

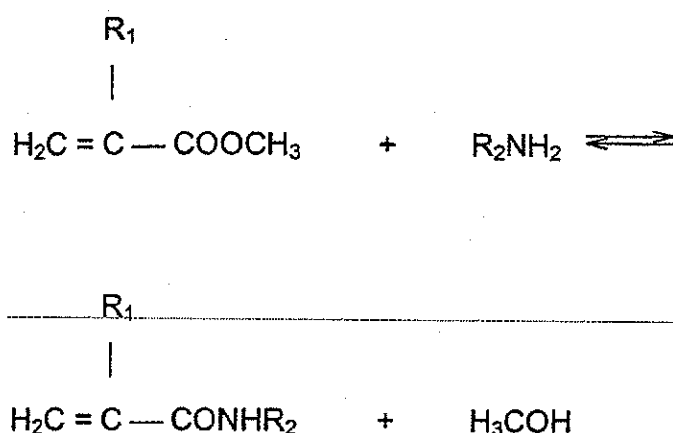
Method for continuously producing alkylamino(meth)-acrylamides

Field of the invention

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The invention relates to a further continuous process for preparing alkylamino(meth)acrylamides (C) by continuously aminolysing, for example, methyl (meth)acrylate (A) with amines (B) to release methanol (D) by the following reaction equation:

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where:

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R^1 = hydrogen or methyl

R^2 is a linear, branched or cyclic alkyl radical, an aryl radical which may also be substituted by one or more alkyl groups; the linear, cyclic or branched alkyl radical may have a length of 2 - 12 carbon atoms, for example ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, tert-butyl, pentyl, hexyl, heptyl, octyl, isooctyl, nonyl, decyl, undecyl, and may optionally be mono- or polysubstituted by

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- NR^3R^4 or

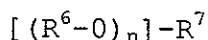
- OR^5 ;

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either R^3 or R^4 may assume the definition of hydrogen, and in addition:

- R^3 , R^4 and R^5 may be either the same or different and be an alkyl group having 1 - 12 carbon atoms, for example methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl, tert-butyl, pentyl, hexyl, heptyl, octyl, isooctyl, nonyl, decyl, undecyl or hydrogen.

- R^2 may also be



where:

- R^6 may be a C_1 - C_4 -alkyl group which may also be branched, for example methyl, ethyl, propyl, isopropyl, butyl, isobutyl or tert-butyl.

Alkylamido (meth)acrylates

m: 1 - 4

R^7 may be the methyl group or the ethyl group.

Useful amines include the following compounds:

Dimethylaminoethylamine,	diethylaminoethylamine,
dipropylaminoethylamine,	diisopropylaminoethylamine,
dibutylaminoethylamine,	diisobutylaminoethylamine,
dimethylaminopropylamine,	diethylaminopropylamine,
dipropylaminopropylamine,	diisopropylaminopropylamine,
dibutylaminopropylamine,	diisobutylaminopropylamine,
dimethylaminobutylamine,	diethylaminobutylamine,
dipropylaminobutylamine,	diisopropylaminobutylamine,
dibutylaminobutylamine,	diisobutylaminobutylamine,
methylamine, cyclohexylamine,	dimethylaminohexylamine,
	diethylaminohexylamine.

Particular preference is given, in addition to dimethylaminopropylamine, to dimethylaminoethylamine, dimethylaminobutylamine, dimethylaminopentylamine and dimethylaminohexylamine.

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Prior art

The literature describes many batchwise transesterification processes (batch transesterification processes) in conjunction with different catalysts.

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The search for economically more viable processes led to the discovery of continuous transesterification processes in which the reactants are fed continuously and the products are removed continuously. The continuous transesterification processes have the following advantages over the batchwise transesterification processes: the process can be more easily automated and can be operated with a reduced need for personnel, the product quality has better reproducibility and less variability, the plant capacity increases as a consequence of the absence of the sequential working through of the individual preparation steps (filling, reaction, low boiler removal, product removal, emptying). The process has a higher space-time yield than a batch process.

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Continuous transesterification processes are known.

EP 0 960 877 (Elf Atochem S.A.) describes a continuous process for preparing methacrylate esters of dialkylaminoalcohols. Dialkylaminoalcohols are reacted generally with methyl (meth)acrylate to obtain dialkylaminoalkyl (meth)acrylate by the following process:

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The mixture of the starting materials (methyl (meth)acrylate and dialkylaminoalcohol) is fed continuously together with a tetraalkyl titanate as a transesterification catalyst (for example tetrabutyl, tetraethyl or tetra(2-ethylhexyl)titanate) and at least

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one polymerization inhibitor (for example phenothiazine, tert-butylcatechol, hydroquinone monomethyl ether, or hydroquinone) to a tubular reactor where the conversion is effected at a temperature of 90 - 120°C to the dialkylamino (meth)acrylate while simultaneously continuously removing the azeotropic methyl (meth)acrylate/methanol mixture. The crude reaction mixture (crude ester) is fed to a first distillation column in which a substantially catalyst-free stream is removed under reduced pressure at the top of the distillation column, and the catalyst and also a little dialkylaminoalkyl (meth)acrylate are removed in the bottom of the distillation column. The top stream of the first distillation column is then fed to a second distillation column in which a stream of low-boiling products having a little dialkylaminoalkyl (meth)acrylate is removed under reduced pressure at the top and a stream consisting of mainly dialkylaminoalkyl (meth)acrylate and also polymerization inhibitor(s) is removed at the bottom and fed to a third distillation column. In the third distillation column, a rectification is carried out under reduced pressure in which the desired pure dialkylaminoalkyl (meth)acrylate ester is removed at the top and essentially the polymerization inhibitor or the polymerization inhibitors are removed at the bottom. The bottom stream of the first distillation column is recycled into the reactor after further purification with the aid of a film evaporator, just like the top stream from the second distillation column.

30

This process dispenses with dewatering of the alcohols before use, which may lead to increased deactivation of the tetraalkyl titanate used as a consequence of hydrolysis up to the formation of undesired solid deposits. In addition, the process has the disadvantage that the catalyst is thermally stressed at relatively high temperatures in the bottom of the first distillation column. This can easily lead to decomposition of the catalyst.

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In this process, both the unconverted reactants and the product are rectified via the top twice altogether. This entails very high energy costs and a total of 4 rectification columns, some of which have to have very large dimensions. The process is therefore burdened with very high capital and operating costs.

EP 0 968 995 (Mitsubishi Gas Chemical Comp.) describes a continuous process for preparing alkyl (meth)acrylates using a reaction column. The transesterification reaction is effected directly in a distillation column (i.e. reactor and distillation column for removing the methyl (meth)acrylate/methanol azeotrope from one apparatus), to which the starting materials (methyl (meth)acrylate and alcohol) are fed continuously. The catalyst required, here likewise preferably a titanium compound, is disposed in the distillation column. In the case of a homogeneous catalyst, the catalyst is metered continuously into the distillation column. However, as a consequence of the flushing effect by the liquid reflux in the distillation column, the use of homogeneous catalysts in a distillation column leads to increased catalyst demand, and, when a solid catalyst precipitate occurs, to fouling of the column internals. In the case of a heterogeneous catalyst, the catalyst is disposed in the reaction column. However, the positioning of the catalyst in the distillation column is disadvantageous, because an increased pressure drop then occurs in the distillation column and very high cost and inconvenience is additionally associated with the regular cleaning of the distillation column. In addition, heterogeneous catalysts may deactivate for example as a consequence of undesired polymerization.

DE 4 027 843 (Röhm GmbH) describes a continuous process for preparing N-substituted (meth)acrylamides by transesterifying alkyl esters of (meth)acrylic acid with aliphatic and aromatic amines. The reaction temperature is $> 150^{\circ}$, the pressure approx. 160 bar. There is no catalyst.

Object

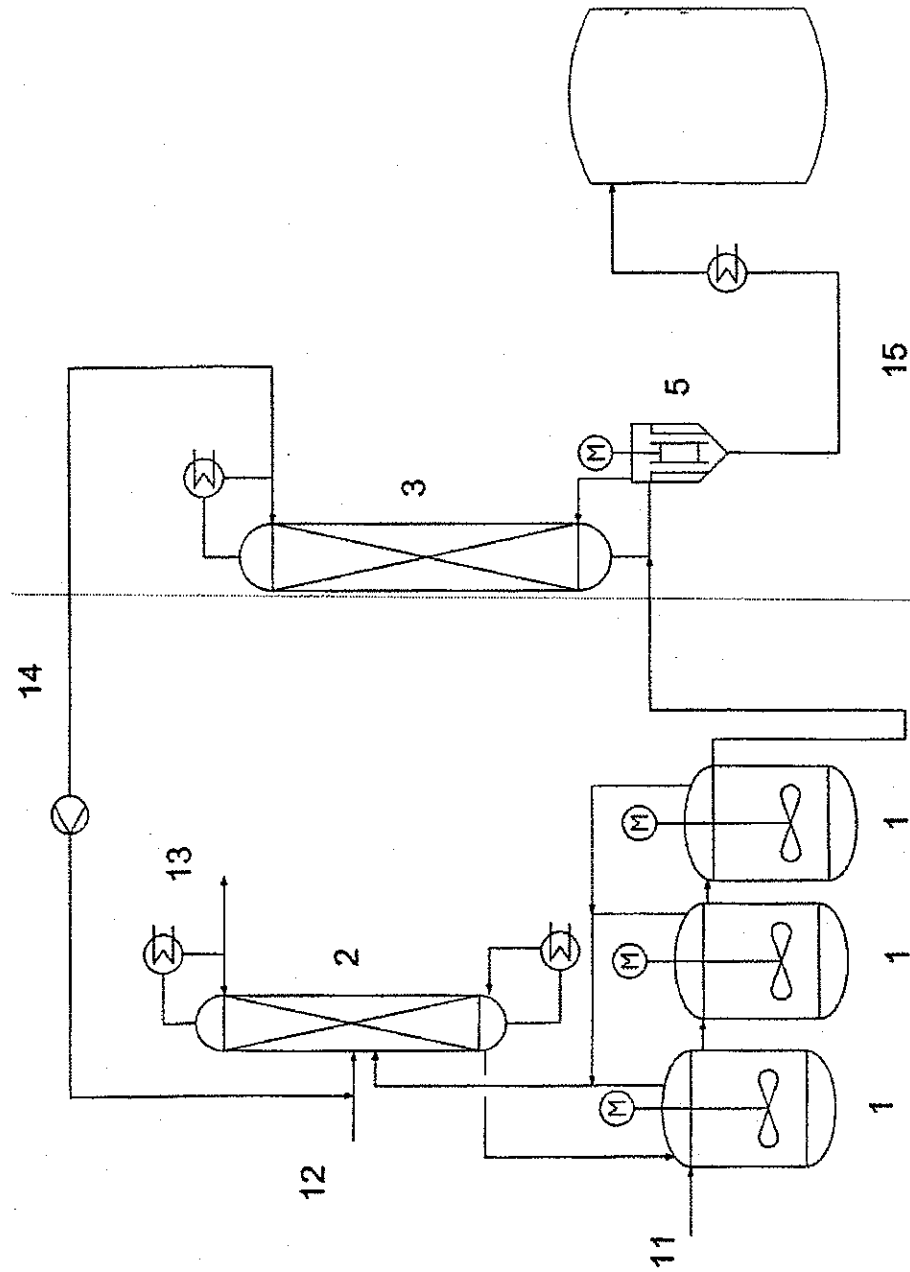
It is an object of the present invention to provide a
5 continuous process for aminolysing methyl (meth)acrylate
with amines having high boiling points, compared to
methanol, which avoids the disadvantages of the two above-
described processes. (Meth)acrylic esters or alkyl
10 (meth)acrylates refer hereinbelow to esters and
derivatives of acrylic acid and of methacrylic acid, for
example methyl methacrylate or ethyl methacrylate. In
addition, the novel process should make available a
product of better quality than those hitherto on the
market. A better quality refers to a lower crosslinker
15 content or a lower content of addition products of the
amines to the double bond of the starting ester or to the
double bond of the product ester. A crosslinker which may
be formed is alkylmethacrylamide. In addition, amino
(meth)acrylates should be prepared by the novel process at
20 very low cost and inconvenience and energetically more
favourably (i.e. less expensively). The personnel demands
for operating the plant should be reduced.

This object, and also other objects which are not
25 specifically detailed but can be immediately discerned or
derived from the introductory discussion of the prior art
are achieved by a process having the features of Claim 1.
Advantageous modifications of the process according to the
invention are protected in the claims dependent upon Claim
30 1.

Process description

The process is schematically illustrated in Figure 1.

Actual



Explanations of the reference numerals in Figure 1:

- 1. Reaction apparatus
- 5 2. Azeotrope distillation column
- 3. Low boiler distillation column
- 5. Film evaporator
- 10 11. Methyl (meth)acrylate and catalyst feed
- 12. Amine feed
- 15 13. Methanol/methyl (meth)acrylate azeotrope
- 14. Low boiler recycle stream
- 15. Crude product

The reactant, methyl (meth)acrylate (MMA, 11), is fed continuously to a suitable reaction apparatus (1), and either a single reaction vessel or a battery of a plurality of reaction vessels connected in series may be used. It is sensible that all reaction vessels have a vapour takeoff to the azeotrope distillation column (2) to remove the methanol released in the reaction.

The amine (12) is fed continuously to the azeotrope distillation of the column for dewatering.

The tetraalkoxy titanate required as a catalyst (the tetraalkoxy titanate content based on MMA used is preferably 0.2 - 4% by weight), like the polymerization inhibitor or inhibitors, is likewise preferably metered continuously into the reaction apparatus (1). However, useful transesterification catalysts may also be all of the transesterification catalysts known from the prior art. Useful catalysts are, for example, zirconium acetylacetonate and further 1,3-diketones of zirconium; mixtures of alkali metal cyanates or alkali metal thiocyanates and alkali metal halides may also be used; and also zinc compounds, for example dioctylzinc oxide, alkaline earth metal oxides or alkaline earth metal hydroxides, for example CaO , $\text{Ca}(\text{OH})_2$, MgO , $\text{Mg}(\text{OH})_2$, or mixtures of the aforementioned compounds, and also alkali metal hydroxides, alkali metal alkoxides and lithium chloride and lithium hydroxide; mixtures of the aforementioned compounds with the aforementioned alkaline earth metal compounds and the Li salts may also be used; dialkyltin oxides, for example dioctyltin oxide, alkali metal carbonates, alkali metal carbonates together with quaternary ammonium salts, for example tetrabutylammonium hydroxide or hexadecyltrimethylammonium bromide, and also mixed catalysts of diorganyltin oxide and organyltin halide, acidic ion exchangers, phosphorus-molybdenum heteropolyacids, titanium alkoxides, for example isopropyl titanate, chelate compounds of the metals titanium, zirconium, iron or zinc with 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds,

lead compounds, for example lead oxides, lead hydroxides, lead alkoxides, lead carbonates or lead salts of carboxylic acids. Particular preference is given to a catalyst mixture of dialkyltin oxide and alkyl titanate, for example dioctyltin oxide and isopropyl titanate in a ratio of approx. 1:1 (% by wt./% by wt.). The catalyst mixture is used in amounts of 0.1 - 10 mass%, based on the amine used.

Useful polymerization inhibitors are, for example, hydroquinone, 4-hydroxy-2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidinoxyl or else bis(2-methoxycarbonylpropyl) sulphide. Hydroquinone monomethyl ether in conjunction with oxygen in question.

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The amine used may contain water. The amount of water in the amine used in the case of amine is between 50 and 500 ppm (0.05 - 0.005% by weight). The amine is dewatered by distillation before entry into the reaction apparatus, preferably using the azeotrope column (2). In this column, the water present in the amine is removed via the top. To prevent contamination of the methanol/MMA azeotrope (13) with the amine used, the amine is preferably introduced in the lower section of the distillation column (2). The amine used may also be dewatered in other ways:

- by an upstream dewatering distillation column or
- by treating with a dewatering agent, for example a molecular sieve, or
- by a membrane separation process, for example a pervaporation.

The dewatering is significant since the water present in the amine may lead to irreversible damage to the catalyst (for example tetraalkyl titanate) in the reactor. The water present in the amine leads to the formation of by-products and is therefore to be strictly prevented. This

dewatering step prevents the hydrolysis of the catalyst and the associated costs as a result of increased catalyst use amounts and as a result of problems with solid deposits. In addition, the purity of the product is
5 increased by a reduced proportion of by-products.

The reaction is effected in a reaction apparatus (1) at a temperature in the range between 80 and 160°C. Preference is given to the temperature range between 110 and 135°C.
10 To increase the reaction rate, the methanol released in the reaction is removed from the reaction mixture as an azeotrope with MMA (13) via the distillation column (2). The reaction mixture, which consists for the most part of the alkyl (meth)acrylate amide product, unconverted MMA
15 and amine, and also small amounts of methanol, the catalyst, the polymerization inhibitors and a very small fraction of by-products, is fed after approx. 0.5 - 3 hours of reactor residence time (preference is given to a residence time of 0.75 - 1.5 hours) to a continuous
20 falling-film evaporator (5). The vapours of the falling-film evaporator (5) are fed to a low boiler distillation column (3). The components having a low boiling point relative to the product ester, predominantly methanol, MMA and unconverted amine reactant, are removed there under
25 reduced pressure, preferably in the range of 10 - 500 mbar. These are removed via the top of the distillation column and recycled (14) into the reactor region or into the azeotrope column (2). This recycle stream guarantees that there is virtually complete conversion with regard to
30 the MMA and amine reactants based on the entire process. The crude amide (15) which is still contaminated with catalyst, polymerization inhibitor and high-boiling by-products and occurs in the effluent of the falling-film evaporator (5) preferably contains > 93% by weight of
35 product ester and is fed for workup to a further vacuum distillation stage which works in the preferred pressure range between 20 and 200 mbar. The highly pure product amine is removed here by distillation as the top product.

The by-products formed in the process are high-boiling components relative to the reactant amine and the methyl methacrylate and therefore get into the product ester as an impurity, which distinctly reduces the product quality.

5 This problem can be solved by using an apparatus having gentle film evaporation (5) to remove the product amine from the catalyst and the polymerization inhibitors, and also the high-boiling by-products. Suitable apparatus for this purpose is falling-film, thin-layer and short-path

10 evaporators.

Downstream of the preparation of the alkylamino (meth)acrylamides may optionally be disposed a purifying distillation plant which may also be operated under

15 reduced pressure, for example at 500-50 mbar.

The process according to the invention is illustrated in detail by the examples which follow, without being restricted thereto.

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Example: Continuously described aminolysis to aminoesters

For continuously described preparation of N-dimethylaminopropylmethacrylamide (aminoester), 235 kg/h of

25 MMA/catalyst feed having a proportion of 3.8% by weight of isopropyl titanate and 3.0% by weight of dioctyltin oxide of the azeotrope distillation column and 244 kg/h of N-dimethylaminopropylamine (DMAPA) are metered into the 1st reaction vessel. In addition, the recycle stream from the

30 top of the low boiler distillation column flowed continuously via the azeotrope column to the 1st reaction vessel (195 kg/h having the composition 78.9% by weight of MMA, 2.12% by weight of methanol, 10.1% by weight of DMAPA and 8.88% by weight of by-products). The molar MMA:DMAPA

35 ratio in the reactor feed was 1.23:1. In addition, the vapours of the stirred tank which had been freed of methanol in the azeotrope column were fed to the 1st reaction vessel via the azeotrope column bottom. Under these reaction conditions, a reaction temperature of 107°C

was established in the 1st reaction vessel. The distillate takeoff of the azeotrope column was 117 kg/h comprising 56.54% by weight of methanol, 39.12% by weight of MMA, 4.02% by weight of isopropanol and 0.5% by weight of by-products.

The effluent of the 1st reaction vessel flowed into the 2nd reaction vessel and the effluent of the 2nd reaction vessel flowed into the 3rd reaction vessel. A residence time of approx. 15 min in the 1st reaction vessel, approx. 30 min in the 2nd reaction vessel and approx. 60 min in the 3rd reaction vessel resulted in the following compositions in the reactors.

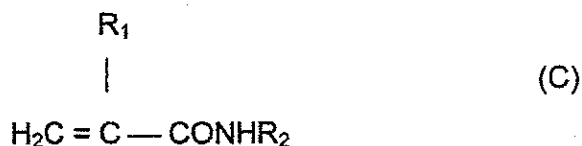
	T(°C)	MMA (%) by wt.	DMAPA (%) by wt.	Amino ester (%) by wt.	Methanol (%) by wt.	By-products (%) by wt.
1 st reactor	107	62.7	10.23	22.07	0.62	4.38
2 nd reactor	111	55.6	10.15	27.69	0.59	5.97
3 rd reactor	130	46.8	4.86	41.29	1.24	5.81

The vapours of the individual reaction vessels were fed continuously to the azeotrope column.

The effluent of the 3rd reaction vessel flowed continuously to the thin-film evaporator of a low boiler column in which unconverted DMAPA, MMA and methanol were removed as distillate (195 kg/h) and fed back to the 1st reaction vessel as recycle stream. The bottom attempt of the thin-film evaporator of the low-boiler column was 426 kg/h and had the composition: 93% of amino ester product, 0.5% of DMAPA, 0.2% of MMA, 2.15% by weight of an MMA-amine adduct and 4.25% by weight of other by-products.

Claims:

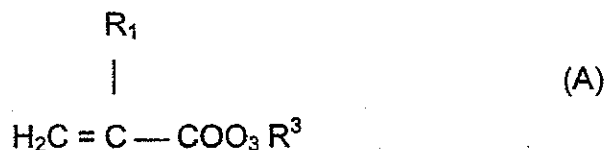
1. Process for continuously preparing alkylamino-(meth)acrylamide of the formula (C)



where R_1 is an H or CH_3 group and R_2 is a linear, branched or cyclic alkyl radical or aryl radical having 2 to 12 carbon atoms, by reacting a compound of the formula (B)



- where R_2 is as defined above with methyl (meth)acrylate (A)



- where R_1 is an H or CH_3 group and R^3 is methyl or ethyl, in the presence of a transesterification catalyst and in the presence of at least one polymerization inhibitor in an apparatus for continuous reaction, characterized in that the reactants are fed continuously to a suitable reaction apparatus (1) and in that the alcohol formed in the reaction is removed continuously with the aid of a distillation column (2) as an azeotropic methanol/methyl (meth)acrylate mixture (13), and also:

- the reaction mixture is conducted continuously out of the reaction apparatus into a distillation

column (3) or an evaporator (5) in which the volatile components (A, B, methanol) and a very small fraction of product amine (C) are removed via the top by distillation under reduced pressure and recycled into the reaction apparatus, and the product amines (C) are removed from the bottom of the column together with the catalyst and the polymerization inhibitors, and also high-boiling by-products;

10 - the bottom stream (15) from the distillation column (3) is fed continuously to a purifying distillation.

2. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that

15 the vapour stream of the evaporator (5) is fed continuously to a further distillation column in which the highly pure product amine (C) is removed via the top by distillation under reduced pressure,

20 and the catalyst and the polymerization inhibitors, and also the high-boiling by-products with a small portion of product amine (C) are removed via the bottom.

25 3. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that

 the amine (B) is dewatered by feeding it to the reaction apparatus via the distillation column (2).

30 4. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that

 the molar ratio of methyl (meth)acrylate to amine in the feed to the reactor is between 1 and 2, preferably 1.05 - 1.15.

35 5. Process according to Claim 1, characterized in that

 the transesterification catalyst used is a tetraalkyl titanate.

6. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the catalyst is used in an amount of 0.1 - 10% by
weight, based on MMA used.
5
7. Process according to Claim 7,
characterized in that
the catalyst is used in an amount of 0.2 - 7% by
weight, based on MMA used.
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8. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the catalyst mixture employed is a mixture of
dioctyltin oxide and isopropyl titanate in a ratio
of 1 : 1 (% by weight).
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9. Process according to Claim 8,
characterized in that
the catalyst mixture is used in an amount of 0.1 -
10% by weight, based on MMA used.
20
10. Process according to Claim 7,
characterized in that
the catalyst is used in an amount of 0.2 - 7% by
weight, based on MMA used.
25
11. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the polymerization inhibitor used is either
phenothiazine, tert-butylcatechol, hydroquinone
monomethyl ether, hydroquinone or mixtures thereof,
and the amount of the inhibitor is between 100 and
5000 ppm, based on the reaction mixture.
30
12. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
oxygen is additionally used as a polymerization
inhibitor.
35

13. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the amine used is preferably dimethylamino-
propylamine.
5
14. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the pressure in the first distillation column (3) is
between 20 and 500 mbar.
10
15. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the residence time in the reaction apparatus is
between 0.5 and 1.5 hours.
15
16. Process according to Claim 1,
characterized in that
the evaporator (5) is a film evaporator.