

Process for the Preparation of Hydrogenated Nitrile Rubber

The present invention relates to a process for the production of hydrogenated nitrile rubber polymers having lower molecular weights and narrower molecular weight distributions than those known in the art, wherein the process is carried out in the presence of hydrogen and optionally at least one co-(olefin). The present invention further relates to the use of specific metal compounds in a process for the production of a hydrogenated nitrile rubber by simultaneous hydrogenation and metathesis of a nitrile rubber.

- Hydrogenated nitrile rubber (HNBR), prepared by the selective hydrogenation of acrylonitrile-butadiene rubber (nitrile rubber; NBR, a co-polymer comprising at least one conjugated diene, at least one unsaturated nitrile and optionally further co-monomers), is a specialty rubber which has very good heat resistance, excellent ozone and chemical resistance, and excellent oil resistance. Coupled with the high level of mechanical properties of the rubber (in particular the high resistance to abrasion) it is not surprising that HNBR has found widespread use in the automotive (seals, hoses, bearing pads) oil (stators, well head seals, valve plates), electrical (cable sheathing), mechanical engineering (wheels, rollers) and shipbuilding (pipe seals, couplings) industries, amongst others.
- Commercially available HNBR has a Mooney viscosity in the range of from 34 to 130, a molecular weight in the range of from 150,000 to 500,000 g/mol, a polydispersity in the range of from 2,0 to 5,0 and a residual double bond (RDB) content in the range of from <1 to 18% (by IR spectroscopy).
- As outlined in independent reviews by Rempel (**Journal of Macromolecular Science – Part C – Polymer Reviews**, 1995, Vol. C35, 239-285) and Sivaram (**Rubber Chemistry and Technology**, July/August 1997, Vol. 70, Issue 3, 309), the bulk of the catalytic work concerning dienes and in particular nitrile butadiene rubber has been focused on the transition metals rhodium (Rh) and palladium (Pd). However considerable efforts have also gone into the exploration of alternative catalytic systems including iridium and Ziegler-Type catalysts. Alternatively efforts into developing ruthenium (Ru) based catalyst have attracted attention. These ruthenium based catalyst were of the general form $\text{RuCl}_2(\text{PPh}_3)_3$, $\text{RuH}(\text{O}_2\text{CR})(\text{PPh}_3)_3$ and $\text{RuHCl}(\text{CO})(\text{PPh}_3)_3$. One negative to the utilization of a ruthenium based catalyst was the

unusually high Mooney viscosity for the resulting hydrogenated nitrile rubber due to the reduction of the nitrile groups to secondary amines, resulting in the subsequent crosslinking/gelling of the polymer. Rempel does point out that the addition of additives (i.e. CoSO_4 and $(\text{NH}_4)_2\text{Fe}(\text{SO}_4)_4$) to react with these amines can minimize the crosslinking/gelling.

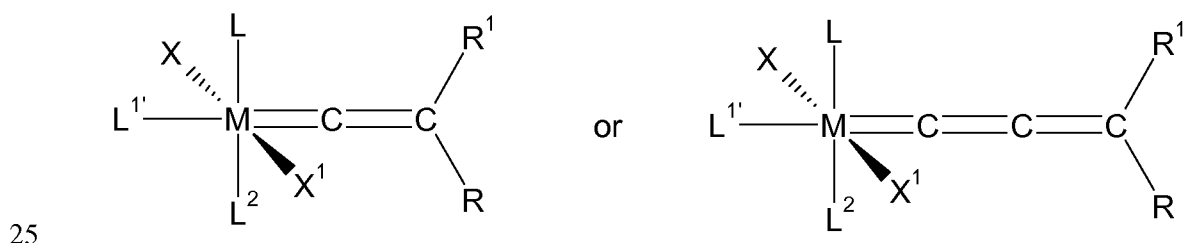
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Rempel and co-workers reported in a series of patents (US Patents **5,210,151**; **5,208,296** and **5,258,647**) the utilization of ruthenium based catalyst for the hydrogenation of nitrile rubber when the nitrile rubber was supplied in an aqueous, latex form and when the reactions were conducted in the presence of additives which were capable for minimalizing the reduction of the nitrile group. Specific ruthenium catalyst utilized include carbonylchlorohydrido bis(tricyclohexylphosphine) ruthenium II, dichloro tris(triphenylphosphine) ruthenium II, carbonylchlorostyryl bis(tricyclohexylphosphine) ruthenium II and carbonylchlorobezoato bis(tricyclohexylphosphine) ruthenium II.

15 Recently, Souza and co-workers reported (**Journal of Applied Polymer Science, 2007, Vol. 106, pg 659-663**) the hydrogenation of a nitrile rubber using a ruthenium catalyst of the general form $\text{RuCl}_2(\text{PPh}_3)_3$. While efficient hydrogenation was reported restrictions were placed on the solvent choice due to the necessity to minimize the nitrile group reduction.

20 The problem of reducing the molecular weight of a nitrile rubber is solved in the more recent prior art prior to hydrogenation by metathesis. Metathesis catalysts are known in the prior art.

WO-A1-03/011455 relates to hexacoordinated metathesis catalysts and to methods of making and using the same. The catalysts are of the formula



wherein

M is ruthenium or osmium;

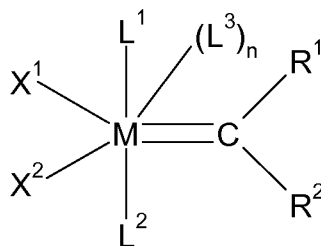
X and X^1 are the same or different and are each independently an anionic ligand

L, L¹ and L² are the same or different and are each independently a neutral electron donor ligand; and

R and R¹ are each independently hydrogen or a substituent selected from alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, carboxylate, alkoxy, alkenyloxy, alynyloxy, aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylthio, alkylsulfonyl, alkylsulfinyl and silyl.

The catalysts are useful in metathesis reactions including ring-opening metathesis polymerization, ring-closing metathesis, ADMET, self- and cross-metathesis reactions, alkyne polymerization, carbonyl olefination, depolymerisation of unsaturated polymers, synthesis of telechelic polymers, and olefin synthesis. All examples in WO-A1-03/011455 disclose polymerization reactions.

WO-A2-03/087167 relates to a method for carrying out cross-metathesis reactions using Group 8 transition metal complexes as catalyst. The process according to WO-A2-03/087167 is especially useful for the synthesis of olefins that are directly substituted with an electron withdrawing group via a cross-metathesis reaction. The Group 8 transition metal complexes have the following formula (I)



in which

L¹ is a strongly coordinating neutral electron donor ligand;

n is zero or 1;

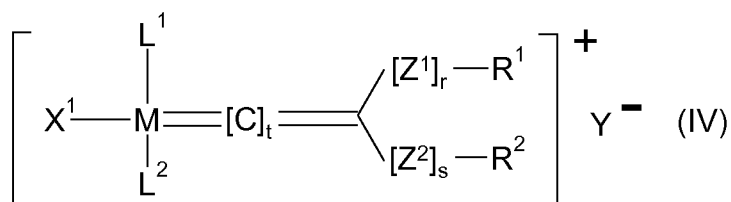
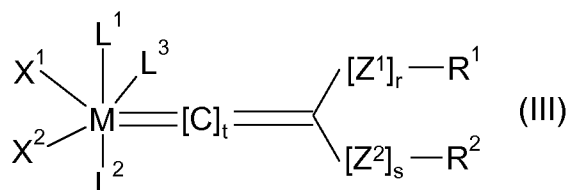
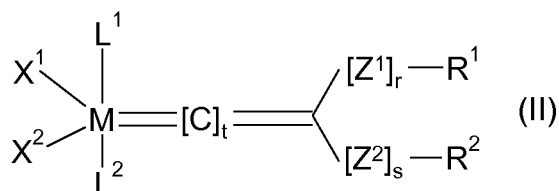
L² and L³ are weakly coordinating neutral electron donor ligands;

X¹ and X² are anionic ligands; and

R¹ and R² are independently selected from hydrogen, hydrocarbyl, substituted hydrocarbyl, heteroatom-containing hydrocarbyl, substituted heteroatom-containing hydrocarbyl, and functional groups, or may be taken together to form a cyclic group,

and further wherein any one or more of X¹, X², L¹, L², L³, R¹, and R² may be attached to a support;

or one of the following formulae (II), (III) or (IV)



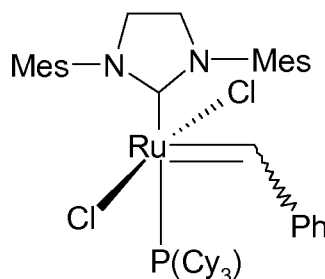
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wherein

X^1 , X^2 , L^1 , L^2 , L^3 , R^1 , and R^2 are as defined previously, r and s are independently zero or 1, t is an integer in the range of zero to 5, Y is any noncoordinating anion, Z^1 and Z^2 are linkages containing 1 to about 6 spacer atoms, any two or more of X^1 , X^2 , L^1 , L^2 , L^3 , Z^1 , Z^2 , R^1 , and R^2 may be taken together to form a cyclic group; e.g., a multidentate ligand, and any one or more of X^1 , X^2 , L^1 , L^2 , L^3 , Z^1 , Z^2 , R^1 , and R^2 may be attached to a support.

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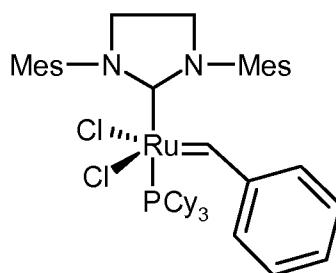
According to the example in **WO-A2-03/087167** a cross-metathesis of acrylonitrile with different cross partners is carried out in the presence of a catalyst of the formula (1)



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However, the catalysts mentioned above are not necessarily suitable for carrying out the degradation of nitrile rubber. Further, the catalysts mentioned above have never been used as hydrogenation catalysts in the prior art.

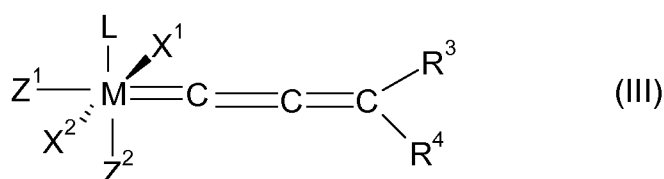
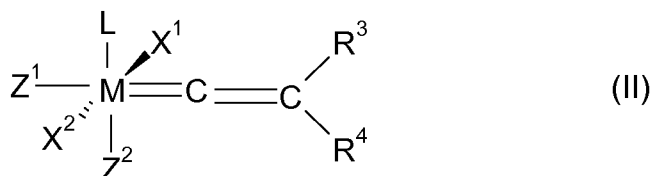
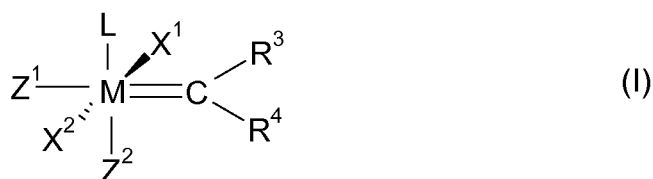
In **WO-A-2005/080456** Guerin reports the preparation of hydrogenated nitrile rubber polymers having low molecular weights and narrower molecular weight distributions than those known in the art. The preparation process is carried out by simultaneously subjecting the nitrile rubber to a metathesis reaction and a hydrogenation reaction. The reaction according to WO 2005/080456 takes place in the presence of a ruthenium based catalyst of the general formula 1,3 bis(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)-2-imidazolidinylidene) (tricyclohexylphosphine) ruthenium (phenylmethylene) dichloride (Grubbs 2nd generation catalyst)



However, there is a need for alternative catalysts which are suitable for the preparation of hydrogenated nitrile rubber polymers in a simultaneous hydrogenation and metathesis reaction. Additionally, the hydrogenation efficiency and – at the same time - the metathesis activity should be improved.

We have now discovered that hydrogenated nitrile rubber having lower molecular weights and narrower molecular weight distributions than those known in the art can be prepared by the metathesis of nitrile butadiene rubber in the presence of hydrogen and optionally at least one co-(olefin). Thus, the inventive process is capable of producing a hydrogenated nitrile rubber with low residual double bond contents (RDB) having a molecular weight (M_w) in the range of from 20,000 to 250,000, a Mooney viscosity (ML 1+4 @ 100 deg. C) of in the range of from 1 to 50, and a MWD (or polydispersity index) of less than 2.8 in a single step.

The present invention therefore relates to a process for the production of a hydrogenated nitrile rubber comprising reacting a nitrile rubber in the presence of hydrogen, optionally at least one co-olefin, and in the presence of at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III),



where

M is ruthenium or osmium,

X¹ and X² are identical or different ligands, preferably anionic ligands,

5 Z¹ and Z² are identical or different and neutral electron donor ligands,

R³ and R⁴ are each independently hydrogen or a substituent selected from the group consisting of alkyl, cycloalkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, carboxylate, alkoxy, alkenyloxy, alkynyloxy, aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylamino, alkylthio, arylthio, alkylsulphonyl and alkylsulphinyl radical, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals, and

L is a ligand.

As nitrile rubbers ("NBR"), it is possible to use copolymers or terpolymers which comprise repeating units of at least one conjugated diene, at least one α,β-unsaturated nitrile and, if desired, one or more further copolymerizable monomers.

The conjugated diene can be of any nature. Preference is given to using (C₄-C₆) conjugated dienes. Particular preference is given to 1,3-butadiene, isoprene, 2,3-dimethylbutadiene, piperylene or mixtures thereof. Very particular preference is given to 1,3-butadiene and isoprene or mixtures thereof. Especial preference is given to 1,3-butadiene.

As α,β -unsaturated nitrile, it is possible to use any known α,β -unsaturated nitrile, preferably a (C_3 - C_5) α,β -unsaturated nitrile such as acrylonitrile, methacrylonitrile, ethacrylonitrile or mixtures thereof. Particular preference is given to acrylonitrile.

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A particularly preferred nitrile rubber is thus a copolymer of acrylonitrile and 1,3-butadiene.

Apart from the conjugated diene and the α,β -unsaturated nitrile, it is possible to use one or more further copolymerizable monomers known to those skilled in the art, e.g. α,β -unsaturated
10 monocarboxylic or dicarboxylic acids, their esters or amides. As α,β -unsaturated monocarboxylic or dicarboxylic acids, preference is given to fumaric acid, maleic acid, acrylic acid and methacrylic acid. As esters of α,β -unsaturated carboxylic acids, preference is given to using their alkyl esters and alkoxyalkyl esters. Particularly preferred alkyl esters of α,β -unsaturated carboxylic acids are methyl acrylate, ethyl acrylate, butyl acrylate, butyl
15 methacrylate, 2-ethylhexyl acrylate, 2-ethylhexyl methacrylate and octyl acrylate. Particularly preferred alkoxyalkyl esters of α,β -unsaturated carboxylic acids are methoxyethyl (meth)acrylate, ethoxyethyl (meth)acrylate and methoxymethyl (meth)acrylate. It is also possible to use mixtures of alkyl esters, e.g. those mentioned above, with alkoxyalkyl esters, e.g. in the form of those mentioned above.

20

The proportions of conjugated diene and α,β -unsaturated nitrile in the NBR polymers to be used can vary within wide ranges. The proportion of or of the sum of the conjugated dienes is usually in the range from 40 to 90% by weight, preferably in the range from 55 to 75% by weight, based on the total polymer. The proportion of or of the sum of the α,β -unsaturated nitriles is usually
25 from 10 to 60% by weight, preferably from 25 to 45% by weight, based on the total polymer. The proportions of the monomers in each case add up to 100% by weight. The additional monomers can be present in amounts of from 0 to 40% by weight, preferably from 0.1 to 40% by weight, particularly preferably from 1 to 30% by weight, based on the total polymer. In this case, corresponding proportions of the conjugated diene or dienes and/or of the α,β -unsaturated
30 nitrile or nitriles are replaced by the proportions of the additional monomers, with the proportions of all monomers in each case adding up to 100% by weight.

The preparation of nitrile rubbers by polymerization of the abovementioned monomers is adequately known to those skilled in the art and is comprehensively described in the polymer literature.

5 Nitrile rubbers which can be used for the purposes of the invention are also commercially available, e.g. as products from the product range of the trade names Perbunan[®] and Krynac[®] from Lanxess Deutschland GmbH.

10 The nitrile rubbers used for the hydrogenation/metathesis usually have a Mooney viscosity (ML 1+4 at 100°C) in the range from 24 to 70, preferably from 28 to 40. This corresponds to a weight average molecular weight M_w in the range 200 000 – 500 000, preferably in the range 200 000 – 400 000. The nitrile rubbers used usually also have a polydispersity $PDI = M_w/M_n$, where M_w is the weight average molecular weight and M_n is the number average molecular weight, in the range 2.0 – 6.0 and preferably in the range 2.0 – 4.0.

15 The determination of the Mooney viscosity is carried out in accordance with ASTM standard D 1646.

20 According to the invention the substrate is simultaneously subject to a metathesis reaction and a hydrogenation reaction.

The catalysts of the general formula (I)-(III) are known in principle. Representatives of this class of compounds are the catalysts described by Grubbs et al. in **WO 2003/011455 A1**, Grubbs et al. **WO 2003/087167 A2**, **Organometallics 2001, 20, 5314** and **Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. 2002, 41, 4038**. The catalysts are commercially available or can be prepared as described in the
25 references cited.

30 The term “substituted” used for the purposes of the present patent application means that a hydrogen atom on an indicated radical or atom has been replaced by one of the groups indicated in each case, with the proviso that the valency of the atom indicated is not exceeded and the substitution leads to a stable compound.

For the purposes of the present patent application and invention, all the definitions of radicals, parameters or explanations given above or below in general terms or in preferred ranges can be

combined with one another in any way, i.e. including combinations of the respective ranges and preferred ranges.

5 **Z¹ and Z²**

In the process of the present invention **Z¹ and Z²** in the catalysts of general formulae (I), (II) and (III) are identical or different ligands being neutral electron donor ligands. Such ligands are in general weakly coordinating. Typically they represent optionally substituted heterocyclic groups. They may represent five- or six-membered monocyclic groups containing 1 to 4, preferably 1 to
10 3, most preferably 1 or 2 heteroatoms, or bicyclic or polycyclic structures composed of 2, 3, 4 or 5 such five- or six-membered monocyclic groups wherein all aforementioned groups are optionally substituted by one or more alkyl, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl, alkoxy, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy, halogen, preferably chlorine or bromine, aryl, preferably C₆-C₂₄-aryl, or heteroaryl, preferably C₅-C₂₃-heteroaryl radicals where these
15 abovementioned substituents may in turn be substituted by one or more radicals, preferably selected from the group consisting of halogen, in particular chlorine or bromine, C₁-C₅-alkyl, C₁-C₅-alkoxy and phenyl.

Examples of **Z¹ and Z²** include, without limitation: nitrogen containing heterocycles such as
20 pyridine, pyridazine, bipyridine, pyrimidine, pyrazine, pyrazolidine, pyrrolidine, piperazine, indazole, quinoline, purine, acridine, bisimidazole, picolyimine, imidazolidine and pyrrole, wherein all aforementioned groups are optionally substituted by one or more alkyl, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl, alkoxy, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy, halogen, preferably chlorine or bromine, aryl, preferably C₆-C₂₄-aryl, or heteroaryl, preferably C₅-C₂₃-
25 heteroaryl radicals where these abovementioned substituents may in turn be substituted by one or more radicals, preferably selected from the group consisting of halogen, in particular chlorine or bromine, C₁-C₅-alkyl, C₁-C₅-alkoxy and phenyl.

Z¹ and Z² together may also represent a bidentate ligand, thereby forming a cyclic structure.

30

L

In the catalysts of the general formulae (I), (II) and (III), **L** is a ligand, usually a ligand having an electron donor function.

The ligand L can, for example, be a phosphine, sulphonated phosphine, phosphate, phosphinite, phosphonite, arsine, stilbine, ether, amine, amide, sulphoxide, carboxyl, nitrosyl, pyridine, thioether or L can be an unsubstituted or substituted imidazolidine ("Im") ligand.

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Preference is given to ligand L being a C₆-C₂₄-arylphosphine, C₁-C₆-alkylphosphine or C₃-C₁₀-cycloalkylphosphine ligand, a sulphonated C₆-C₂₄-arylphosphine or a sulphonated C₁-C₁₀-alkylphosphine ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl phosphinite or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl phosphinite ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl phosphonite or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl phosphonite ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl phosphite or C₁-C₁₀-alkylphosphite ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-arylarsine or C₁-C₁₀-alkylarsine ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-arylamine or C₁-C₁₀-alkylamine ligand, a pyridine ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl sulphoxide or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl sulphoxide ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl ether or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl ether ligand or a C₆-C₂₄-arylamide or C₁-C₁₀-alkylamide ligand, each of which may be substituted by a phenyl group which may in turn be substituted by a halogen, C₁-C₅ alkyl radical or C₁-C₅-alkoxy radical, or L is a unsubstituted or substituted imidazolidine ("Im") ligand.

15

Aryl encompasses an aromatic radical having from 6 to 24 skeletal carbon atoms (C₆-C₂₄-aryl). Preferred monocyclic, bicyclic or tricyclic carbocyclic aromatic radicals having from 6 to 10 skeletal carbon atoms are, for example, phenyl, biphenyl, naphthyl, phenanthrenyl and anthracenyl.

20

Alkyl is preferably C₁-C₁₂-alkyl and is, for example, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl, n-butyl, sec-butyl, tert-butyl, n-pentyl, 1-methylbutyl, 2-methylbutyl, 3-methylbutyl, neopentyl, 1-ethylpropyl or n-hexyl, n-heptyl, n-octyl, n-decyl or n-dodecyl.

25

Cycloalkyl is preferably C₃-C₁₀-Cycloalkyl and encompasses cyclopropyl, cyclobutyl, cyclopentyl, cyclohexyl, cycloheptyl and cyclooctyl.

30

The term phosphine includes PR₃ structures, wherein R is in each case independently of one another C₁-C₆-alkyl, C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl or aryl, like for example, PPh₃, P(p-Tol)₃, P(o-Tol)₃, PPh(CH₃)₂, P(CF₃)₃, P(p-FC₆H₄)₃, P(p-CF₃C₆H₄)₃, P(C₆H₄-SO₃Na)₃, P(CH₂C₆H₄-SO₃Na)₃, P(iso-Pr)₃, P(CHCH₃(CH₂CH₃))₃, P(cyclopentyl)₃, P(cyclohexyl)₃, P(neopentyl)₃ and P(neophenyl)₃.

Phosphinite includes, for example, triphenyl phosphinite, tricyclohexyl phosphinite, triisopropyl phosphinite and methyl diphenylphosphinite.

- 5 Phosphite includes, for example, triphenyl phosphite, tricyclohexyl phosphite, tri-tert-butyl phosphite, triisopropyl phosphite and methyl diphenyl phosphite.

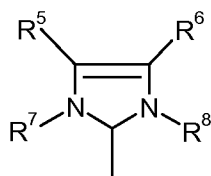
Stilbine includes, for example, triphenylstibine, tricyclohexylstibine and trimethylstibene.

- 10 Sulphonate includes, for example, trifluoromethanesulphonate, tosylate and mesylate.

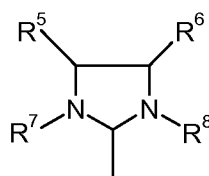
Sulphoxide includes, for example, $\text{CH}_3\text{S}(=\text{O})\text{CH}_3$ and $(\text{C}_6\text{H}_5)_2\text{SO}$.

- 15 Thioether includes, for example, CH_3SCH_3 , $\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{SCH}_3$, $\text{CH}_3\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{SCH}_3$ and tetrahydrothiophene.

The imidazolidine radical (**Im**) usually has a structure of the general formula (IVa) or (IVb),



(IVa)



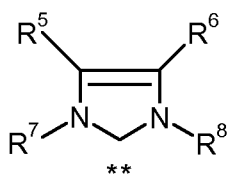
(IVb)

where

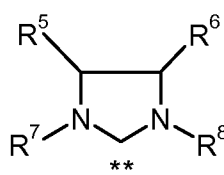
- 20 R^5 , R^6 , R^7 , R^8 are identical or different and are each hydrogen, straight-chain or branched C_1 - C_{30} -alkyl, preferably C_1 - C_{20} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{20} -cycloalkyl, preferably C_3 - C_{10} -cycloalkyl, C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyl, preferably C_2 - C_{10} -alkenyl, C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyl, preferably C_2 - C_{10} -alkynyl, C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, preferably C_6 - C_{14} -aryl, C_1 - C_{20} -carboxylate, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -carboxylate, C_1 - C_{20} -alkoxy, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -alkoxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyloxy, preferably C_2 - C_{10} -alkenyloxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyloxy, preferably C_2 - C_{10} -alkynyloxy, C_6 - C_{24} -aryloxy, preferably C_6 - C_{14} -aryloxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkoxycarbonyl, preferably C_2 - C_{10} -alkoxycarbonyl, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylthio, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -alkylthio, C_6 - C_{24} -arylthio, preferably C_6 - C_{14} -arylthio, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphonyl, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -alkylsulphonyl, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphonate, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -
- 25

alkylsulphonate, C₆-C₂₄-arylsulphonate, preferably C₆-C₁₄-arylsulphonate, or C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphinyl, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkylsulphinyl.

- One or more of the radicals R⁵, R⁶, R⁷, R⁸ may, independently of one another, optionally be substituted by one or more substituents, preferably straight-chain or branched C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy or C₆-C₂₄-aryl, where these abovementioned substituents may in turn be substituted by one or more radicals, preferably selected from the group consisting of halogen, in particular chlorine or bromine, C₁-C₅-alkyl, C₁-C₅-alkoxy and phenyl.
- Only for the sake of clarity it is hereby confirmed that the structures as depicted in the general formulae (IVa) and (IVb) of this application with regard to the structure of the imidazolidine radical shall have the same meaning as the structures often used in the relevant literature with regard to such imidazolidine radical which are hereinafter depicted as structures (IVa') and (IVb') and which emphasize the carbene-like structure of the imidazolidine radical. The same shall apply to the structures (Va)-(Vf) which are also later on depicted in this application.



(IVa')



(IVb')

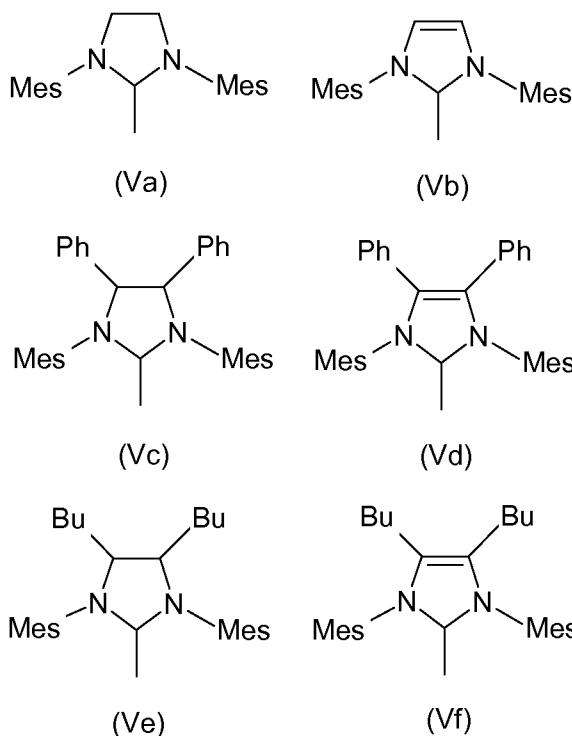
- In a preferred embodiment of the catalysts of the general formula (I), (II) or (III) a ligand L is present in which R⁵ and R⁶ are each, independently of one another, hydrogen, C₆-C₂₄-aryl, particularly preferably phenyl, straight-chain or branched C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, particularly preferably propyl or butyl, or together form, with inclusion of the carbon atoms to which they are bound, a cycloalkyl or aryl radical, where all the abovementioned radicals may in turn be substituted by one or more further radicals selected from the group consisting of straight-chain or branched C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy, C₆-C₂₄-aryl and functional groups selected from the group consisting of hydroxy, thiol, thioether, ketone, aldehyde, ester, ether, amine, imine, amide, nitro, carboxyl, disulphide, carbonate, isocyanate, carbodiimide, carboalkoxy, carbamate and halogen.

The radicals R^7 and R^8 in the ligand L of the catalysts of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III) are preferably identical or different and are each straight-chain or branched C_1 - C_{10} -alkyl, particularly preferably i-propyl or neopentyl, C_3 - C_{10} -cycloalkyl, preferably adamantyl, C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, particularly preferably phenyl, C_1 - C_{10} -alkylsulphonate, particularly preferably methanesulphonate, C_6 - C_{10} -arylsulphonate, particularly preferably p-toluenesulphonate.

These radicals R^7 and R^8 which are mentioned above as being preferred may optionally be substituted by one or more further radicals selected from the group consisting of straight-chain or branched C_1 - C_5 -alkyl, in particular methyl, C_1 - C_5 -alkoxy, aryl and functional groups selected from the group consisting of hydroxy, thiol, thioether, ketone, aldehyde, ester, ether, amine, imine, amide, nitro, carboxyl, disulphide, carbonate, isocyanate, carbodiimide, carboalkoxy, carbamate and halogen.

In particular, the radicals R^7 and R^8 are identical or different and are each i-propyl, neopentyl, adamantyl or mesityl.

Particularly preferred imidazolidine radicals (Im) have the structures (Va) –(Vf), where Mes is in each case a 2,4,6-trimethylphenyl radical.



R³ and R⁴

The radicals R³ and R⁴ of the the catalysts of general formulae (I), (II) and (III) used in the process of the present invention are identical or different and are each hydrogen or alkyl, preferably C₁-C₃₀-alkyl, more preferably C₁-C₂₀-alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C₃-C₂₀-cycloalkyl, more preferable C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl alkenyl, preferably C₂-C₂₀-alkenyl, more preferable C₂-C₁₆-alkenyl, alkynyl, preferably C₂-C₂₀-alkynyl, more preferably C₂-C₁₆-alkynyl, aryl, preferably C₆-C₂₄-aryl, carboxylate, preferably C₁-C₂₀-carboxylate, alkoxy, preferably C₁-C₂₀-alkoxy, alkenyloxy, preferably C₂-C₂₀-alkenyloxy, alkynyloxy, preferably C₂-C₂₀-alkynyloxy, aryloxy, preferably C₆-C₂₄-aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, preferably C₂-C₂₀-alkoxycarbonyl, alkylamino, preferably C₁-C₃₀-alkylamino, alkylthio, preferably C₁-C₃₀-alkylthio, arylthio, preferably C₆-C₂₄-arylthio, alkylsulphonyl, preferably C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphonyl, or alkylsulphinyl, preferably C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphinyl radical, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals.

X¹ and X²

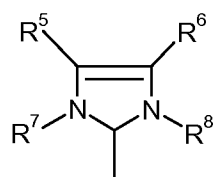
X¹ and X² of the the catalysts of general formulae (I), (II) and (III) used in the process of the present invention are identical or different ligands, preferably anionic ligands. In the literature, the customary term "anionic ligands" always refers, in the context of such metathesis catalysts, to ligands which, when they are regarded separately from the metal centre, would be negatively charged for a closed electron shell.

In the catalysts of the general formulae (I), (II) and (III), X¹ and X² are identical or different and can be, for example, hydrogen, halogen, pseudohalogen, straight-chain or branched C₁-C₃₀-alkyl, C₆-C₂₄-aryl, C₁-C₂₀-alkoxy, C₆-C₂₄-aryloxy, C₃-C₂₀-alkyldiketonate, C₆-C₂₄-aryldiketonate, C₁-C₂₀-carboxylate, C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphonate, C₆-C₂₄-arylsulphonate, C₁-C₂₀-alkylthiol, C₆-C₂₄-arylthiol, C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphonyl or C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphinyl.

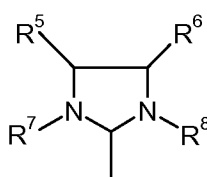
The abovementioned radicals X¹ and X² can also be substituted by one or more further radicals, for example by halogen, preferably fluorine, C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy or C₆-C₂₄-aryl radicals, where the latter radicals may optionally also in turn be substituted by one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of halogen, preferably fluorine, C₁-C₅-alkyl, C₁-C₅-alkoxy and phenyl.

In a preferred embodiment, X^1 and X^2 are identical or different and are each halogen, in particular fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine, benzoate, C_1 - C_5 -carboxylate, C_1 - C_5 -alkyl, phenoxy, C_1 - C_5 -alkoxy, C_1 - C_5 -alkylthiol, C_6 - C_{24} -arylthiol, C_6 - C_{24} -aryl or C_1 - C_5 -alkylsulphonate.

- 5 In a particularly preferred embodiment, X^1 and X^2 are identical and are each halogen, in particular chlorine, CF_3COO , CH_3COO , CFH_2COO , $(CH_3)_3CO$, $(CF_3)_2(CH_3)CO$, $(CF_3)(CH_3)_2CO$, PhO (phenoxy), MeO (methoxy), EtO (ethoxy), tosylate (p - CH_3 - C_6H_4 - SO_3), mesylate (2,4,6-trimethylphenyl) or CF_3SO_3 (trifluoromethanesulphonate).
- 10 Particular preference is given to a process according to the invention which is carried out in the presence of at least one catalyst of the general formula (I) in which
- M is ruthenium,
- X^1 and X^2 are both halogen, in particular, both chlorine,
- Z^1 and Z^2 are identical or different and represent five- or six-membered monocyclic groups
- 15 containing 1 to 4, preferably 1 to 3, most preferably 1 or 2 heteroatoms, or bicyclic or polycyclic structures composed of 2, 3, 4 or 5 such five- or six-membered monocyclic groups wherein all aforementioned groups are optionally substituted by one or more alkyl, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C_3 - C_8 -cycloalkyl, alkoxy, preferably C_1 - C_{10} -alkoxy, halogen, preferably chlorine
- 20 or bromine, aryl, preferably C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, or heteroaryl, preferably C_5 - C_{23} heteroaryl radicals, or Z^1 and Z^2 together represent a bidentate ligand, thereby forming a cyclic structure,
- R^3 and R^4 are identical or different and are each hydrogen or C_1 - C_{30} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{20} -cycloalkyl, C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyl, C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyl, C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, C_1 - C_{20} -carboxylate, C_1 - C_{20} -alkoxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyloxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyloxy, C_6 - C_{24} -aryloxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkoxycarbonyl, C_1 - C_{30} -alkylamino, C_1 - C_{30} -alkylthio, C_6 - C_{24} -arylthio, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphonyl, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphiny, each of which may optionally be
- 25 substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals, and
- 30
- L has a structure of the general formula (IVa) or (IVb),



(IVa)

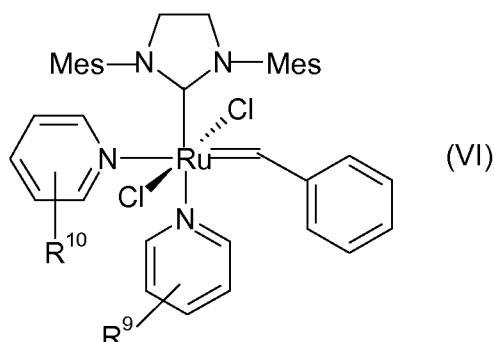


(IVb)

where

- R^5, R^6, R^7, R^8 are identical or different and are each hydrogen, straight-chain or branched
- 5 C_1-C_{30} -alkyl, C_3-C_{20} -cycloalkyl, C_2-C_{20} -alkenyl, C_2-C_{20} -alkynyl, C_6-C_{24} -aryl, C_1-C_{20} -carboxylate, C_1-C_{20} -alkoxy, C_2-C_{20} -alkenyloxy, C_2-C_{20} -alkynyloxy, C_6-C_{24} -aryloxy, C_2-C_{20} -alkoxycarbonyl, C_1-C_{20} -alkylthio, C_6-C_{24} -arylthio, C_1-C_{20} -alkylsulphonyl, C_1-C_{20} -alkylsulphonate, C_6-C_{20} -arylsulphonate, or C_1-C_{20} -alkylsulphinyl.

- 10 A particularly preferred catalyst which comes under the general structural formula (I) is that of the formula (VI)

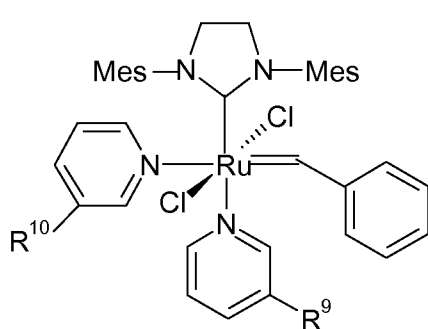


(VI)

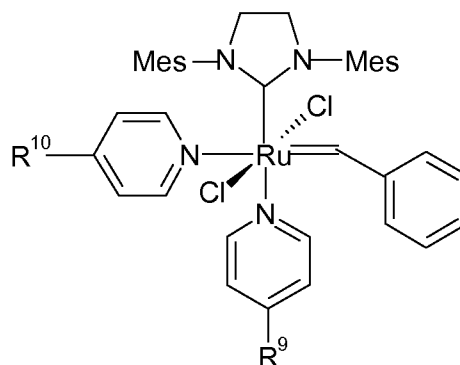
where

- R^9, R^{10} are identical or different and represent halogen, straight-chain or branched C_1-
- 15 C_{20} alkyl, C_1-C_{20} heteroalkyl, C_1-C_{10} haloalkyl, C_1-C_{10} alkoxy, C_6-C_{24} aryl, preferably phenyl, formyl, nitro, nitrogen heterocycles, preferably pyridine, piperidine and pyrazine, carboxy, alkylcarbonyl, halocarbonyl, carbamoyl, thiocarbomoyl, carbamido, thioformyl, amino, trialkylsilyl und trialkoxysilyl.
- 20 The aforementioned alkyl, heteroalkyl, haloalkyl, alkoxy, phenyl, nitrogen heterocycles, alkylcarbonyl, halocarbonyl, carbamoyl, thiocarbomoyl and amino radicals may optionally also in turn be substituted by one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of halogen, preferably fluorine, chlorine, or bromine, C_1-C_5 -alkyl, C_1-C_5 -alkoxy and phenyl.

In a particularly preferred embodiment the catalyst (VI) has the general structural formula (VIa) or (VIb), wherein R^9 and R^{10} have the same meaning as given for structural formula (VI)



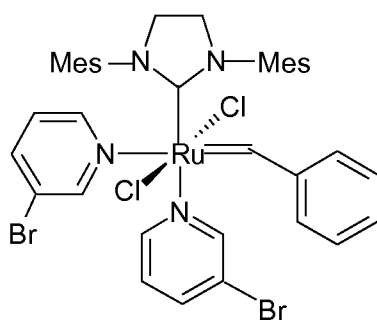
(VIa)



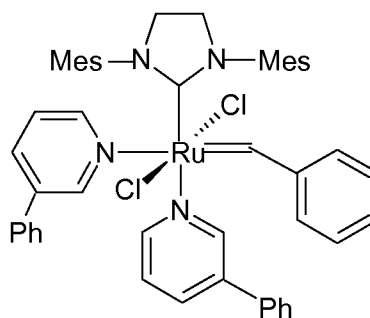
(VIb)

- 5 In the case where R^9 and R^{10} are each hydrogen, catalyst (VI) is referred to as “Grubbs III catalyst” in the literature.

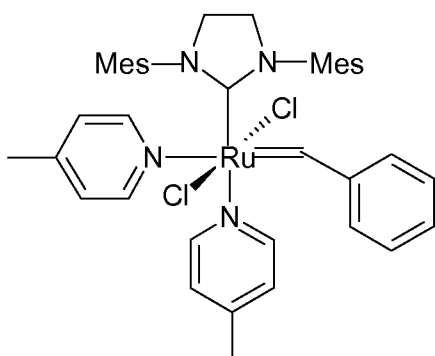
Further suitable catalysts which come under the general structural formulae (I)-(III) are those of the formulae (VII), (VIII), (IX), (X), (XI), (XII), (XIII), (XIV), (XV) and (XVI), where Mes is
10 in each case a 2,4,6-trimethylphenyl radical.



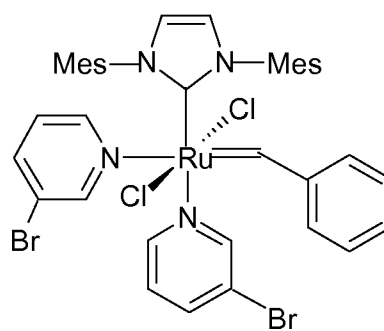
(VII)



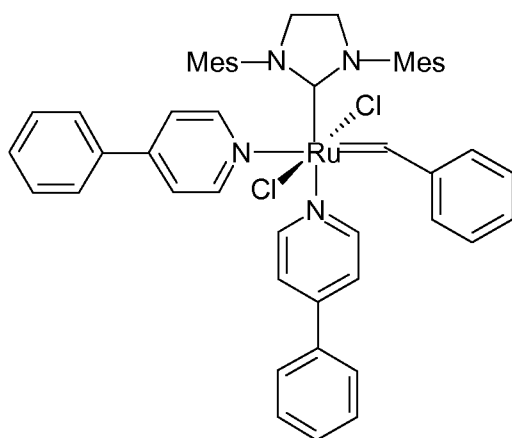
(VIII)



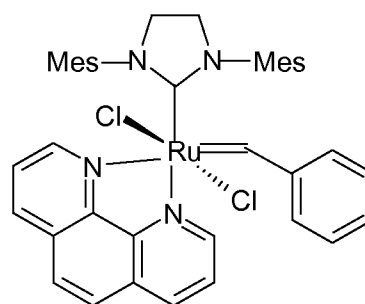
(IX)



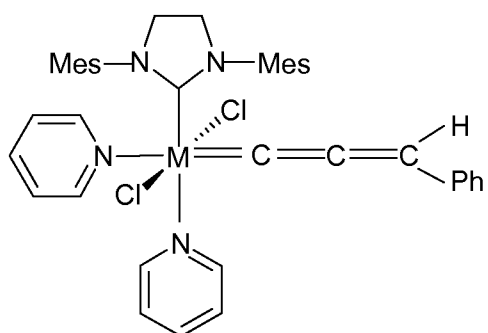
(X)



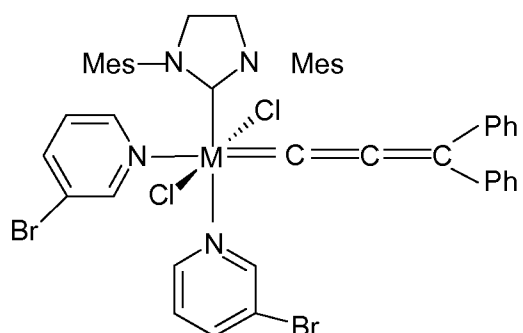
(XI)



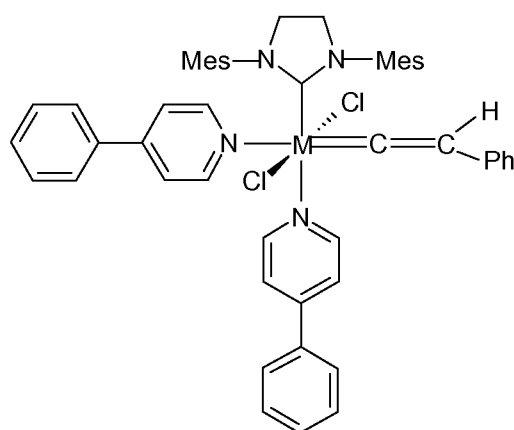
(XII)



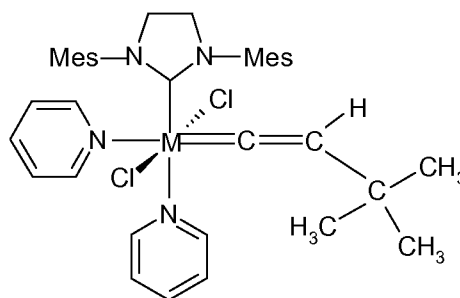
(XIII)



(XIV)



(XV)



(XVI)

All the abovementioned catalysts of the formulae (I)-(III) and (VI)-(XVI) can either be used as such for the simultaneous metathesis and hydrogenation of NBR or can be applied to and immobilized on a solid support. As solid phases or supports, it is possible to use materials which firstly are inert towards the reaction mixture of the metathesis and secondly do not impair the activity of the catalyst. It is possible to use, for example, metals, glass, polymers, ceramic, organic polymer spheres, inorganic sol-gels, silica, silicates, calcium carbonate or barium sulfate for immobilizing the catalyst.

The catalysts of all the abovementioned general and specific formulae (I)-(III) and (VI)-(XVI) are highly suitable for the simultaneous metathesis and hydrogenation of nitrile rubber.

The amount of at least one catalyst of the formulae (I), (II), (III) or (VI) to (XVI) used according to the invention for the simultaneous metathesis and hydrogenation depends on the nature and the catalytic activity of the specific catalyst. The amount of catalyst used is usually from 5 to 1000 ppm of noble metal, preferably from 5 to 500 ppm, in particular from 5 to 250 ppm, more preferably from 5 to 100 ppm, based on the nitrile rubber used.

The process of the present invention (simultaneous metathesis and hydrogenation of NBR) can optionally be carried out with a coolefin. Suitable coolefins are, for example, ethylene, propylene, isobutene, styrene, 1-hexene and 1-octene.

The process of the present invention (simultaneous metathesis and hydrogenation of NBR) can be carried out in a suitable solvent which does not deactivate the catalyst used and also does not adversely affect the reaction in any other way. Preferred solvents include but are not restricted to dichloromethane, benzene, toluene, methyl ethyl ketone, acetone, tetrahydrofuran, 5 tetrahydropyran, dioxane and cyclohexane. The particularly preferred solvent is chlorobenzene.

The concentration of NBR in the reaction mixture is not critical but, obviously, should be such that the reaction is not hampered if the mixture is too viscous to be stirred efficiently, for example. Preferably, the concentration of NBR is in the range of from 1 to 40% by weight, most 10 preferably in the range of from 6 to 15 wt.%.

The concentration of hydrogen is usually between 100 psi and 2000 psi, preferably 800 psi and 1400 psi.

15 The process is preferably carried out at a temperature in the range of from 60 to 200°C; preferably in the range of from 100 to 140°C.

The reaction time will depend upon a number of factors, including cement concentration, amount of catalyst used and the temperature at which the reaction is performed. The progress of the 20 reaction may be monitored by standard analytical techniques, for example using GPC or solution viscosity. Whenever referenced throughout the specification the molecular weight distribution of the polymer was determined by gel permeation chromatography (GPC) carried out according to DIN 55672-1 version 2007.

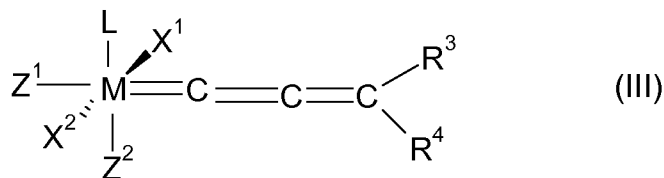
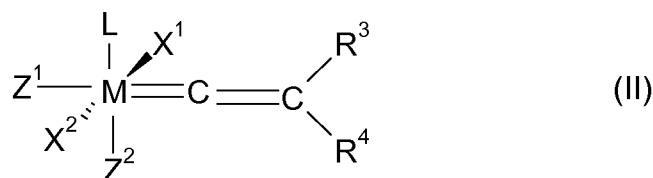
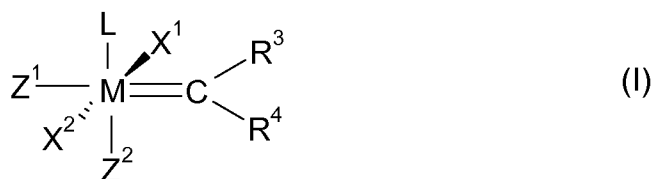
25 Hydrogenation in this invention is understood by preferably more than 50 % of the residual double bonds (RDB) present in the starting nitrile polymer being hydrogenated, preferably more than 90 % of the RDB are hydrogenated, more preferably more than 95 % of the RDB are hydrogenated and most preferably more than 99 % of the RDB are hydrogenated.

30 Due to the low viscosity of the resulting HNBR, it is ideally suited to be processed by but not limited to injection molding technology. The polymer can also be useful to transfer molding, to compression molding, or to liquid injection molding.

Further, the polymer obtained in the process of the present invention is very well suited for the manufacture of a shaped article, such as a seal, hose, bearing pad, stator, well head seal, valve plate, cable sheathing, wheel, roller, pipe seal, in place gaskets or footwear component prepared by injection molding technology.

5

In a further embodiment the present invention relates to the use of at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III),



10 where

M is ruthenium or osmium,

X¹ and X² are identical or different ligands, preferably anionic ligands,

Z¹ and Z² are identical or different and neutral electron donor ligands,

R³ and R⁴ are each independently hydrogen or a substituent selected from the group

15 consisting of alkyl, cycloalkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, carboxylate, alkoxy, alkenyloxy, alkynyloxy, aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylamino, alkylthio, arylthio, alkylsulphonyl and alkylsulphinyl radical, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals, and

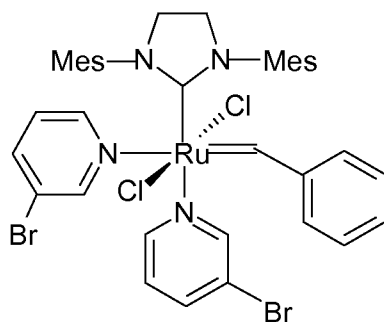
20 L is a ligand

in a process for the production of a hydrogenated nitrile rubber by simultaneous hydrogenation and metathesis of a nitrile rubber.

Preferred groups M, X^1 , X^2 , Z^1 , Z^2 , R^3 , R^4 and L as well as particularly preferred compounds of
5 the general formulae (I), (II) and (III) are mentioned before.

EXAMPLES:**Examples 1-2**

The following catalysts were used:

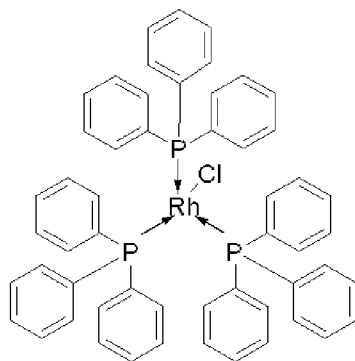
“Grubbs III catalyst” (according to the invention):

5

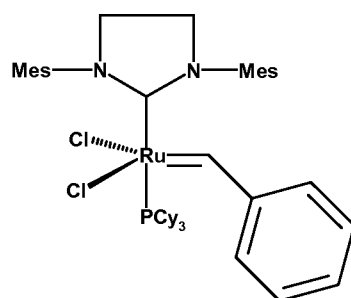
The Grubbs III catalyst was produced via the preparation outlined in Grubbs et al., *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.*, 2002, 41(21), 4035.

Wilkinson's catalyst (comparison):

10



The Wilkinson's catalyst was procured from Umicore AG.

15 Grubbs II catalyst (comparison):

The Grubbs II catalyst was procured from Materia (Pasadena/California).

The degradation reactions described below were carried out using the nitrile rubber Perbunan[®] NT 3429 from Lanxess Deutschland GmbH. This nitrile rubber had the following characteristic properties:

5	Acrylonitrile content:	34% by weight
	Mooney viscosity (ML 1+4 @100°C):	28 Mooney units
	Residual moisture content:	<0,5% by weight
	M _w :	214 000 g/mol
	M _n :	67 000 g/mol
10	PDI (M _w /M _n):	3,2

In the text that follows, this nitrile rubber is referred to as NBR for short.

518 grams of nitrile rubber were dissolved in 4300 grams of monochlorobenzene at room
15 temperature and agitated for 12 hours. The 12% solution was then transferred to a high pressure
reactor agitating at 600rpm, where the rubber solution was degassed 3 times with H₂ (7 bar)
under full agitation. The temperature of the reactor was raised to 130°C and a
monochlorobenzene solution containing the catalyst and triphenylphosphine (if needed) was
added to the reactor. The pressure was set to 85bar and the temperature was allowed to increase
20 to 138°C and maintained constant for the duration of the reaction. The hydrogenation reaction
was monitored by measuring the residual double bond (RDB) level at various intervals using IR
spectroscopy.

On completion of the reaction GPC analysis was carried out according to DIN 55672-1 version
25 2007.

The Mooney viscosity (ML 1+4 @100°C) was determined utilizing ASTM standard D 1646.

The following characteristic properties were determined by means of GPC analysis both for the
30 original NBR rubber (before degradation) and for the degraded nitrile rubbers:

M_w [kg/mol]: weight average molar mass
M_n [kg/mol]: number average molar mass

PDI: width of the molar mass distribution (M_w/M_n)

Example 1: Details

Table 1: Comparison of Hydrogenation Parameters

	HNBR 1	HNBR 2	HNBR 3	HNBR 4
Hydrogenation Catalyst	Grubbs III	Grubbs III	Wilkinson's	Grubbs II
Catalyst Amount (phr)	0,057	0,080	0,06	0,055
Metal content (ppm)	65,6	91,3	65,6	65,6

5

Table 2: Comparison of Hydrogenation Profiles

	HNBR 1	HNBR 2	HNBR 3	HNBR 4
Reaction Time (min)	RDB %	RDB %	RDB %	RDB %
0	100	100	100	100
60	2,0	0,7	15,4	2,9
120	0,4	0,5	3,1	0,6
180	0,3	0,3	1,3	0,3
240	-	-	0,6	-

Table 3: Summary of HNBR Properties

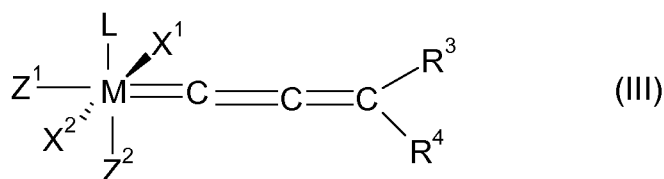
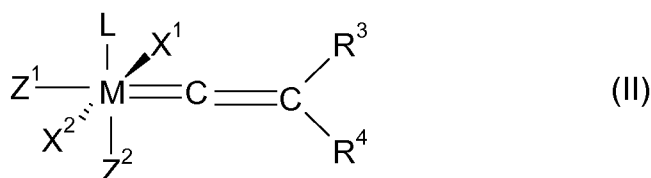
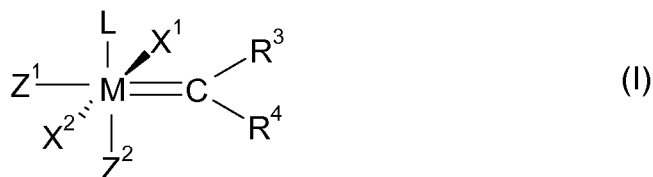
	Mw (g/mol)	Mn (g/mol)	PDI (Mw/Mn)	Mooney Viscosity
HNBR 1	191541	68643	2,79	38,2
HNBR 2	135772	58259	2,33	20,2
HNBR 3	195304	64130	3,05	69,3
HNBR 4	144212	59851	2,45	32,6

10

In comparing HNBR's 1, 3 and 4 all at equal metal contents, we observe that the Grubbs III catalyst hydrogenates faster in the first 120min than either the reaction with Grubbs II or Wilkinson's catalyst.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for the production of a hydrogenated nitrile rubber comprising reacting a nitrile rubber in the presence of hydrogen, optionally at least one co-olefin, and in the presence of at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III),



where

M is ruthenium or osmium,

10 X^1 and X^2 are identical or different ligands, preferably anionic ligands,

Z^1 and Z^2 are identical or different and neutral electron donor ligands,

15 R^3 and R^4 are each independently hydrogen or a substituent selected from the group consisting of alkyl, cycloalkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, carboxylate, alkoxy, alkenyloxy, alkynyloxy, aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylamino, alkylthio, arylthio, alkylsulphonyl and alkylsulphinyl radical, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals, and

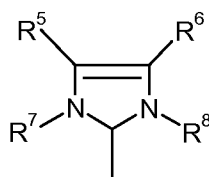
L is a ligand.

- 20 2. The process according to claim 1, wherein in the at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III) Z^1 and Z^2 are identical or different and represent optionally

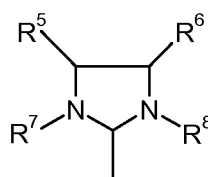
substituted heterocyclic groups, preferably five- or six-membered monocyclic groups containing 1 to 4, more preferably 1 to 3, most preferably 1 or 2 heteroatoms, or bicyclic or polycyclic structures composed of 2, 3, 4 or 5 such five- or six-membered monocyclic groups wherein all aforementioned groups are optionally substituted by one or more alkyl, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl, alkoxy, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy, halogen, preferably chlorine or bromine, aryl, preferably C₆-C₂₄-aryl, or heteroaryl, preferably C₅-C₂₃-heteroaryl radicals where these abovementioned substituents may in turn be substituted by one or more radicals, preferably selected from the group consisting of halogen, in particular chlorine or bromine, C₁-C₅-alkyl, C₁-C₅-alkoxy and phenyl, preferably Z¹ and Z² are identical or different and represent nitrogen containing heterocycles, preferably pyridine, pyridazine, bipyridine, pyrimidine, pyrazine, pyrazolidine, pyrrolidine, piperazine, indazole, quinoline, purine, acridine, bisimidazole, picolyimine, imidazolidine and pyrrole or in the alternative Z¹ and Z² together represent a bidentate ligand under formation of a cyclic structure.

3. The process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein in the at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III) the ligand L is a phosphine, a sulphonated phosphine, phosphate, phosphinite, phosphonite, arsine, stibine, ether, amine, amide, sulphoxide, carboxyl, nitrosyl, pyridine, thioether or L is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolidine ("Im") ligand, preferably the ligand L is a C₆-C₂₄-arylphosphine, C₁-C₆-alkylphosphine or C₃-C₁₀-cycloalkylphosphine ligand, a sulphonated C₆-C₂₄-arylphosphine or a sulphonated C₁-C₁₀-alkylphosphine ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl phosphinite or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl phosphinite ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl phosphonite or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl phosphonite ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl phosphite or C₁-C₁₀-alkylphosphite ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-arylsarsine or C₁-C₁₀-alkylarsine ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-arylamine or C₁-C₁₀-alkylamine ligand, a pyridine ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl sulphoxide or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl sulphoxide ligand, a C₆-C₂₄-aryl ether or C₁-C₁₀-alkyl ether ligand or a C₆-C₂₄-arylamide or C₁-C₁₀-alkylamide ligand, each of which may be substituted by a phenyl group which may in turn be substituted by a halogen, C₁-C₅ alkyl radical or C₁-C₅-alkoxy radical, or L is a substituted or unsubstituted imidazolidine ("Im") ligand.

4. The process according to claim 3, wherein in the at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III) L is selected from the group consisting of PPh_3 , $\text{P}(\text{p-Tol})_3$, $\text{P}(\text{o-Tol})_3$, $\text{PPh}(\text{CH}_3)_2$, $\text{P}(\text{CF}_3)_3$, $\text{P}(\text{p-FC}_6\text{H}_4)_3$, $\text{P}(\text{p-CF}_3\text{C}_6\text{H}_4)_3$, $\text{P}(\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{-SO}_3\text{Na})_3$, $\text{P}(\text{CH}_2\text{C}_6\text{H}_4\text{-SO}_3\text{Na})_3$, $\text{P}(\text{i s o-Pr})_3$, $\text{P}(\text{CHCH}_3(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_3))_3$, $\text{P}(\text{cyclopentyl})_3$, $\text{P}(\text{cyclohexyl})_3$, $\text{P}(\text{neopentyl})_3$ and $\text{P}(\text{neophenyl})_3$.
5. The process according to claim 3, wherein the imidazolidine radical (**Im**) has a structure of the general formula (IVa) or (IVb),



(IVa)



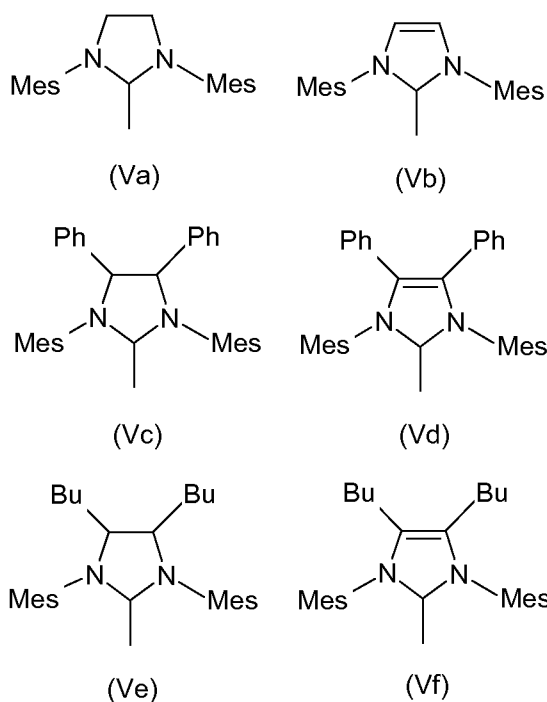
(IVb)

10 where

$\text{R}^5, \text{R}^6, \text{R}^7, \text{R}^8$ are identical or different and are each hydrogen, straight-chain or branched $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{30}$ -alkyl, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkyl, $\text{C}_3\text{-C}_{20}$ -cycloalkyl, preferably $\text{C}_3\text{-C}_{10}$ -cycloalkyl, $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkenyl, preferably $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkenyl, $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkynyl, preferably $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkynyl, $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{24}$ -aryl, preferably $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{14}$ -aryl, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -carboxylate, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{10}$ -carboxylate, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkoxy, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkoxy, $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkenyloxy, preferably $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkenyloxy, $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkynyloxy, preferably $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkynyloxy, $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{24}$ -aryloxy, preferably $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{14}$ -aryloxy, $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkoxycarbonyl, preferably $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkoxycarbonyl, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkylthio, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkylthio, $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{24}$ -arylthio, preferably $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{14}$ -arylthio, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkylsulphonyl, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkylsulphonyl, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkylsulphonate, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkylsulphonate, $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{24}$ -arylsulphonate, preferably $\text{C}_6\text{-C}_{14}$ -arylsulphonate, or $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{20}$ -alkylsulphinyl, preferably $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{10}$ -alkylsulphinyl, preferably the imidazolidine radical (**Im**) has a structure of the formulae (Va) –(Vf), where Mes is in each case a 2,4,6-trimethylphenyl radical

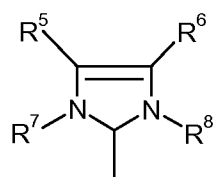
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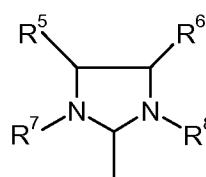


6. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein in the at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III) R^3 and R^4 are identical or different and are each hydrogen or an alkyl, preferably C_1 - C_{30} -alkyl, more preferably C_1 - C_{20} -alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C_3 - C_{20} -cycloalkyl, more preferably C_3 - C_8 -cycloalkyl, alkenyl, preferably C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyl, more preferably C_2 - C_{16} -alkenyl, alkynyl, preferably C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyl, more preferably C_2 - C_{16} -alkynyl, aryl, preferably C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, carboxylate, preferably C_1 - C_{20} -carboxylate, alkoxy, preferably C_1 - C_{20} -alkoxy, alkenyloxy, preferably C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyloxy, alkynyloxy, preferably C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyloxy, aryloxy, preferably C_6 - C_{24} -aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, preferably C_2 - C_{20} -alkoxycarbonyl, alkylamino, preferably C_1 - C_{30} -alkylamino, alkylthio, preferably C_1 - C_{30} -alkylthio, arylthio, preferably C_6 - C_{24} -arylthio, alkylsulphonyl, preferably C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphonyl, or alkylsulphinyl, preferably C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphinyl radical, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals.
7. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III) X^1 and X^2 are identical or different and represent hydrogen, halogen, pseudohalogen, straight-chain or branched C_1 - C_{30} -alkyl, C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, C_1 - C_{20} -alkoxy, C_6 - C_{24} -aryloxy, C_3 - C_{20} -alkyldiketonate, C_6 - C_{24} -aryldiketonate, C_1 - C_{20} -carboxylate, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphonate, C_6 - C_{24} -arylsulphonate, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylthiol, C_6 - C_{24} -

- arylthiol, C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphonyl or C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphinyl, preferably X¹ and X² are identical or different and are each halogen, in particular fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine, benzoate, C₁-C₅-carboxylate, C₁-C₅-alkyl, phenoxy, C₁-C₅-alkoxy, C₁-C₅-alkylthiol, C₆-C₂₄-arylthiol, C₆-C₂₄-aryl or C₁-C₅-alkylsulphonate, more preferably X¹ and X² are each halogen, in particular chlorine, CF₃COO, CH₃COO, CFH₂COO, (CH₃)₃CO, (CF₃)₂(CH₃)CO, (CF₃)(CH₃)₂CO, PhO (phenoxy), MeO (methoxy), EtO (ethoxy), tosylate (p-CH₃-C₆H₄-SO₃), mesylate (2,4,6-trimethylphenyl) or CF₃SO₃ (trifluoromethanesulphonate).
8. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III)
- M is ruthenium,
- X¹ and X² are both halogen, in particular, both chlorine,
- Z¹ and Z² are identical or different and represent five- or six-membered monocyclic groups containing 1 to 4, preferably 1 to 3, most preferably 1 or 2 heteroatoms, or bicyclic or polycyclic structures composed of 2, 3, 4 or 5 such five- or six-membered monocyclic groups wherein all aforementioned groups are optionally substituted by one or more alkyl, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkyl, cycloalkyl, preferably C₃-C₈-cycloalkyl, alkoxy, preferably C₁-C₁₀-alkoxy, halogen, preferably chlorine or bromine, aryl, preferably C₆-C₂₄-aryl, or heteroaryl, preferably C₅-C₂₃ heteroaryl radicals, or Z¹ and Z² together represent a bidentate ligand, thereby forming a cyclic structure,
- R³ and R⁴ are identical or different and are each hydrogen, C₁-C₃₀-alkyl C₃-C₂₀-cycloalkyl, C₂-C₂₀-alkenyl, C₂-C₂₀-alkynyl, C₆-C₂₄-aryl, C₁-C₂₀-carboxylate, C₁-C₂₀-alkoxy, C₂-C₂₀-alkenyloxy, C₂-C₂₀-alkynyloxy, C₆-C₂₄-aryloxy, C₂-C₂₀-alkoxycarbonyl, C₁-C₃₀-alkylamino, C₁-C₃₀-alkylthio, C₆-C₂₄-arylthio, C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphonyl, C₁-C₂₀-alkylsulphinyl, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals, and
- L has a structure of the general formula (IVa) or (IVb),



(IVa)

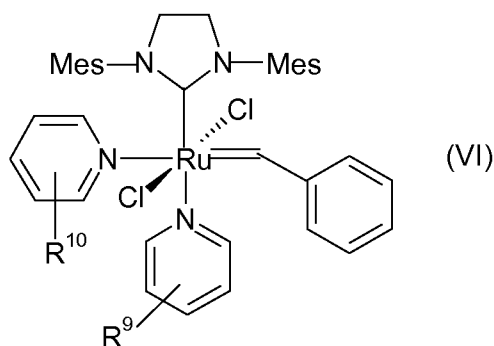


(IVb)

where

R^5, R^6, R^7, R^8 are identical or different and are each hydrogen, straight-chain or
 5 branched C_1 - C_{30} -alkyl, C_3 - C_{20} -cycloalkyl, C_2 - C_{20} -alkenyl, C_2 - C_{20} -
 alkynyl, C_6 - C_{24} -aryl, C_1 - C_{20} -carboxylate, C_1 - C_{20} -alkoxy, C_2 - C_{20} -
 alkenyloxy, C_2 - C_{20} -alkynyloxy, C_6 - C_{24} -aryloxy, C_2 - C_{20} -
 alkoxycarbonyl, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylthio, C_6 - C_{24} -arylthio, C_1 - C_{20} -
 alkylsulphonyl, C_1 - C_{20} -alkylsulphonate, C_6 - C_{24} -arylsulphonate, or C_1 -
 10 C_{20} -alkylsulphinyl.

9. The process according to claim 1, wherein at least one catalyst of formula (I) is at least one catalyst of formula (VI),

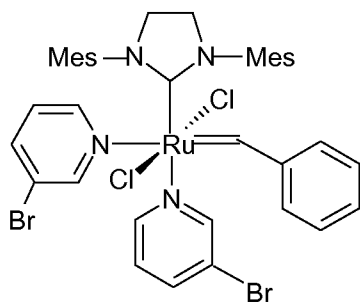


(VI)

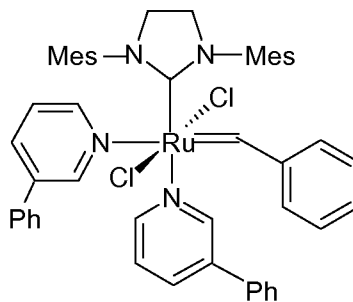
where

R^9 and R^{10} are identical or different and represent halogen, straight-chain or
 15 branched C_1 - C_{20} alkyl, C_1 - C_{20} heteroalkyl, C_1 - C_{10} haloalkyl, C_1 - C_{10}
 alkoxy, C_6 - C_{24} aryl, preferably phenyl, formyl, nitro, nitrogen
 heterocycles, preferably pyridine, piperidine and pyrazine, carboxy,
 20 alkylcarbonyl, halocarbonyl, carbamoyl, thiocarbomoyl, carbamido,
 thioformyl, amino, trialkylsilyl und trialkoxysilyl.

10. The process according to claim 1, wherein at least one catalyst of formulae (I), (II) or (III) is at least one catalyst of formulae (VII), (VIII), (IX), (X), (XI), (XII), (XIII), (XIV), (XV) or (XVI), where Mes is in each case a 2,4,6-trimethylphenyl radical

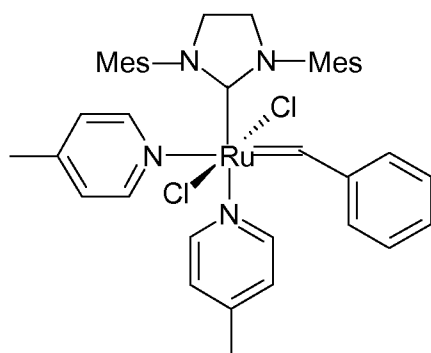


(VII)

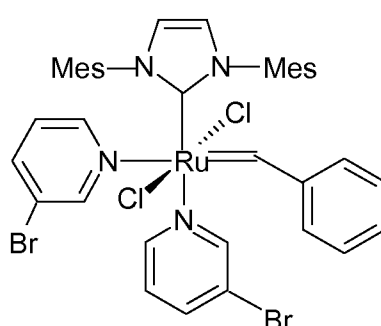


(VIII)

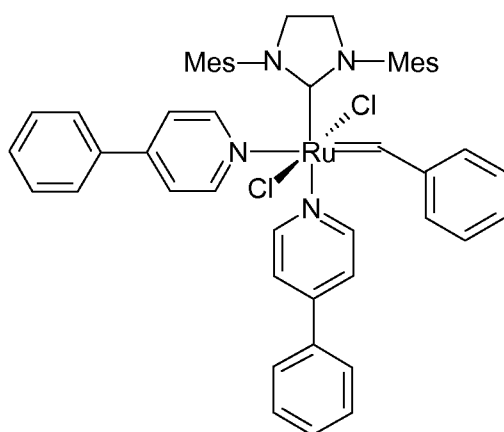
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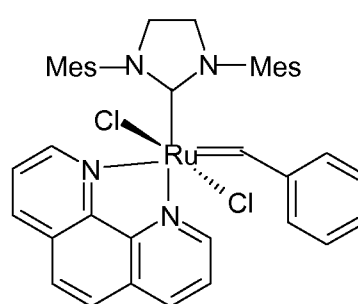
(IX)



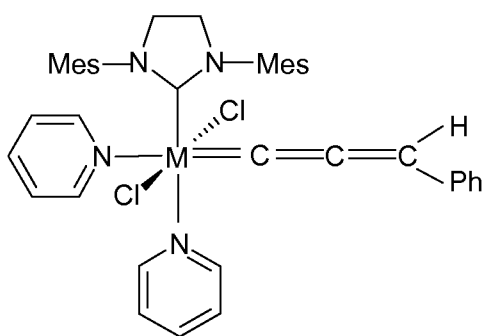
(X)



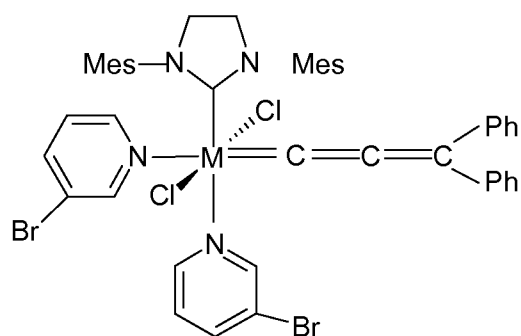
(XI)



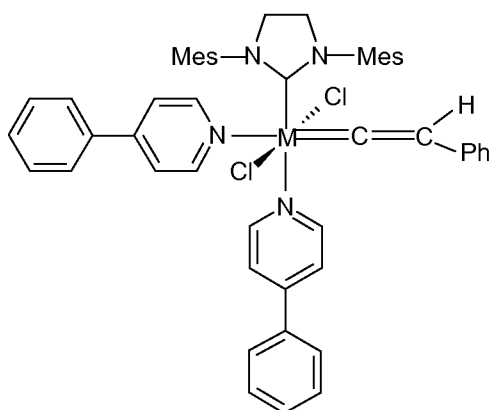
(XII)



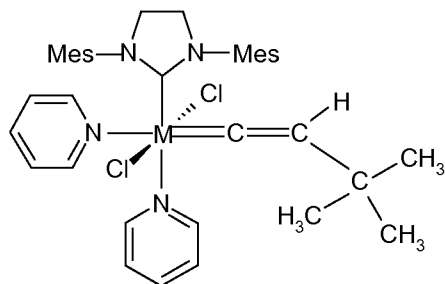
(XIII)



(XIV)

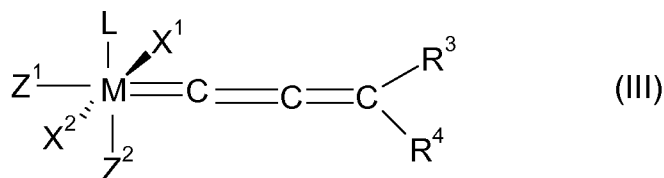
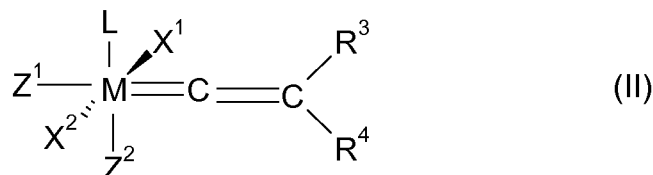
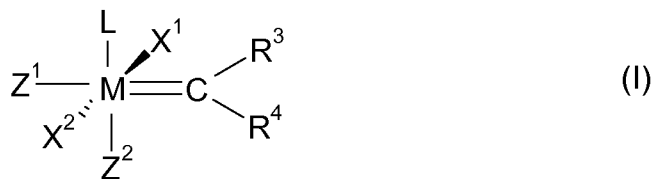


(XV)



(XVI)

11. The process according to any one of claims 1 to 10, in which the amount of catalyst is
5 from 5 to 1000 ppm of noble metal, preferably from 5 to 500 ppm, in particular from 5 to 250 ppm, based on the nitrile rubber used.
12. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 11 wherein the process is carried out with
10 at least one coolefin, preferably ethylene, propylene, isobutene, styrene, 1-hexene and/or 1-octene.
13. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 12 wherein the hydrogenation reaction is
15 carried out in at least one suitable solvent which does not deactivate the catalyst used and also does not adversely affect the reaction in any other way, preferably dichloromethane, benzene, toluene, methyl ethyl ketone, acetone, tetrahydrofuran, tetrahydropyran, dioxane and/or cyclohexane, particularly preferably chlorobenzene.
14. Use of at least one catalyst of the general formulae (I), (II) or (III),



where

M is ruthenium or osmium,

5 X¹ and X² are identical or different ligands, preferably anionic ligands,

Z¹ and Z² are identical or different and neutral electron donor ligands,

10 R³ and R⁴ are each independently hydrogen or a substituent selected from the group consisting of alkyl, cycloalkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, carboxylate, alkoxy, alkenyloxy, alkynyloxy, aryloxy, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylamino, alkylthio, arylthio, alkylsulphonyl and alkylsulphinyl radical, each of which may optionally be substituted by one or more alkyl, halogen, alkoxy, aryl or heteroaryl radicals, and

L is a ligand

15 in a process for the production of a hydrogenated nitrile rubber by simultaneous hydrogenation and metathesis of a nitrile rubber.