

Alice Jovy

English Correspondence and Report Writing for Real Estate Professionals

Anleitung, Mustersätze und -formulierungen, Briefe und
Fachvokabular zur professionellen englischen Kommunikation
in der Immobilienwirtschaft

3., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage

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PREFACE

When visiting the offices of many real estate professionals in Germany, one cannot help but notice a copy of the Immobilien Zeitung Real Estate Dictionary propped up on a shelf or desk. This dictionary has become an essential reference tool for professionals and students alike, particularly as almost every sector of the real estate business has experienced the effect of increasing globalisation and the need to communicate with colleagues, clients and business partners in English.

Many of my students have commented that it would be useful to have examples of how individual words are used in context in the form of ready-made phrases and how they may be adapted to everyday situations. This is of course beyond the scope of a dictionary and so this book was conceived as a practical guide and reference to correspondence for professionals in the real estate business.

A high standard of correspondence suggests a high standard in business. It reflects the competence and professionalism of the person who has written it and the company they work for. This book aims to provide guidance and ready-to-use phrases for effective real estate correspondence in English. It is hoped this will enable readers to improve their writing skills so that they can approach business writing tasks with increased confidence. Examples are provided for situations commonly encountered by real estate professionals in many fields of work. The real estate business encompasses a wide range of different professions and areas of work. Therefore the focus of this book is assigned to commercial property as this is considered to be the sector where most correspondence is undertaken in English.

Interviews and research were conducted with professionals in the UK in order to capture the authenticity of language used by native professionals. The correspondence and documents used reflect authentic information in real estate practice.

A common criticism of model phrases is that the user may copy them for inappropriate situations. The user is not relieved of the necessity of understanding the context or making decisions regarding the context of the letters and to make whatever amendments seem fit in the circumstances. Having said that, there is no doubt that model phrases, sensibly used, are a useful tool to the busy professional.

Although every possible care and attention has been taken to ensure that all definitions and translations are accurate, no responsibility can be accepted for inadvertent errors or omissions. The information in this book is not designed to provide legal or specific advice in managing or in the transaction of property. Decisions made in any given circumstances or for any given property are subject to many factors. In all cases the information provided in this book serve only as an example and should not be used or relied upon for legal purposes or be considered as the only way of approaching business situations.

It is of course an impossible task to include all aspects of correspondence encountered in the real estate business and inevitably some situations will not be covered. I should be grateful to receive any suggestions for standard phrases or letters for inclusion in a further edition.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to all those who have made this book possible. Comments, suggestions and criticism have provided valuable insights and contributions. First and foremost I wish to acknowledge the patience of my husband, Kurt Jovy. I also wish to express my gratitude to my father, John Waldron for the proofreading and professional input he has provided. I am most grateful to the editor, Thomas Hilsheimer and graphic designer Sybille Tietze, who through their expertise have added so much in creating the final product. Finally, I thank my students, who are a constant source of inspiration and knowledge. Through my teaching, I am always learning and as my students share their knowledge with me, I hope to share it with my readers.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the following people for their professional input: Alan Mitchell, Anja Schäfer, Anke Haverkamp, Annette Kaiser, Antje Haas, Beatrix Kersten, Dagmar Marx, Elif Ebeci, Erika Schröder-Eisenach, Irina Hinz, Karsten Kujus, Katrin Gibbons, Dipl.-Ing. Maja Procz, Marta Kosilo, Oliver Schmitt, Peter Cairns MRICS VOB, Managing Partner Gleeds Germany GbR, Regina Andreas, Robert Renner, Ruth Laxton, Semir Selcukoglu, Tina Reuter, Maria Höcht.

Bad Soden a. Ts., Juli 2012

Alice Jovy

INTRODUCTION

The contents of this book are arranged into key real estate activities encountered by professionals in their work. Each unit offers vocabulary and phrases that deal with situations specific to these individual areas. It is possible to access the book at any stage, however, vocabulary and phrases examined in earlier units are not necessarily repeated where an overlap in activities exist.

In addition to specific real estate activities, three further units address common correspondence issues.

Unit 1 introduces the issues of grammar and style and examines the way English is used as a global language. The use of modern business English is discussed and guidance is given on when it is appropriate to use formal and informal language as well as the etiquette of using first names. An overview of key grammar issues is provided and a glossary of common British and American spelling and grammar differences. Finally common abbreviations and acronyms are listed.

Unit 2 deals with general correspondence for everyday situations – arranging a meeting, beginning and ending emails, requests, complaints and many other common phrases. A glossary of phrases for everyday business situations is provided with illustrations of both formal and informal examples. In addition, example emails and letters are provided.

Units 3 to 10 cover real estate specific topics starting with descriptions of office, retail and industrial/logistic properties and moving on to examine the areas of managing the property, acquisitions and sales, due diligence, property development and office market reports.

Unit 11 provides examples of social business correspondence with illustrations of greetings, invitations and other personal matters.

Unit 12 examines the language, content and format of job applications. This unit explains the many differences between German, British and

American applications as well as common real estate jobs and provides useful tips. Example CVs are provided for students and experienced applicants alike, with a glossary of phrases for describing different professional activities.

For the purposes of this book, British English is used, however North American differences are provided where possible. Correspondence examples are shown in fully blocked format, which is the style most commonly used in modern business correspondence. Fully blocked text is aligned to the left margin and no punctuation is used in the address or following the salutation or complimentary close (Dear and Yours sincerely/faithfully). Other layouts are also perfectly acceptable and individual companies may have their own preferred style of correspondence.

Explanations, tips and translations are provided in the margins along with space for the reader to make their own notes.

This book is primarily written in the English language for German native speakers and assumes some previous knowledge / linguistic proficiency. German translations have been provided for some correspondence examples and have been kept as close as possible to the original English meaning in order to aid understanding of the vocabulary used. The German text therefore, does not necessarily represent authentic German correspondence.

Throughout the book symbols highlight important issues, such as:

-  Useful tips on style, tone and intercultural issues.
-  Mistake! Common language traps and grammatical errors.
-  Correct! Examples of correct language.
-  Formal language
-  Informal language

Where appropriate differences in British and North American terminology are highlighted.

The words from the individual units can be found in alphabetical order in the glossary at the end of the book.

LANGUAGE, GRAMMAR & STYLE

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1 Intercultural Communication

To use language effectively and to understand the real meaning of messages it is important to be aware of the cultural context, the personality of the communication partner and to choose a style that is appropriate to the given situation. Researchers have found distinctly different communication styles between different cultures, indeed even the English language varies according to the culture in which it is spoken.

Linguistic and intercultural experts have identified tendencies or averages in the value system that makes up a culture and while this is not an exact science, the framework provides interesting insights into the tendencies within different cultures.

In German culture, truth and directness have been found to be key values which often come before diplomacy. Researchers have identified that Germans use more absolutes to intensify their language (**auf keinen Fall, bestimmt, völlig, absolut**) and more frequently use the modal verb **müssen** as well as the imperative. This usage when translated directly into English can appear overly strong and unfriendly. While Germans, Americans and Australians use direct language, the perceptions of directness differ. Germans are often more direct than Americans particularly when talking about facts or giving criticism.

In American culture direct language is more commonly used when communicating positive issues e.g. when giving a compliment. Being liked by others is considered to be a key value in American culture. When communicating issues such as criticism, Americans will therefore use more indirect language.

In Australia openness is highly valued and the style of communication is often considered to be very direct by cultures that do not speak in such a straightforward manner. At the same time Australians are considered to be informal and relaxed and distrust self-promotion. First names are used in almost all situations and academic titles have little relevance in business situations.

British and Asian cultures are almost similar in the use of diplomatic language. Diplomacy is put strongly before directness in communication. Directness is often associated with open confrontation and rudeness. Negative matters or disagreement are often expressed in a coded way:

“I disagree” could be expressed “I see your point, however ...”

To avoid misunderstanding, consideration should be given to language style and how it will appear to the recipient, especially when writing to important business partners and dealing with sensitive issues.

TIP!

Certain words can be used to “soften” sentences:

- **Unfortunately**, the meeting has been cancelled. (before giving “bad” news)
- **I am afraid** I can’t agree to your offer. (before giving “bad” news)
- I **just** wanted to remind you about the deadline tomorrow.
- We have a **slight** problem.
- “**Could**” and “**would**” are used to make questions or statements less direct.

International English

In the field of sociolinguistics, international English is a comparatively recent topic which describes the movement towards a global English standard as a lingua franca. It is acknowledged that the majority of English spoken in the world is by non-natives and the international variation of English promotes vocabulary that is easier to understand in the international context. American grammar and spelling is often used because it is normally simpler. The concept is difficult to define, particularly as it is not controlled by a specific institute or organisation, but rather by consensus.

Formal and informal language

Formal language is used in letters, reports and emails with a serious content. There are many fixed phrases with standard salutations and closes and the language is impersonal and polite. Contractions (*I've* for *I have*) are not used.

When the writer and reader have a more informal relationship language is closer to speech. It is simpler and more direct, with the use of contractions and its use is especially common in emails.

Below is a list of informal and formal words. Longer words of Latin origin tend to sound more formal and shorter words more informal.

Formal 	Informal 
enquire / request	ask
due to	because of
purchase	buy
verify	check
receive	get
contact	get in touch
assistance	help
postpone	move, put off (a meeting)
require	need
arrange	set up
regret / apologise	sorry
inform	tell

1

Using first names in English is very common with business partners. Here are some tips to help you:

- If it is the first time you write to an important contact and are unsure how to address them, you should use their last name. Often you will receive a response with your first name.
- Use first names if you have had previous contact.
- Do what the other person does. If you are addressed by your first name, respond by using the other person's first name. If, however, the other person has a much higher status you may want to use their last name to show respect.
- Use last names for official correspondence such as important letters.

Academic titles play little part in business situations and are used mainly by medical doctors or by academic professionals.

Gender neutrality

In English there is no singular pronoun that can be used for both genders ("it" can only be used for objects, not for people). In modern language it has become increasingly inappropriate to use the personal pronouns he or his in correspondence when referring to a person whose sex might be either male or female.

There is no real satisfactory solution to this problem. However "them" and "their" are increasingly being accepted as singular pronouns.



~~"If anybody calls while I am out, tell him I will be back in an hour."~~

"If anybody calls while I am out, tell **them** I will be back in an hour." ✓

Other options include:

- Using both pronouns together: he or she or he/she or s/he
- Rephrase the sentence to avoid the need of a pronoun.



Test your Grammar and Style

Test your knowledge gained in this unit by identifying these common language mistakes. Underline the correct word or phrase.

1. The rent is *249,500 € / € 249,500* per annum.
2. The rent is € *1.080 / 1,080* per sq m.
3. The service charge is an additional € *3,90 / 3.90* per sq m.
4. Mutual House is a prime property at the corner of *the Bond Street / Bond Street*.
5. Please could you send the *German / german* version of the document.
6. Take-up in the *west end / West End* office sector increased last quarter.
7. The premises are located to the *north / North* of Frankfurt.
8. The meeting is scheduled for *17 pm / 5 pm* on Wednesday.
9. The tenant will take possession of the property on *it's / its* completion.
10. The current investment volume is *25m / 25 mio*.
11. *I think, that / I think that* we need to offer further incentives.
12. The *Winter / winter* weather has caused delays to the construction works.

1. € 249,500 | 2. 1,080 | 3. 3.90 | 4. Bond Street | 5. German | 6. West End | 7. north | 8. 5 pm | 9. its | 10. 25m | 11. I think that | 12. winter

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

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Useful Expressions

The following unit provides a glossary of useful expressions for general correspondence. Examples of formal and informal expressions are given, however deciding which style is appropriate depends on the context and the personal style of writing.

Formal



Salutation

Dear Sir

Dear Madam

Dear Sir or Madam

Dear Sirs

Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms

Opening: Referring to previous contact

I refer to our recent conversation/telephone conversation regarding ...

I refer to your letter/email of 25 March concerning/regarding ...

Thank you for your letter of 10 January concerning/regarding ...

Further to our meeting on 3 April, ...

Further to your last email, ...

Further to our telephone conversation of 14 August, ...

Thank you for calling this morning regarding ...

I apologise for the delay in replying.

I apologise for not replying sooner to your letter of 15 April regarding ...

We met last month at the Expo Real in Munich.

Thank you for your email.



~~Miss~~

Ms ✓

Miss is not used in business correspondence. Mrs is used for married women, if this information is known.

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MANAGING THE PROPERTY

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This unit provides vocabulary and phrases for many aspects of managing property, including facility, property and asset management activities. It features examples of correspondence with tenants for issues regarding collecting rent, arranging inspections, repair work and service charges, as well as management reports to owners regarding the status of their investment.

Tenant Correspondence

Whether you are a property owner or you are representing one, communicating effectively with tenants is an important part of your role. Regardless of the information contained in the letter, it is important to maintain a polite and friendly tone in order to promote goodwill.

English 	German 
contractor	Auftragnehmer
issues with tenants	Probleme/Angelegenheiten mit Mietern
landlord consent	Einverständnis des Vermieters
maintenance	Instandhaltung
meeting minutes	Besprechungsprotokoll
operating costs	Betriebskosten
rent demand	Mahnung/Zahlungserinnerung bezügl. der Miete
repairs	Instandsetzung
reporting	Berichtswesen
request for payments	Zahlungsaufforderung
service charges	Nebenkosten
tenant concerns	Anliegen / Beschwerden von Mietern
tenant's credit standing	Mieterbonität
tradesperson / craftsperson	Handwerker

Letter of introduction from new property manager to tenants

CURATE Property Management

15 October 2012

Mr David Newman
6 St Mary's Square
London
SW2 4HT

Dear Mr Newman

A warm welcome from (name of new property manager)

We are pleased to announce that we have recently been appointed Managing Agents for (name of property). Our appointment commenced on 1 October 2012 in place of (name of old property management company).

In the circumstances, I feel it important to contact you personally to introduce ourselves.

(CURATE Property Management) is an experienced commercial property management firm with a dedicated support team who are on hand to assist whenever you may need us.

Our service to you underlines our commitment to our clients. This includes a 24 hour service.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Yours sincerely

P. Adams

Paul Adams
Property Manager

Jefferson Road, London SW1 HPQ

Tel: + 44 (0) 20 783 496 • Fax: + 44 (0) 20 783 785 • Email: info@curateman.org

Letter from property manager to tenant regarding prospective new tenant viewing

CURATE
Property Management

6 February 2012

Mr David Newman
6 St Mary's Square
London
SW2 4HT

Dear Mr Newman

6 St Mary's Square, London SW2 4HT

As you are aware, **we are currently seeking** new tenants for the above named property and I am writing **to advise you of** a viewing that I would like to conduct.

The viewing has been scheduled for 5 March 2012 at 2.00 pm.

We hope this is convenient. However, should you wish to discuss this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

P. Adams

Paul Adams
Property Manager

Jefferson Road, London SW1 HPQ

Tel: + 44 (0) 20 783 496 • Fax: + 44 (0) 20 783 785 • Email: info@curateman.org

we are currently seeking

wir suchen zurzeit

to advise so. of

hier: jemanden von etwas benachrichtigen



Flächenumsatz

~~Turnover~~

Take-up ✓

Take-up

English 	German 
absorption / net absorption	Absorption / Nettoabsorption
active demand / requirements (named entities with a declared requirement for office accommodation which it wishes to satisfy within the foreseeable future)	aktive Nachfrage, Flächengesuche
large lettings	Großvermietungen
lease extension / lease renewal	Verlängerung bestehender Mietverträge
lettings / leasings (US), lease transactions	Abschlüsse, abgeschlossene Mietverträge, Vertragsabschlüsse, Anmietungen
new inquiries	Neuanfragen, Gesuche
new lettings	Neuanmietungen
pre-letting / pre-leasing (US)	Vorvermietung
take-up	Flächenumsatz
under offer (space which a prospective occupier has agreed to acquire, subject to legal negotiations)	in Verhandlung, Angebot von Mietinteressent abgegeben

- Letting activity decreased in the second quarter due to a lack of large-scale lettings.
Die Vermietungsleistung nahm mangels Großabschlüssen im zweiten Quartal ab.
- In the first six months a take-up result of 420,500 sq m was achieved in the Frankfurt office letting market. This was around 2% below the 10-year average.
Der Frankfurter Büovermietungsmarkt hat das erste Halbjahr mit einem Umsatz von 420.500 m² abgeschlossen. Damit liegt der Umsatz 2% unter dem Zehnjahresdurchschnitt.
- Letting of grade A space in the Birmingham market has accounted for 46% of take-up during the last quarter due to new-build supply entering the market while letting grade B/C space has declined.
46% des Flächenumsatzes in Birmingham im vergangenen Quartal bezogen sich auf A-Flächen, da viele Neubaufächen auf dem Markt waren. Der Umsatz mit B-/C-Flächen ging dagegen zurück.

- The category 250 sqm to below 500 sqm accounted for about one third of lease transactions in 2015, while large-scale lettings were rather subdued.
 Etwa ein Drittel aller 2015 abgeschlossenen Mietverträge bezog sich auf Flächen von 250 m² bis unter 500 m², während die Großanmietungen eine eher untergeordnete Rolle spielten.
- Sentiment among occupiers remains weak and letting activity continues to be dominated by **lease events** and consolidation rather than expansion.
 Potenzielle Mieter zeigen sich nicht sehr entscheidungsfreudig, und der Vermietungsmarkt wird weiterhin eher von Vertragsverlängerungen als von Neuanmietungen und Erweiterungen geprägt.

Lease events
 An important 'event' in the term of a lease such as lease expiry, a break clause being exercised or a lease being renewed.

Sectors

English 	German 
Business Sectors	Branchen
Advertising and Media	Werbung und Medien
Banking & Finance	Banken & Finanzdienstleister
Consultants	Beratungsunternehmen
Insurance	Versicherungen
IT & Telecommunications	EDV & Telekommunikation
Legal	Rechtsanwälte
Occupier (occupational) market	Vermietungsmarkt (inkl. Eigennutzer)
Owner-occupiers	Eigennutzer
'Professionals' (term used in the UK) Occupations requiring special training, qualifications or licences such as auditors, engineers, doctors, lawyers and business specialists providing tax, accounting or management advice.	„Professionelle Berufe“ Sachverständige, Ärzte etc.
Public administration / Government	Öffentliche Hand
Tax advisors and auditors	Steuerberater und Wirtschaftsprüfer

False Friend:

Branche

~~Branch~~

Sector ✓



*Occupations such as auditors, lawyers etc. see above.

- The Financial sector led demand absorption with 30% of the total, followed by Media companies with 28%, and the legal sector with 23%.
Der Finanzsektor nahm mit 30% des gesamten Umsatzes die meisten Flächen auf, gefolgt von Medienunternehmen mit 28% und Anwaltskanzleien mit 23%.
- A total office take-up of 83,400 sq m was registered in the Frankfurt office leasing market. Around 3% of this was attributable to owner-occupier transactions.
Auf dem Frankfurter Büovermietungsmarkt wurde ein Gesamtflächenumsatz von 83.400 m² registriert. Rund 3% hiervon entfielen auf Eigennutzungen.
- The professional sector* dominated the first three quarters of 2015, accounting for 62% of the space taken up, although this can be mainly attributed to the large deal at Skyline Towers to Smithson & Partners Ltd.
Die ersten drei Quartale 2015 wurden von Unternehmen wie Wirtschaftsprüfern und Anwaltskanzleien geprägt mit 62% des Flächenumsatzes, hauptsächlich verursacht durch die den großflächigen Mietvertrag von Smithson & Partners Ltd in den Skyline Towers.

10



Mietpreis

~~Rental price~~

Rents ✓

Rental rates (US) ✓

Rents

English 	German 
effective rent	Effektivmiete
headline rent (UK) / asking rent or face rent (US) Rent being paid, which may not take account of incentives such as rent-free periods	Vertragsmiete, Nominalmiete
incentives / inducements or concessions (US) - Rent-free periods - moving allowances - above standard tenant improvement allowance	Incentives - mietfreie Zeiten - Übernahme der Umzugskosten - zusätzliche Ausbauten
over rented	oberhalb der Marktmiete vermietet
prime rent - achievable prime rent	Spitzenmiete - erzielbare Spitzenmiete

English 	German 
rack rent (UK) Equal to open market rental value (not over or under rented)	Marktmiete
secondary rents	B-Lagen-Miete
under rented / reversionary Below open market rental value	unterhalb der Marktmiete vermietet, mit Steigerungspotenzial
average rent	Durchschnittsmiete

- The weighted average rent for the whole Frankfurt market area currently stands at € 17.82/sq m/month.
Die gewichtete Durchschnittsmiete für das gesamte Frankfurter Marktgebiet liegt aktuell bei 17,82 €/m²/Monat.
- Headline rents are set to remain at their current level, but incentives are likely to increase.
Die Nominalmieten bleiben voraussichtlich auf ihrem jetzigen Stand, doch werden wahrscheinlich mehr Incentives geboten.
- The achievable prime rent remained stable at € 36.00/sq m/month.
Die erzielbare Spitzenmiete blieb stabil bei 36,00 €/m²/Monat.
- Prime rent increased significantly year-on-year, from € 32.50/sq m/month to € 35.00/sq m/month.
Die Spitzenmiete stieg im Jahresvergleich deutlich von 32,50 €/m²/Monat auf 35,00 €/m²/Monat.
- Some older buildings in more central locations are commanding higher rental rates than newer properties in peripheral locations.
Einige ältere Gebäude in zentraler Lage erzielen höhere Mieten als neuere Immobilien in Randlagen.
- Birmingham experienced a slowdown in leasing activity and an increase in sublease space in 2010 as companies delayed expansion plans and downsized in order to reduce occupancy costs in view of economic decline. As a result, the size of inducement packages has increased in order to attract and retain tenants.
Auf dem Birminghamer Vermietungsmarkt waren 2010 eine deutlich verlangsamte Vermietungsdynamik und mehr untervermietete Flächen festzustellen, weil Unternehmen angesichts des konjunkturellen Abschwungs geplante Flächenerweiterungen aufschoben oder Mietflächen reduzierten, um die Mietkosten zu senken. Infolgedessen boten Vermieter mehr Anreize, um neue Mieter anzuziehen oder bestehende zu halten.



Rise and raise

To rise = something moves (by itself) upwards (example: market movement)

To raise = something is changed (by someone or an organisation) to a higher position (example: interest rates)

*In London the financial district is called "the city"



Articles or no articles

The definite article (the) is used in market reports to describe specific situations such as a rate. For example: The vacancy rate increased to 8.4%

Most other market terms such as 'vacancy', 'take-up' and 'rents' do not require a definite article:

~~The vacancy in the Frankfurt market increased~~

Vacancy in the Frankfurt market increased ✓

~~The take-up fell by 15%~~

Take-up fell by 15% ✓

English 	German 
Submarkets	Teilmärkte
Airport	Flughafen
Banking district / Financial district	Bankenviertel / Finanzviertel
CBD (central business district)	CBD
Central station / Railway station district	Bahnhofsviertel
City*	City / Zentrum
Emerging markets	aufstrebende Teilmärkte
Fringe markets / periphery markets	Peripherie
Trade Fair / Exhibition Centre	Messe, Messegelände

- The most active submarket was the Banking District with 22% ahead of the West End with 18% and City West with 12%.
Der umsatzstärkste Teilmarkt war das Bankenviertel mit 22%, vor dem West End mit 18% und der City West mit 12%.
- The second quarter saw a number of deals in the secondary office market; whether these are fringe CBD, short leases, non-grade A specification or suburban office markets.
Im zweiten Quartal wurden die meisten Abschlüsse in B-Segment verzeichnet: CBD-Peripherie, Kurzvermietungen, Non-Core-Immobilien oder Vorstadt-Büros.
- Tight supply across the wider market has resulted in increased competition for space in the fringe markets.
Die angespannte Angebotssituation auf dem Markt führte zu verstärkter Nachfrage nach Flächen in peripheren Marktsegmenten.
- As undersupply becomes more acute in the key sub-markets, we expect increased competition for prime space to place increasing pressure on rents in the emerging markets.
Da eine Unterversorgung auf wichtigen Teilmärkten immer deutlicher wird, gehen wir von verstärkter Nachfrage nach A-Flächen aus. Dadurch wird in aufstrebenden Märkten ein Aufwärtsdruck auf die Mieten ausgeübt.