D09.7 - Tell Your Mobility Story (TYMS) videos

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1. FRAMEWORK

1.1 BUILDING THE ARQUS MOBILITY CULTURE

The Arqus Tell Your Mobility Story (TYMS) is an initiative that aims to collect videos depicting or describing international mobility experiences through insights shared from different perspectives, from memorable events to everyday life. Videos are created by students as the main protagonists of mobility itself and respond to the general objective of creating a multiplier effect on those who watch them, stimulating participation in mobility pathways and therefore enhancing internationalisation.

TYMS is one of the initiatives implemented by the Working Group 09 Arqus on the Move and established to foster an Alliance's mobility culture. "Generating" a culture is an ambitious goal: a complex process that touches on different aspects, such as the identification of a set of values and the development of the sense of belonging. The achievement of such a goal needed a definition of an Alliance's approach to mobility first. This approach was built on the priorities of the Erasmus+ programme as inclusion, digitalisation and sustainability, and with a red thread that intertwines them through all the initiatives carried out by Working Group 9 in this framework, which is awareness.

In this framework, TYMS fits in as a fundamental tool for the enhancement of Arqus mobility culture. It makes students the actors of this generative process, enabling them to recognize and reflect on the context in which they act, give value to the experiences they have had, and help their peers follow the same path.

1.2 ALL MOBILE STUDENTS ARE ARQUS STUDENTS

There is a distinctive mark in all the activities implemented by the working group Arqus on the Move. We could define it as the reflection of a common way of understanding inclusion within the Alliance, and it turned into an important ingredient in the community-building process. This mark could be summarized in the following sentence: all mobile students are Arqus students.

There are several examples of how this spirit has been animating Arqus so far. Just to mention a couple, Arqus Green Mobility Days for two years have been providing international students from all over the world, no matter the origin, the chance to explore their host cities in a sustainable way while visiting an Arqus university. In addition, the pre-mobility virtual exchange Arqus moVEs has seen a remarkable variety of participants in terms of culture and nationality, and that was made possible by including students from any university having a partnership with an Arqus university. Broadening the perspective has always been considered by the Alliance as its own way to give substance to the idea of inclusion and so it works for TYMS.

In conclusion, the approach remained unchanged and the participation in TYMS was opened to all mobile students benefitting from physical mobilities promoted by Arqus members, belonging to but even just visiting an Arqus university.

2. THE CONTEST

2.1 A STUDENT-CENTERED INITIATIVE

TYMS kicked-off as a contest between students. Indeed a contest in which the competition is based on the quality of the content and its appeal, but that also comes with a task with a strong educational impact: living or reliving one's experience abroad through two basic steps, namely telling it to oneself first and then telling it to the world.

Reflection is the basis of adult learning and allows a person to put one's biography "in order", valuing events, linking them with the past and future, and thus enabling them as relevant parts of one's life to make the best of having experienced them. We wanted students to compete somehow, but first we wanted them to look within themselves to understand what the experience of being abroad had been like.

In order to keep students at the centre of the whole initiative, the evaluation of the contents produced and submitted for the contest was left to their self-promotion skills. All videos were published on Arqus' official Youtube channel and this is where the selection of the best ones actually took place, based on the number of "likes" that each video could garner.

This solution not only allowed us to empower students directly, making them the agents of their own achievements, but involved their peers in the identification of the most appealing products, activating a first level of sensitisation of a part of our target group (the part involved in the voting phase) and ensuring the selection of videos that could actually be effective and could hit the mark.

2.2 RULES, TECHNICAL CONSULTING AND CATEGORIES

RULES

In order to ensure that participants' creative process was as free as possible, the call was based on very few basic rules:

- The important and obvious limitation against controversial messages, such as those containing violence or discrimination;
- Videos had to last no longer than 90 seconds, in order to allow their use and dissemination by using all possible means and especially social networks;
- In alignment with Arqus approach to multilingualism, we invited participants to express themselves in any of the official languages spoken in Arqus universities and, in order to guarantee accessibility to the messages conveyed through videos and acceptable levels of understanding, we asked them to provide English subtitles if not using spoken English;
- A recommendation to respect private and intellectual property was introduced to prevent students' contents from being banned from platforms and affect their participation.

Before submitting the videos (maximum 3 per student), applicants had to fill out a form confirming their interest in participating. The form activated an automatic reply via email confirming receipt and the availability of the WG09 staff for support. The mail also included an attachment with a summary of the rules and some important technical tips related to video making.

TECHNICAL CONSULTING

The document above mentioned was produced in collaboration and thanks to the competences of the communication staff (WG15). It contains a section dedicated to technical tips, suggestions and best practices relating to video production, in order to help those students less confident with video making and let them work on their contents considering the viewer experience too: light, audio, and setting are not aspects that we take care of a lot when using our cell phones every day when shooting videos for our own.

The communications staff also remained available throughout the period dedicated to collecting applications and reviewing videos to provide assistance to participants and identify technical problems, interacting with WG09's staff and indirectly with students when necessary, to find the most practical and effective solutions.

We wanted students to feel confident enough to embark on the production of a video having some basic understanding of how to make a pleasing one, though not necessarily up to the standard of a professional product.

CATEGORIES

When outlining the rules of participation, it emerged the possibility to have some free interrail passes as a reward of initiatives promoting green mobility, thanks to the presence of some Arqus partners within the Coimbra Group and the collaboration between this network and the Eurail company. The Working Group considered that this benefit could fit perfectly and combine with the TYMS spirit.

Two separate categories for videos were then settled: *Mobility Stories* for those dedicated to international mobility as such and *Green Travelling* for the participants more passionate with green hacks and making their international mobility sustainable too. In order to stimulate participation, it was further decided then that participants in the second category would be incentivized by the possibility of winning one of the available Interrail passes, while those in the first category were still provided with prizes, and more specifically gift boxes with gadgets from Arqus.

This choice made it possible to broaden the scope of this initiative and promote the making of videos that touched on more diverse aspects of mobility, while emphasising a key theme for the Working Group, sustainability, thus embracing the work of building the Arqus mobility culture in a more complete way.

2.3 OUTCOMES

The contest was officially launched in mid January 2025 and disseminated through the Arqus website and social media. The dissemination was supported by partners at local level with advertisements conveyed by international relations offices.

The form with the expression of interest was submitted by 31 students and 14 of them then actively participated by sending 1 to 3 videos each.

Past the deadlines, set on the 23rd of June, the videos were checked by WG9 and WG15 staff to make sure that they complied with the rules for participation and 18 out of 19 videos received were admitted to the voting stage and published on the Arqus Youtube channel.

The voting stage took place in July from the 10th to the 20th, supported by further advertisement.

Videos received a total of more than 700 votes and gathered nearly 4000 views. On the 22nd of July the 4 most voted videos in each category were announced as winners on the Arqus website:

- Emma Cassara from the University of Padua, who did her Erasmus+ exchange in Girona, Spain, and won in both categories;
- The other winners in the *Mobility Stories* category were Mariluz Lopez (incoming student at the University of Padova coming from the University of Malaga), Greta Vincini (from the University of Padua, former exchange student at Kirstianstad University, Sweden) and Trinidad Bertolotti (incoming exchange student from the University of Cuyo, Argentina, who spent a period studying in Padua);
- In the Green Travelling category further winning videomakers were Nicola Castelletti (University of Padua, hosted at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, for his Erasmus), Arume Morales (enrolled at the University of Granada who also benefitted from a BIP at the University of Minho) and Kristina Buchelova (incoming student from the Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, who did her Erasmus+ exchange at the University of Padua).

The Working Group 09 Arqus on the Move will take into consideration the possibility of implementing further editions and to apply the competencies acquired thanks to TYMS and possibly extend them also to other activities.

3. IMPACT ON THE ARQUS COMMUNITY

TYMS allowed the Working Group to collect 18 genuine videos. This is invaluable material that in all future dissemination activity will be instantly recognizable and relatable to the Alliance and will help future mobile students feel closer to their peers who have already experienced international mobility. The Alliance, however, has not only equipped itself with an important dissemination and awareness-raising tool, but it has already managed to achieve:

- Visibility within the student community;
- Recognition outside the alliance itself, thanks to the showcasing moment provided by social media (YouTube in particular) and the views attracted by the videos;
- The enhancement of the learning potential of internationalization through story telling;
- The dissemination of a self-assessment model on study or internship experiences abroad;
- An additional and excellent opportunity to raise once more awareness of sustainability issues related to international mobility.

Regarding the last point, it has to be considered that fostering the creation of contents on sustainability through the *Green travelling* category has given us a way to create important synergies with the Green Mobility Days initiative and to be able to broaden the scope of intervention in this field. The 2025 edition of Arqus Green Mobility Days involved different Arqus cities with events that took place from late March until early May: the fact that this initiative's main target were mobile students, provided us the possibility to take advantage of each activity to disseminate TYMS and provide hundreds of people a complete overview on how Arqus tackles sustainability and a taste of Arqus mobility culture.

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