project and possible lack of resources, we aim at excellent organization **quality** through the efforts of the international team of volunteers.
* Start developing a centralized **database** of useful information on the Saijo project **website**
* Start developing a **communication network** between existing Go teachers in Europe, promote existing working models
* Work on a **yearbook** that should be finished soon after the last event in the Saijo tour

At each tour event there will be a **beginner tournament** where we expect an average of about 50 youth to join. This means a total expectation of 250 new players for the year 2019.

We expect an **average** level of participation from the existing Go players, due to the novelty of the project, travel cost challenges, difficulties of adjusting schedule to school holiday dates and unclear resources that can be used for rewards.

For the year 2020 we expect the number of **tournaments** to increase to 12, one for each month of the year. Due to experience gained through the first year we also expect an increase of **participation** in the beginner tournaments to an average of 100 players per event, with a total expectation of 1200 new players.

Due to dissemination efforts and promotional campaign done in 2019 we also expect the participation of existing Go players to become high.

For the year 2021 we expect the number of events to **double**.

Depending on organizers ability to deal with large events (over 200 participants) the expected number of new players can vary between 2500 to 4000.

Also we expect that the basic **infrastructure** of the project to take a solid shape, with a well maintained website, experienced team, solid partnerships and sponsorship options.

For the year 2022 we expect the project to spread to all EGF member countries and the number of new players to cross **5000** people.

In the fifth year of the project we can expect a growth at regional level, with additional local tournaments and a separation of events in categories. Thus the number of events can grow to about 50-100 per year and cover every corner of Europe. The number of new players can be estimated to grow **over 10000**.

In the tenth year of the project we expect to have built an infrastructure that can support the addition of over **100000** new players.

Finally, in the 20th year of the project we expect to cross **one million** new players and enter a new age for the European Go.