

# Surface active agents — Determination of polyethylene glycol content in nonionic ethoxylated surfactants — HPLC method

## 1 Scope

This International Standard specifies a method for the determination of the polyethylene glycol (PEG) content in aromatic and aliphatic non-ionic surface active agents of the type  $R-(O-C_2H_4)_n OH$ ; where  $n$  is the mean ethylene oxide (EO) value. It is applicable to all ethoxylated products soluble in methanol or methanol/water mixture. This method applies to PEG concentrations as mass fraction greater than or equal to 0,1 %. This International Standard is not applicable to PEG whose molar mass is lower than 400 g/mol. Monomeric ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, triethylene glycol, and glycerol are not detected.

## 2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 3696, *Water for analytical laboratory use — Specification and test methods*

ISO 607, *Surface active agents and detergents — Methods of sample division*

ISO 5725-2, *Accuracy (trueness and precision) measurement methods and results — Part 2: Basic method for the determination of repeatability and reproducibility of a standard measurement method*

## 3 Terms and definitions

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

### 3.1

#### **polyethylene glycol content**

amount of polyethylene glycol, expressed as a percentage by mass, calculated from the calibration curve in accordance with this International Standard

## 4 Principle

Polyethylene glycol is separated from the polyethoxylated surface active agents by means of reversed phase liquid chromatography. In this process PEG is eluted in the first minutes while the non-ionic surface active agents are retarded. Evaporative light scattering detector (ELSD) or charged aerosol detector (CAD) does not detect volatile materials such as the sample solvent; interferences with the PEG peak are limited. The sample is dissolved in an 80/20 (V/V) mixture of methanol/water or in another methanol/water mixture to obtain a clear solution. A portion of the sample solution is then analysed by high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC). Quantification of PEG content is achieved by external calibration with PEG molar mass equal to 1 000 g/mol.

## 5 Reagents

During the analysis, use only reagents of recognized analytical grade and the water used shall conform to grade 3 in accordance with ISO 3696.

**5.1 Polyethylene glycol**, with molar mass of 1 000 g/mol, gel permeation chromatography (GPC) grade.