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# Specific heat capacities and thermal properties of a homogeneous ethylene-1-butene copolymer by adiabatic calorimetry

P.J. van Ekeren<sup>a,\*</sup>, L.D. Ionescu<sup>a</sup>, V.B.F. Mathot<sup>b</sup>, J.C. van Miltenburg<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Chemical Thermodynamics Group, Debye Institute, Utrecht University, Padualaan 8, 3584 CH Utrecht, The Netherlands <sup>b</sup>DSM Research, P.O. Box 18, 6160 MD Geleen, The Netherlands

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#### Abstract

Specific heat capacities of a homogeneous ethylene-1-butene copolymer were measured by adiabatic calorimetry in the temperature range from 7 to 406 K (stepwise heating after cooling at rates in the range from 6 to 25 K h<sup>-1</sup>, averaged heating rates 5-34 K h<sup>-1</sup>). The glass transition is centred around 224 K. With devitrification also melting sets in. The crystallinity of the polymer was calculated (within the two-phase model) as a function of temperature using two sets of reference data (one for linear and branched polyethylenes (BPEs), and the other for strictly linear polyethylene (LPE)) for completely crystalline and for completely amorphous material. On heating, the mass fraction crystallinity decreased from 0.30 to 0 in the temperature range from 220 to 360 K, confirming earlier differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) heat capacity measurements. During the stabilisation periods in the melting region negative temperature drifts, related to endothermic effects caused by melting, were observed below 325 K. However, in the temperature range from 325 K up to the end melting temperature, 360 K, positive drifts were measured, reflecting exothermic effects which are attributed to recrystallisation phenomena. © 2002 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Adiabatic calorimetry; Crystallinity; Ethylene-1-butene copolymer; Heat capacity; Polyethylene; Recrystallisation; Relaxation

#### 1. Introduction

To support studies on the thermal behaviour of polymers, which are usually performed using differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) [1], it was decided to measure the heat capacity of some ethylene-1-alkene copolymers very accurately over a wide temperature range using adiabatic calorimetry. The results for a heterogeneous ethylene-1-octene very low density

\*Corresponding author. Tel.: +31-30-2533509;

fax: +31-30-2533947.

polyethylene (VLDPE) with a comonomer content of 6.2 mol% and a density of 902 kg m<sup>-3</sup> and for a homogeneous ethylene-1-octene copolymer with a comonomer content of 13.6 mol% and a density of 870 kg m<sup>-3</sup> have been published previously [2,3]. In this paper, data are presented for a homogeneous ethylene-1-butene copolymer with a comonomer content of 12.9 mol% and a density of 878 kg m<sup>-3</sup>. With this contribution we would like to express our appreciation to Dr. M. Richardson and to Dr. G. Höhne for their pioneering research in developing techniques and methods for calorimetry and for their commitment to perform quantitative calorimetry for better understanding of the thermal behaviour of polymers.

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E-mail address: ekeren@chem.uu.nl (P.J. van Ekeren).

# 2. Experimental

# 2.1. The sample

The sample, EB 5, is a homogeneous ethylene-1butene copolymer [4,5] which was produced using metallocene based catalysis. The molar percentage of 1-butene is 12.9% (i.e. the mass percentage of 1-butene is 22.9% by NMR). Its meltindex,  $I_2$ , is 9.76 dg/min and the density of the material (at 298 K, after compression moulding) is 878 kg m<sup>-3</sup>.

# 2.2. The adiabatic calorimeter

The measurements were performed using one of our home-built adiabatic calorimeters [6,7]. The temperature is measured using a 27  $\Omega$  rhodium–iron resistance, which has been calibrated by Oxford Instruments at 33 points between 1.5 and 300 K. The calibration was extended to 430 K using the melting temperatures of naphthalene and indium. Conversion to the ITS-90 scale [8] is based on the article of Goldberg and Weir [9].

After filling and successive evacuation of the calorimeter vessel, helium gas is admitted to the vessel until the pressure is about 1000 Pa. Measurements are made in the intermittent mode. This implies that stabilisation periods are followed by input periods under automatic control. During the stabilisation periods, the temperature is recorded as a function of time. Between two stabilisation periods, an input period is used to raise the temperature of the sample (and vessel). The amount of heat added to the calorimeter vessel is measured very accurately. The temperature increase, which is caused

Table 1									
Overview	of the	series of	measureme	nts per	formed	on th	e EB	5	sample

by the heat input, follows from extrapolation of the temperature-time curves of both stabilisation periods. These data allow for the accurate calculation of the heat capacity. The heat capacity of the sample is obtained by subtracting the heat capacity of the empty calorimeter vessel. In the transition regions thermal equilibrium is not reached within a practical time limit because of various kinds of temperature-time dependent processes. Therefore, in these regions another method was applied. The known heat transfer to the surroundings (from an empty vessel experiment) and the amount of heat added to the calorimeter vessel were used to calculate the enthalpy increment between (the midpoints of) two successive stabilisation periods. This results in the actual enthalpy path of the vessel and its content.

Due to the adiabatic construction the heat exchange with the surroundings is very small. Therefore, temperature drifts observed in the stabilisation periods may be used to investigate the temperature–time dependent processes. According to measurements of standard materials, the inaccuracy is approximately 0.2% of the absolute heat capacity.

# 2.3. The measurements

The calorimeter vessel was filled with an amount of 5.52958 g of the polymer. Eight series of measurements were performed with this sample in the temperature range from 7 to 406 K. An overview of the performed measurements (temperature ranges, duration of stabilisation and input periods and averaged heating rates) is given in Table 1. The sample was cooled after series 1 and 3 by switching off the temperature control of the shields. This resulted in

Series no.	$T_1$ (K)	$T_2$ (K)	t (stabilisation) (s)	<i>t</i> (input) (s)	$\langle \beta \rangle ~({\rm K}~{\rm h}^{-1})$
1	298	389	600	708	5
2	85	113	600	708	7
3	116	385	600	708	6
4	7	31	100	100	34
5	7	29	200	100	20
6	9	100	600	608	8
7	98	279	800	808	5
8	280	406	800	808	4

For each measurement series the temperature range in which measurements were performed is given together with the duration of the stabilisation and input periods and the averaged heating rates  $\langle \beta \rangle$ .



Fig. 1. Cooling curve, recorded after measurement series 3.

Table 2

a (slow) exponential decrease of the temperature: at 360 K the cooling rate was approximately 25 K h<sup>-1</sup> and at 220 K the cooling rate was approximately 6 K h<sup>-1</sup>. To have an impression of the thermal history of the sample the cooling curve which was recorded after series 3 is plotted in Fig. 1.

#### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Specific heat capacity

The specific heat capacities that were evaluated from the measurements are given in Table 2 and graphically presented in Fig. 2. For temperatures below 315 K the heat capacities measured in series 1 are considerably lower than those measured in series 3 and 8 at the same temperatures. In the temperature range from 315 to 370 K, on the other hand, the heat capacities measured during series 1 are significantly higher than those measured during series 3 and 8. This is caused by the different thermal history of the sample for these measurements. Series 1 was performed on the polymer as received, i.e. on material that had been stored for a long time (years) at room temperature. During the storage the material had obviously relaxed to a more stable state. The first measurements of series Measured specific heat capacity of EB 5 as a function of temperature

$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$
2.384
2.417
2.442
2.480
2.519
2.562
2.613
2.674
2.756
2.882
3.023
3.119
3.170
3.198
3.221
3.244
3.270
3.298
3.330
3.358
3.384
3.403
3.416
3.422
3.419

Table 2 (Continued)

#### Table 2 (Continued)

T/K	$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$	T/K	$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$
339.23	3.407	152.28	0.971
340.87	3.387	155.21	0.987
342.52	3.351	158.14	1.002
344.19	3.298	161.07	1.020
345.88	3.222	163.99	1.036
347.62	3.114	166.91	1.052
349.42	2.979	169.83	1.069
351.27	2.831	172.76	1.087
353.19	2.693	175.68	1.104
355.15	2.580	178.60	1.122
357.16	2.507	181.52	1.139
359.18	2.462	184.44	1.159
361.22	2.439	187.36	1.176
363.24	2.428	190.29	1.195
365.25	2.423	193.21	1.213
367.26	2.424	196.13	1.232
369.25	2.428	199.04	1.252
371.25	2.433	201.95	1.274
373.24	2.439	204.87	1.294
375.23	2.445	207.76	1.329
377.22	2.452	210.65	1.370
379.21	2.454	213.50	1.411
381.20	2.452	216.29	1.459
383.20	2.460	219.02	1.517
385.21	2.464	221.69	1.586
387.21	2.467	224.30	1.653
389.21	2.472	226.85	1.709
Series 2		229.36	1.762
85.31	0.605	231.84	1.805
87.75	0.621	234.27	1.850
90.39	0.637	236.68	1.890
93.25	0.654	239.06	1.927
96.11	0.670	241.41	1.964
98.97	0.686	243.73	2.000
101.83	0.706	246.03	2.034
104.71	0.720	248.32	2.067
107.59	0.734	250.57	2.100
110.48	0.751	252.81	2.132
113.44	0.683	255.03	2.156
Series 3		257.23	2.186
115.78	0.777	259.41	2.216
117.70	0.788	261.58	2.247
120.13	0.801	263.72	2.278
123.05	0.817	265.85	2.307
125.97	0.833	267.95	2.338
128.89	0.848	270.04	2.369
131.81	0.863	272.11	2.397
134.73	0.878	274.16	2.427
137.66	0.893	276.20	2.459
140.58	0.910	278.22	2.490
143.50	0.925	280.22	2.519
146.42	0.940	282.21	2.550
149.35	0.955	284.19	2.575

Table 2 (Continued)

Т/К	$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$	Τ/Κ	$\frac{C_p}{JK^{-1}g^{-1}}$
286.14	2.610	384.81	2.458
288.08	2.640	Series 4	
290.01	2.669	6.61	0.009
291.92	2.699	7.26	0.012
293.82	2.726	8.59	0.017
295.70	2.754	10.45	0.027
297.58	2.783	12.16	0.036
299.44	2.808	14.07	0.049
301.29	2.832	16.17	0.063
303.14	2.860	18.37	0.079
304.97	2.884	20.67	0.097
306.80	2 910	23.06	0.117
308.61	2.936	25.53	0.137
310.42	2.950	28.09	0.154
312.22	2,990	30.54	0.171
314.00	3.019	Series 5	0.171
315.78	3.048	7 14	0.011
317 55	3 080	8 28	0.016
310.30	3.114	0.20	0.023
321.04	3 140	11.49	0.023
322.04	3 182	13.10	0.032
324.48	3 217	1/ 0/	0.054
326.19	3 246	16.80	0.054
327.89	3 271	18.71	0.083
329.59	3 290	20.66	0.099
331.28	3 302	22.66	0.115
332.08	3 309	24.70	0.134
334.68	3 311	26.78	0.152
336 38	3 312	28.94	0.168
338.09	3.311	Series 6	0.100
339.80	3 304	9 43	0.023
341 51	3 284	13.23	0.042
343.24	3 246	15.61	0.057
344.98	3.186	17.61	0.073
346.74	3.098	19.72	0.091
348.55	2.982	21.91	0.108
350.40	2.842	24.07	0.128
352.30	2.687	26.22	0.147
354.26	2.545	28.45	0.164
356.28	2.449	30.75	0.184
358.32	2.408	33.06	0.209
360.37	2.398	35.35	0.228
362.43	2.398	37.72	0.247
364.48	2.401	40.15	0.268
366.53	2.407	42.60	0.289
368.58	2.415	45.08	0.311
370.62	2.422	47.58	0.332
372.65	2.430	50.12	0.353
374.69	2.438	52.96	0.375
376.72	2.444	55.29	0.396
378.74	2.448	57.92	0.417
380.77	2.452	60.58	0.436
382.79	2.454	63.26	0.456

Table 2 (Continued)

#### Table 2 (Continued)

T/K	$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$	T/K	$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$
65.96	0.476	205.20	1.328
68.69	0.495	207.75	1.351
71.43	0.514	210.27	1.375
74.19	0.532	212.76	1.406
76.96	0.551	215.21	1.444
79.75	0.568	217.62	1.490
82.55	0.586	219.99	1.542
85.36	0.603	222.31	1.599
88.18	0.620	224.58	1.656
91.01	0.637	226.81	1.709
93.85	0.653	229.00	1.758
96.71	0.669	231.17	1.801
99.57	0.685	233.30	1.839
Series 7		235.42	1.875
98.10	0.690	237.51	1.908
98.20	0.675	239.57	1.939
99.75	0.689	241.62	1.968
102.69	0.709	243.65	1.994
105.57	0.724	245.66	2.021
108.45	0.737	247.66	2.048
111.34	0.755	249.63	2.077
114.23	0.771	251.59	2 103
117.13	0.787	253.54	2.128
120.03	0.802	255.47	2 150
122.94	0.818	257.39	2.175
125.85	0.833	259 29	2.202
128.75	0.848	261 19	2 228
131.66	0.863	263.07	2 255
134 58	0.879	264.94	2.235
137 50	0.894	266.79	2 309
140.41	0.910	268.63	2 336
143.33	0.926	270.45	2.350
146.25	0.920	270.45	2 390
140.25	0.942	272.20	2.350
152.09	0.973	275.84	2.417
155.01	0.975	277.61	2.445
157.03	1.004	279.37	2.472
160.85	1.004	Series 8	2
163.77	1.022	280.24	2 437
166.60	1.053	280.24	2.497
160.61	1.055	280.95	2.551
172.52	1.070	282.20	2.331
172.32	1.085	284.10	2.902
173.39	1.112	280.01	2.805
176.20	1.099	207.00	2.809
101.10	1.140	209.70	2.795
105.00	1.133	291.71	2.795
100.04	1.170	295.05	2.805
107.57	1.190	293.39 207.52	2.019
192.07	1.221	297.35	2.040
194.73	1.242	299.48	2.000
197.40	1.204	202.20	2.001
200.03	1.280	505.39 205.25	2.902
202.03	1.307	303.35	2.924

Table 2 (Continued)

T/K	$\frac{C_p}{J K^{-1} g^{-1}}$
307.31	2.946
309.27	2.971
311.24	2.995
313.20	3.023
315.16	3.054
317.13	3.087
319.09	3.124
321.06	3.163
323.02	3.200
324.99	3.236
326.97	3.262
328.95	3 281
330.94	3.282
332.92	3 275
334.91	3 265
336.91	3 253
338.91	3 241
340.91	3.221
342.93	3 185
344.96	3 119
347.03	3.017
349 15	2 883
351 30	2.005
353.47	2.576
355.62	2.570
357.73	2.402
359.79	2 305
361.81	2.395
363.81	2.373
365.80	2.403
367.70	2.400
360.78	2.417
371 77	2.417
373.76	2.424
375.76	2.432
375.70	2.438
370.75	2.442
381 75	2.440
292 75	2.440
385.75	2.449
207.75	2.450
301.13	2.400
201.74	2.470
202.74	2.477
595.74 205.74	2.483
207 75	2.491
200 75	2.490
۲۶۲. ۱۵ ۱۹۲	2.500
401.75	2.312
405.70	2.518
405.77	2.524
3/3./6	2.432
3/5./6	2.438

8 (up to about 300 K) are also affected by relaxation because there was a waiting time of several hours under adiabatic conditions (almost constant temperature) between the end of series 7 and the start of series 8: first a lower heat capacity was observed than the heat capacities measured during series 3 and then the heat capacities were higher.

The results obtained in the temperature range from 350 to 406 K are plotted in Fig. 3. This temperature range represents the end of the melting process and the liquid state. Above 362 K the sample appears to be molten (series 3 and 8). During series 1, however, the end of melting was observed at a slightly higher temperature: 368 K. Above 368 K the results of the series 1, 3 and 8 are in almost perfect agreement with each other, although possibly in the temperature range 368-385 K the heat capacities measured during series 1 are slightly higher than those measured during series 3 and 8. Above approximately 380 K, within experimental error, the measurements are in very good agreement with (estimated) specific heat capacity data of (metastable) liquid LPE as given by Wunderlich and Czornyj [10] (and adopted by Mathot [11]):

$$\frac{c_p(\text{LPE}, \text{liq}, T)}{\text{J } \text{K}^{-1} \text{ mol}^{-1}} = 1.426 + 2.401 \times 10^{-3} \left(\frac{T}{\text{K}}\right) + 7.065 \times 10^{-7} \left(\frac{T}{\text{K}}\right)^2$$
(1)

Measurements on VLDPE showed a remarkable progressive increase of the specific heat capacity of the polymer in its liquid state between subsequent series of measurements [2]. This phenomenon was not observed for a homogeneous ethylene-1-octene copolymer [3] and for this EB 5 sample.

At the lowest temperatures, see Fig. 4a–b, the specific heat capacities are found to lie in between those for the reference states for completely amorphous and completely crystalline polyethylenes, as expected for a semi-crystalline polyethylene [11,12].

EB 5 shows a clear-cut glass transition, centred around 224 K, which value marks the point of inflection of the heat capacity heating curve. The glass transition of ethylene-based copolymers is known to depend on the type and amount of comonomer [5] and the transition range for EB 5 is situated at lower temperatures as reported for BPE [13]. As typical for the present amount of comonomer, melting starts immediately on devitrification during heating.



Fig. 2. Specific heat capacity of EB 5 as a function of temperature. Series 1 (sample as received) ( $\bigcirc$ ); series 2 ( $\diamondsuit$ ); series 3 ( $\bigtriangleup$ ); series 5 ( $\bigstar$ ); series 6 ( $\bigstar$ ); series 7 ( $\bigtriangledown$ ); series 8 ( $\square$ ). Dashed line, specific heat capacity of (metastable) liquid linear polyethylene (LPE) according to Eq. (1).

# 3.2. Crystallinity

calculated using the following equation [12]:

The enthalpy-based mass fraction crystallinity of EB 5, as defined within the two-phase model, may be

$$w^{c}(T) = \frac{h_{a}(T) - h(T)}{h_{a}(T) - h_{c}(T)}$$
(2)



Fig. 3. Specific heat capacity of EB 5 in the liquid state. Series 1 (sample as received) ( $\bigcirc$ ); series 3 ( $\triangle$ ); series 8 ( $\square$ ). Dashed line, specific heat capacity of (metastable) liquid linear polyethylene (LPE) according to Eq. (1).



Fig. 4. Low temperature specific heat capacity data for EB 5. Series 2 ( $\diamondsuit$ ); series 3 ( $\triangle$ ); series 4 ( $\bigcirc$ ); series 5 ( $\diamondsuit$ ); series 6 ( $\blacktriangle$ ); series 7 ( $\bigtriangledown$ ). (a) The solid lines represent specific heat capacity data for completely crystalline and completely amorphous polyethylene (BPE) according to the ATHAS data bank [13]; (b) the solid lines represent the data for completely amorphous and completely crystalline LPE according to Mathot [11]. Specific heat capacities for the completely amorphous phase are higher than those for the completely crystalline phase.

In this equation,  $h_a(T)$  is the specific enthalpy of the completely amorphous phase,  $h_c(T)$  the specific enthalpy of the completely crystalline phase and h(T)the specific enthalpy of the semi-crystalline sample. Because the enthalpy function does not have a natural zero-point (see e.g. [14]) a common reference point has to be defined. Here, the specific enthalpy of EB 5 at a temperature of 400 K is selected as the reference point for the enthalpy function. At T = 400 K EB 5 is completely molten; therefore, it may be stated that  $h_a(T = 400 \text{ K}) = h(T = 400 \text{ K}).$ 

The specific enthalpy as a function of temperature is found by integrating the specific heat capacity:

$$h(T = \Theta) - h(T = 400 \text{ K}) = \int_{T=400 \text{ K}}^{T=\Theta} c_p(T) \,\mathrm{d}T$$
 (3)

It is assumed here that the specific enthalpy of the crystalline phase is equal to the specific enthalpy of completely crystalline LPE as given by Mathot [11], corrected for the difference in reference point. The specific enthalpy of the amorphous phase is calculated using Eq. (3) by assuming that:

- the glass transition temperature is  $T_g = 224$  K;
- the specific heat capacity of the amorphous phase above the glass transition temperature is equal to the specific heat capacity of (super-cooled) liquid LPE (given by Eq. (1));
- the specific heat capacity of the amorphous phase below the glass transition temperature is equal to the specific heat capacity of amorphous BPE in its glassy state as given by the ATHAS data bank [13].

The heat capacities used to evaluate the specific enthalpies are plotted in Fig. 5. The Fig. 6 represents a plot of the specific enthalpies thus found together with the enthalpy-based mass fraction crystallinity calculated using Eq. (2). In the temperature range from 220 to 360 K the crystallinity gradually decreases from 0.30 to zero, caused by melting of the crystalline phase. Vanden Eynde [4] calculated the crystallinity of EB 5 from DSC heating curves (after cooling at 10 K min<sup>-1</sup>): she found crystallinities of 0.26 at 233 K, 0.22 at 273 K and 0.17 at 293 K whereas our values at the same temperatures are slightly higher: 0.28, 0.24 and 0.19, respectively. This small difference is probably caused by the much smaller cooling rates in our experiments.



Fig. 5. Specific heat capacity data for EB 5 in the glass transition and melting region. Series 3 ( $\triangle$ ); series 7 ( $\bigtriangledown$ ); series 8 ( $\square$ ). The solid and the dash-dotted lines represent reference data for BPE according to the ATHAS data bank [13] and for LPE according to Mathot [11], respectively. Reference data are given for completely amorphous and for completely crystalline phases. The dashed line represents the specific heat capacity of (metastable) liquid LPE according to Eq. (1). The thick vertical line at T = 224 K represents the assumed heat capacity step for completely amorphous material at the glass transition temperature (see text).



Fig. 6. Specific enthalpy of the semi-crystalline EB 5 sample ( $\diamond$ ), together with the specific enthalpy of the crystalline phase ( $\bigtriangledown$ ) and of the amorphous phase ( $\triangle$ ). The enthalpy-based mass fraction crystallinity (scaling given on the right vertical axis) of the EB 5 sample is also plotted ( $\bullet$ ).

#### 3.3. Base line and excess heat capacities

The so-called specific base-line heat capacity  $(c_{pb})$  [12] of EB 5 may be calculated using the evaluated crystallinity as a function of temperature and the following equation:

$$c_{pb}(T) = w^{c}(T)c_{pc}(T) + [1 - w^{c}(T)]c_{pa}(T)$$

where  $c_{pc}$  and  $c_{pa}$  are the specific heat capacities of the completely crystalline and completely amorphous phases, respectively. Successively, the specific excess heat capacity ( $c_{pe}$ ) [12] can be calculated by subtracting the specific base-line heat capacity from the experimental specific heat capacity:

$$c_{pe}(T) = c_p(T) - c_{pb}(T)$$

A plot of the specific base-line heat capacity and the specific excess heat capacity of EB 5 as a function of temperature is presented in Fig. 7.

# 3.4. Temperature drifts during stabilisation periods in the melting region

Temperature drifts of the sample and calorimeter vessel in the melting region were evaluated from linear fits of the temperature versus time curves in the second half of the stabilisation periods. The temperature drifts of measurement series 1, 3, 7, and 8 are plotted in Fig. 8. In a transition region characterised by an endothermic heat effect, such as melting, negative drifts are usually observed. The negative drifts for series 1 (up to  $-180 \,\mu\text{K s}^{-1}$ ) and series 8 with local minima at approximately 315 and 285 K, respectively, are related to the temperatures at which annealing took place (room temperature and 280 K, respectively) and to the time it took (some years for series 1 and some hours for series 8). During series 1, 3, and 8, however, at higher temperatures (above approximately 340 K for series 1 and above approximately 325 K for series 3 and 8) also positive temperature drifts were detected (see Fig. 8). This implies that in this part of the melting region a relaxation process occurs in the stabilisation periods, which must be intermitted as recrystallisation.

These observations for EB 5 are in agreement with the results that were obtained for a homogeneous ethylene-1-octene copolymer (EOM) [3] as well as for a heterogeneous ethylene-1-octene very low-density polyethylene [2].

Obviously, the longer the time spent in annealing, and/or the slower the cooling rate before subsequent melting, the more stable the material will be for an increasing temperature range above the annealing temperature. In these cases, during heating, possibilities of recrystallisation are decreased or even prohibited; in the latter case only melting is left.



Fig. 7. Experimental specific heat capacity of EB 5 ( $\bigcirc$ ) together with the specific base-line heat capacity (solid line) and the specific excess heat capacity ( $\bullet$ ).



Fig. 8. Temperature drifts observed during the stabilisation periods. Series 1 ( $\bigcirc$ ) (sample as received); series 2 ( $\triangle$ ); series 3 ( $\diamond$ ); series 8 ( $\square$ ).

As stated in our paper presenting the results of measurements on a homogeneous ethylene-1-octene copolymer [3], the observed phenomena link up with temperature-modulated differential scanning calorimetry (TMDSC) experiments in which, depending on the thermal history, also excess phenomena are seen [15–17].

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