During the time of November 19th and November 24th, a delegation of 10 students from Bonn, Germany, took part in the MICC School Project in Krzyzowa, Poland which was organized by the Kreisau-Initiative e.V. together with its Polish partner organisation Foundation Krzyżowa for Mutual Understanding in Europe and coordinated by Kerim Somun. Along with the German delegation, high school students from Tel Aviv, Israel, Albuquerque, United states and Katowice, Poland participated in the intercultural dialogue, made possible by the project.

MICC School (Model international criminal court) is a simulation in which high school students reenact cases that were brought before international tribunals in the past, dealing with the worst crimes in international criminal law: the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. During the project, the students take on the roles of prosecutors, the defence, judges and journalists. They prepare the trials with the help of legal trainers and learn about tasks and responsibilities of their roles. The result of these preparations are the trials in which the arguments for and against indictment of the accused are presented to the judges by the prosecution and the defence. After hearing the pleading of both sides, the judges agree on a verdict and present it to the participants. The Press team accompanies the process of jurisdiction by doing interviews and taking pictures resulting in the creation of a newspaper and a video of the project. To make the cases more approachable for the students, the original case material is shortened, but the cases are being handled according to Rome Statute just as in the real ICC.

The MICC took place in the International Youth Meeting Centre in Krzyzowa, a historical place where the „Kreisau Circle“, a resistance group against the Nazi-regime, gathered between 1942 and 1943 to discuss the re-establishment of democracy in Germany through a European confederation of states, sharing common values and roots and cooperating on economic and political levels. Another issue that was discussed by the circle was the punishment of the crimes committed by National Socialists before an international criminal court. These ideals and principles developed by the „Kreisau Circle“ are reflected in the diverse intercultural projects that are held in Krzyzowa today.

One of the cases that the students dealt with is the case of Friedrich Flick, a German industrialist in the National Socialist regime whose case was brought before the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Especially challenging about this case was proving his connection to the crime of enslavement in order for him to be sentenced or raising doubt for him to be acquitted. The second case was the case of Drazen Erdemovic, who was a soldier during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which raised the question among the judges as to when a person can be held criminally responsible for the crime of murder as a crime against humanity. This case was originally brought before the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia. The last trial dealt with the case of Simon Bikindi, a composer in Rwanda which was discussed before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and where the difficulty lies in proving his awareness of the consequences triggered by his songs and him therefore actively aiding the crime of genocide.

During the preparation of the trials and the verdict, the participants became aware of the importance of human rights, not only the rights of the victims that were violated but also the rights of the accused. The students learned about the possibilities but also the limits of international law when trying to protect the rights of both parties and were challenged to practise justice under emotional pressure when dealing with the most horrible crimes possible.

The understanding of international law, legal argumentation and human rights was deepened by additional workshops in between the trial preparations. These workshops included not only the discussion about different perceptions of justice and the question as to why we punish, but also debates about political, social, or environmental issues that are of relevance today. Debates that
were so gripping, that the students continued them in their free time at lunch or during one of the valued coffee breaks. The focus of the activities was put on intercultural exchange: on one hand regarding the issues that were discussed during the workshops, on the other to also getting to know common ground as well as differences of the various national cultures presented by the delegations. This frequently resulted in lots of laughter along with singing, dancing and trying foreign food specialties.

Our delegation entirely agrees that taking part in the MICC School project was an experience that we all will keep in our hearts. We gained experience, knowledge and awareness -also on an emotional level- and while working avidly on our cases, we nonetheless had a great time with friends that we made from all around the world. We now share memories of snowball fights, dancing together and chatting throughout the whole five-hour bus ride and although saying goodbye to all those (without any exception) great people we met was hard and way too early in our eyes, we will stay in contact and may meet again at the MICC University.