

English Version

**Liquid chromatography at critical conditions (LCCC) -
Chemical heterogeneity of polyethylene oxides (ISO/TS
23973:2020)**

Chromatographie liquide aux conditions critiques -
Hétérogénéité chimique des oxydes de polyéthylène
(ISO/TS 23973:2020)

This Technical Specification (CEN/TS) was approved by CEN on 5 December 2021 for provisional application.

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDIZATION
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European foreword

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Endorsement notice

The text of ISO/TS 23973:2020 has been approved by CEN as CEN ISO/TS 23973:2021 without any modification.

Contents

Page

Foreword	iv
Introduction	v
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Principle	2
5 Apparatus	2
5.1 General.....	2
5.2 Eluent supply.....	3
5.3 Pump.....	3
5.4 Injection system.....	4
5.5 Separation columns.....	4
5.6 Column temperature control.....	5
5.7 Detectors.....	5
5.8 Eluent.....	5
5.9 Data acquisition.....	5
6 Sample preparation	5
7 Performance of the measurements	6
7.1 Determination of the critical conditions.....	6
7.2 Analysis of the validation kit.....	7
8 Test report	7
Annex A (informative) Error sources	9
Annex B (informative) Evaluation of the interlaboratory testing	10
Annex C (informative) Elugrams of the participants (excerpts)	17
Annex D (informative) Investigations of the long-term stability of the test mixture	43
Bibliography	49

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 35, *Paints and varnishes*.

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Introduction

Since the first description of liquid chromatography at critical conditions (LCCC) in 1986 (see Reference [1]), the method has been continuously refined and has proved itself to be indispensable for polymer characterisation. Separation is required not only for the quantitative analysis of the individual species. It also offers the preconditions for qualitative characterisation of the fractions by means of spectroscopic and spectrometric techniques. The key factor here is the reduction of the polydispersity/chemical heterogeneity within a fraction, which represents a large problem for mass-spectrometric investigations.

The method has been described extensively in professional circles over the last two decades for different polymer systems, see References [2] to [9].

Within the framework of the Technical Committee, the extent that the method supplies consistent results for a simple, chemically heterogeneous polymer mixture was clarified as part of interlaboratory testing.

At this time, necessary experience relating to the selection of the system (interaction between the polarities separation phase/eluent/sample) was not expected of any of the participating laboratories.

The interlaboratory testing has shown that, even with a well-characterized system and with specification of all pertinent system parameters, it has to date not been possible to classify the process as a routine method in laboratories with experience in polymer analytics.

The idea presents itself of offering a validation kit (polymer mixture with the expecting separation result).

Liquid chromatography at critical conditions (LCCC) — Chemical heterogeneity of polyethylene oxides

1 Scope

This document establishes a valid method for separation of chemically heterogeneous polyethylene oxide (PEO) mixtures and for the determination the number and content of the chemically heterogeneous species in the overall sample.

The method presented in this document serves as a technical guideline and enables laboratories to learn the principle of “critical chromatography” on a validated system.

This method presented in this document with its stated system parameters is not applicable for other polymer classes, due to the diversity of the interactions between the polymer/mobile phase/stationary phase and the number of separation systems that are therefore available.

The evaluation of the interlaboratory testing has shown that many error sources relate to the technique of liquid chromatography in general. Possible error sources are described in [Annex A](#).

Details on the evaluation of the interlaboratory testing are given in [Annex B](#).

Elugrams of the participants (excerpts) are given in [Annex C](#).

Investigations of the long-term stability of the test mixture are given in [Annex D](#).

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

liquid chromatography at critical conditions

LCCC

special form of liquid chromatography of polymers at the point of adsorption, where chemically and structurally identical polymers with a certain repeat unit elute independently of the molar mass at the same retention time

Note 1 to entry: The individual monomer units do not contribute to the retention. Under these determined system parameters (defined combination of separation column/eluent mixture/temperature), a separation of polymer mixtures of the same repeat unit takes place based on chemical heterogeneity. Chemical heterogeneities can take the form of different functional groups, end groups, differences in the microstructure (e.g. copolymers and their composition) as well as topological differences (e.g. branching).

4 Principle

In the following, the method for the separation of polyethylene oxides at critical conditions of adsorption is described for the ethylene oxide repeat unit.

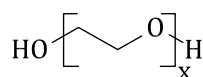
Three polyethylene glycols (PEG) with different molar masses (1 mg/ml to 2 mg/ml dissolved in the relevant eluent mixture (see 7.1) are measured, starting with a high proportion of the thermodynamically good solvent B (in this case acetonitrile). The eluent mixture is successively changed by increasing the proportion of component A (in this case water). This is followed by measurements in different compositions until all three standards elute independently of the molar mass at the same retention time. The determined critical solvent composition (csc) corresponds to the critical conditions.

Afterwards, the unknown mixtures are dissolved in this eluent mixture and measured.

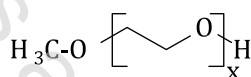
From the peaks of the resulting chromatograms, the number of species with different functionalities and their relative content (taking into account the detection properties) can be determined.

Species contained in the mixtures:

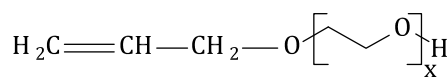
(1) Polyethylene glycol



(2) Methylene polyethylene glycol



(3) Polyethylene glycol monoallyl ether



5 Apparatus

5.1 General

The apparatus shall consist of the components shown in [Figure 1](#), which are described in more detail below.