Effect of H₂S on the S-PAH formation during ethylene pyrolysis
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7 Abstract

8 The effect of the H₂S presence on the formation of six different sulphurated polycyclic hydrocarbons (S-PAH), during the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S mixtures, has been studied 9 in a tubular flow reactor installation. Experiments with different inlet H₂S 10 concentrations (0.3, 0.5 and 1%) and temperatures of reaction (between 1075 and 1475 11 K) have been carried out. The 16 compounds that the Environmental Protection Agency 12 (EPA) has stated as EPA-PAH priority pollutants were also analysed. EPA-PAH 13 compounds were the majority of quantified PAH, and also S-PAH were found and 14 15 quantified. For temperatures studied, the S-PAH/EPA-PAH ratio values showed a 16 maximum value at 1075 K and a minimum value at 1175 K. With respect to the effect of the inlet concentration of H₂S, the S-PAH/EPA-PAH ratio values increased with the 17 increase of the H₂S concentration. 18

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- Keywords: H₂S, ethylene pyrolysis, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH),
 sulphurated polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (S-PAH).

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23 1. Introduction

There is an increasing interest in the use of different non-conventional fuel mixtures due to their proved reserves [1-3], e.g. sour gas or biogas generated in anaerobic digestion, in combustion processes. These gases may contain different amounts of hydrogen sulphide in their composition. While expensive H_2S treatments have been traditionally applied to purify the gas, nowadays, an important tendency involves not to pre-treat the raw gas and devote the main efforts to the development of optimized technologies and combustion processes [4], taking also the advantage of using the combustion heat of H_2S , together with the downstream cleaning of the gases.

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The presence of reducing zones in the combustion chamber may produce pyrolysis 33 reactions that contribute to the consumption of the fuel, and can also generate the 34 35 formation of appreciable amounts of unburned pollutants, such as Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) and particulate matter (soot). PAH have a fundamental role in the 36 formation of soot as they are known to participate actively in the HACA (Hydrogen 37 38 Abstraction Carbon Addition) route until the formation of the first soot particles [5]. Owing to their carcinogenic and mutagenic character [6], the Environmental Protection 39 Agency of USA (EPA) has classified 16 Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons as priority 40 pollutants, from now on called EPA-PAH. Formation of EPA-PAH may happen in 41 different processes, as in flames [e.g. 7], or during the combustion of biomass pellets in 42 43 domestic boilers [e.g. 8].

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Moreover, sulphur compounds present in the reacting gas mixture can modify the amount of soot and EPA-PAH formed during the combustion process. For example, the presence of SO₂ has been demonstrated to clearly decrease both the soot and EPA-PAH amounts formed in tubular reactor experiments [9-11], flames [12, 13], Claus furnaces [14] and in the combustion of biomass, when sulphur compounds with different functionalities were added [15]. The effect of H₂S on the pyrolysis of ethylene (known as soot precursor compound) has also been studied [16], showing that the H₂S presence
slightly decreases the formation of soot and EPA-PAH, and in Claus furnaces [17, 18],
where the decrease in the EPA-PAH concentration was greater with the inlet H₂S
concentration increasing. Furthermore, if oxygenated compounds are present, the
formation of oxy-PAH can also occur.

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Therefore, in the combustion of hydrocarbon fuels in the presence of sulphur species, both EPA-PAH and oxy-PAH may appear, but also Sulphurated Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (S-PAH) generated from the interaction of unburnt hydrocarbons and sulphur species [19, 20]. S-PAH have shown potential carcinogenic and mutagenic properties [21] and highly bio-accumulative characteristics [22], with benzothiophene and dibenzothiophene as the most abundant S-PAH found in the environment [19].

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The joint quantification of 29 different polycyclic aromatic compounds (16 EPA-PAH, 7 oxy-PAH and 6 S-PAH) during pyrolysis experiments of different ethylene-SO₂ mixtures was carried out in a previous work of the group [11]. In that work, the presence of the 7 oxy-PAH studied, from the 9-fluorenone to benzo[*cd*]pyrenone, was observed, with benzanthrone and benzo[*cd*]pyrenone exhibiting the highest concentrations. Likewise, five S-PAH were detected and quantified.

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In this context, and considering the interest in taking advantage of different nonconventional fuel sources (e.g. sour gas with high H₂S content), the objective of the present work is to study the formation of EPA-PAH and S-PAH in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S mixtures under well controlled experimental conditions. Ethylene is wellknown as soot and EPA-PAH precursor in the literature, as has been chosen for comparison with earlier works of our group [e.g. 9-11]. 16 EPA-PAH and 6 S-PAH
have been analysed. The effect of reaction temperature (1075 to 1475 K) and the inlet
H₂S concentration (0.3 to 1%) on their formation has been analysed. Additionally, a
comparison of the results obtained with those obtained in the presence of SO₂ [11] was
done.

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82 **2.** Experimental

An experimental set-up available at the Thermochemical Processes Group (GPT) of the 83 University of Zaragoza has been used for the present experimental study. The pyrolysis 84 experiments have been carried out in a set-up that can be seen in Fig. 1 [23]. The full 85 description of the experimental set-up can be found in Sánchez et al. [23-25]. A short 86 description of the main features of the set-up is done here. The set-up used has four 87 88 different zones: (1) a gas feeding zone, (2) a reaction zone including a flow reactor of 45 mm inner diameter and 160 mm in length, (3) a soot and PAH collecting zone, and 89 90 (4) a gas analysis zone. Ethylene and H₂S, as reactant gases, are diluted in N₂ and fed to 91 the reaction system with a total flow rate of 1 L (STP)/min. The ethylene concentration is constant in all experiments with a value of 3%. 92

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Experiments for different reaction temperatures (1075-1475 K) were carried out. Temperature is measured with a thermocouple (type S) with a \pm 1.5 K of estimated uncertainty. In the quasi-isothermal reaction zone, the temperature can vary \pm 25 K of the desired nominal temperature. Each experiment lasts a total of 3 h, which was set for collecting enough S-PAH and EPA-PAH amounts for their analysis.

100 Table 1 shows the conditions for the experiments carried out in the present work. In 101 general, the experimental conditions are based on the conditions of the experiments of pyrolysis done in a previous study [16], in which only the 16 EPA-PAH were quantified 102 103 using the method proposed by Sánchez et al. [24, 25]. The experiments of the present work were thus planned in order to evaluate the influence of H₂S inlet concentration on 104 105 PAH formation for a given temperature, and to evaluate the influence of temperature on PAH formation keeping a given inlet H₂S concentration. Experiments 7a and 7b of 106 107 Table 1 correspond to repeated experiments. Additional information about the analytical method used and the compounds analysed can be found in the supplementary material 108 109 and in a previous work [11]. The methodology followed has been satisfactorily used in other previous works of the group [23-27]. Error bars included in figures correspond to 110 111 the standard deviation assumed following previous works of the group [e.g. 10, 11, 16, 112 25], considering that the present work results agree fairly well the experimental results of Viteri et al. [16], and since the repeated experiments of the present work (7a and 7b) 113 114 do also agree very well.

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116 **3.** Results and discussion

Total EPA-PAH concentrations corresponding to the present study are compared with the Viteri et al. results [16], under similar experimental conditions, in Fig. 2. Viteri et al. did not include the determination of S-PAH and, therefore, those compounds can not be compared, and thus the comparison refers to light gases and EPA-PAH. The results obtained are very similar in all conditions tested and follow the same trend [16].

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123 The total amount (in mg) of EPA-PAH and S-PAH obtained in the tests performed can 124 be seen in Fig. 3, varying the temperature of reaction (Fig. 3a) and the H₂S concentration fed at 1475 K (Fig. 3b). In every test, the amount of S-PAH is lower than
the amount of EPA-PAH, in particular, in the tests done from 1175 to 1375 K. At 1325
K, the maximum formation of EPA-PAH is obtained. For S-PAH, maximum formation
of these compounds is found at 1375 K. Similar trends were found in the ethylene-SO₂
mixtures pyrolysis, but happening at lower temperatures [11].

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At 1475 K, the H₂S conversion obtained by Viteri et al. [16] was 100%, and, even at this temperature, the EPA-PAH amount was higher than that of S-PAH, as it can be seen in Fig. 3b for different inlet H₂S concentrations. When the amount of H₂S fed to the reactor increases, the S-PAH concentration slightly increases, and the EPA-PAH concentration decreases. For EPA-PAH, Ibrahim et al. [17] also observed that the EPA-PAH formation decreased when the concentration of H₂S was increased in the Claus process.

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139 With the amount of S-PAH and EPA-PAH formed in the ethylene-H₂S mixtures 140 pyrolysis, the mass ratio between S-PAH and EPA-PAH is calculated. Fig. 4 shows the ratio values corresponding to experiments varying the temperature of reaction (Fig. 4a) 141 and the H₂S inlet concentration at 1475 K (Fig. 4b). In Fig. 4a, it can be observed that 142 143 this ratio presents a minimum with the temperature and it increases with H₂S concentration at the reactor inlet, Fig. 4b. The main difference with the results obtained 144 in the ethylene-SO₂ mixtures pyrolysis is that the S-PAH/EPA-PAH ratio maximum 145 value is obtained at the lowest temperature studied (1075 K) in the ethylene-H₂S 146 mixtures pyrolysis, while with SO₂, it was obtained at the highest temperature 147 148 considered (1475 K) [11]. This maximum value in the S-PAH/EPA-PAH mass ratio is obtained even with a low H₂S conversion [16]. Comparing these maximum values, the 149

150 S-PAH/EPA-PAH mass ratio value obtained with H_2S is a 45% higher than the 151 maximum value obtained in the ethylene-SO₂ pyrolysis experiments [11].

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In Fig. 4b, it can be seen that the mass ratio of S-PAH/EPA-PAH increased with the increase of H₂S inlet concentration, which is similar trend compared to that found with the total S-PAH amount formed, see Fig. 3b. In the case of the experiments of ethylene-SO₂ mixtures pyrolysis, the mass ratio of S-PAH/EPA-PAH increased with the increase of the SO₂ fed, but S-PAH amount decreased [11].

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159 The obtained results for the EPA-PAH and S-PAH amount formed in this work have been compared with those corresponding to the study of the influence of SO₂ on the 160 formation of these products in ethylene pyrolysis [11]. The results of EPA-PAH are 161 162 shown in Fig. 5a as a function of temperature, and in Fig. 5b as a function of the concentration of either SO₂ or H₂S. The trends are the same using H₂S or SO₂ during 163 ethylene pyrolysis. A maximum in the EPA-PAH amount is obtained with the 164 temperature, although this maximum is lower and shifted to higher temperatures when 165 H₂S is used. The total EPA-PAH amount decreases, in general, with an increase of 166 167 either the H_2S or SO_2 inlet concentration. This decrease is more significant with SO_2 than for H₂S. 168

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Fig. 6 presents the amount of S-PAH obtained corresponding to this work compared to that obtained in the presence of SO₂ [11], both as a function of the reaction temperature (Fig. 6a) and the H₂S or SO₂ inlet concentration at 1475 K (Fig. 6b). In both cases, the total S-PAH amount presents a maximum with the temperature, Fig. 6a. In the case of H₂S, the total S-PAH amount increases until the maximum value, happening at 1375 K. This fact can be attributed to the H₂S conversion increase, accompanied by the incipient increase in the formation of soot [16]. At temperatures higher than 1375 K, the formation of soot from S-PAH appears to be important, and this soot formation is accompanied by the diminution of the amount of S-PAH.

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180 Different trends are obtained when analysing the effect of the H_2S or SO_2 inlet 181 concentrations. The S-PAH amount increases with the H_2S concentration, but decreases 182 with the concentration of SO_2 , which can be attributed to the oxidizing effect of SO_2 183 compared to H_2S . In general, the values of S-PAH are higher in the presence of H_2S 184 than in the presence of SO_2 .

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The yields of different elements (S, C, H) to PAH have also been determined. Figs. 7a 186 187 and 7b show the sulphur yield obtained in the tests done modifying the temperature and the fed concentration of H₂S or SO₂, respectively. The ratio between sulphur in S-PAH 188 and sulphur in the inlet gas is defined as the sulphur yield to S-PAH (S yield). For the 189 190 concentration of 1% of H₂S, this yield presents a maximum at 1375 K, in the presence of H₂S, Figure 7a, coinciding with the maximum of S-PAH formation, Fig. 6a. The S 191 yield values corresponding to the presence of H₂S are higher than those obtained with 192 193 SO₂.

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Although the S-PAH amount increases with the H_2S inlet concentration (Fig. 6b), Fig. 7b shows that, when the H_2S inlet concentration increases from 0.3 to 1% of H_2S , the S yield falls from 0.018% to 0.008%. The fact that the amount of soot decreases when the fed H_2S concentration increases can explain the decrease in the S-PAH formed [14], which are adsorbed on the soot. The S-PAH concentration in the soot is approximately constant with the increase of the H₂S fed concentration (not shown), similarly to what
occurred for the ethylene-SO₂ mixtures pyrolysis [11]. Therefore, the soot formation
decrease is followed by an S-PAH decrease similarly to what is observed for EPA-PAH.
If these results are compared with those obtained with SO₂, the S yield is higher in the
experiments with H₂S, Fig. 7b, except for the lower concentration of sulphur compound
considered, for which the yield attained is higher with SO₂.

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207 The hydrogen yield to PAH (H yield) and carbon yield to PAH (C yield), considering PAH = EPA-PAH + S-PAH, can be seen in Fig. 8, for the tests done modifying the 208 temperature (Fig. 8a) and the concentration of H₂S fed (Fig. 8b). The C yield is 209 determined as the quotient of C in (EPA-PAH + S-PAH) and C fed. The H yield has 210 been determined as the quotient of H in (EPA-PAH + S-PAH) and H fed. The carbon 211 212 and hydrogen yields (Fig. 8a) follow the same tendency as that observed for the EPA-213 PAH amount in Fig. 3, obtaining a maximum for both yields at 1325 K, as it happened 214 with the maximum formation of EPA-PAH. The yield values decrease at higher 215 temperatures according with the increasing transformation of EPA-PAH in soot [16].

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Fig. 8b shows that both hydrogen and carbon yields suffer a slightly decrease with the increase of the fed concentration of H₂S from 0.5 to 1%, similarly to the behaviour of the sulphur yield to S-PAH, Fig. 7b, but much less pronounced. The C and H yields to PAH decrease might be attributed to the soot formation decrease in the ethylene-H₂S mixtures pyrolysis experiments with the increase of the H₂S fed concentration [16], and EPA-PAH and S-PAH are found to be mostly adsorbed in soot (not shown).

The analysis of the individual total S-PAH formed has also been done in the present 224 work. The individual total S-PAH amount (in mg) and their concentration (in ppmv) can 225 be observed in Figs. 9 and 10, in the tests performed modifying the temperature and the 226 fed concentration of H₂S, respectively. As seen in Fig. 9, only 5 of the 6 S-PAH 227 analysed were detected and quantified. For all the temperatures tested, the majority 228 compound is benzothiophene (BTP), followed by dibenzothiophene (DBTP), i.e., the 229 lightest compounds, while diacenaphtho[1,2-b1',2'-d]thiophene (DACN[1,2-b,1',2']TP) 230 231 is not detected in any case. The main difference between the different compound results in mass (Fig. 9a) or in concentration (Fig. 9b), is the numeric value, although the 232 233 relationship between them is not modified.

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The individual total S-PAH amounts and concentrations at 1475 K and for several fed concentration of H₂S can be seen in Fig. 10. An increase in the S-PAH amount occurs when the inlet H₂S concentration increases, except for dibenzothiophene (DBTP), which reaches a maximum for a H₂S inlet concentration of 0.5%. When the H₂S concentration increases in the inlet flow, the sulphur available in the reactor increases as well.

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In a similar way, as for the experiments carried out varying the reactor temperature, the 242 majority S-PAH compound were the lightest compounds: benzothiophene (BTP) 243 followed dibenzothiophene (DBP). Diacenaphtho[1,2-b1',2'-d]thiophene 244 by (DACN[1,2-b,1',2']TP) was not either detected in any case. Also in this case, the main 245 difference between the different compound results in mass (Fig. 10a) or in concentration 246 247 (Fig. 10b), is the numeric value, although the relationship between them is not modified, similarly to what happens when analysing the effect of temperature. 248

250 Conclusions

The formation, during the ethylene- H_2S mixtures pyrolysis, of EPA-PAH and S-PAH has been analysed. The ethylene fed concentration was 3% and the fed concentration of H_2S was modified in the range 0.3-1%. The reaction temperature studied was between 1075 and 1475 K.

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256 As main results, it can be said that S-PAH were detected and quantified in all the tests done. Likewise, the EPA-PAH compounds were the majority of the PAH quantified in 257 products of pyrolysis in all tests carried out. The S-PAH/EPA-PAH ratio values showed 258 a minimum at 1175 K that increased with the H₂S inlet concentration. With respect to 259 individual S-PAH, in all cases the majority compound was benzothiophene (BTP) 260 261 followed by dibenzothiophene (DBP), i.e., the lightest compounds, while diacenaphtho[1,2-b1',2'-d]thiophene (DACN[1,2-b,1',2']TP) was not quantified nor 262 263 detected in any experiment.

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The sulphur yield to S-PAH presented a maximum at 1375 K, coinciding with the maximum S-PAH formation. In the other hand, when the H₂S inlet concentration increased from 0.3 to 1% of H₂S, the sulphur yield to S-PAH diminished from 0.018% to 0.008%. The fact that increasing the fed H₂S concentration results in a decrease of the amount of soot can explain the decrease in the S-PAH formed.

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The H and C yields to PAH (EPA-PAH + S-PAH) followed the same tendency as that
the observed for EPA-PAH, obtaining a maximum in both yields at 1325 K, equal than
the maximum EPA-PAH formation. The yield values decreased at higher temperatures,

according with the increasing EPA-PAH transformation in soot. Both yields suffered a slightly decrease when the H₂S fed concentration increased, as happened to sulphur yield, but much less pronounced. The C and H yields to PAH decrease might be attributed to the soot formation decrease in the ethylene-H₂S mixtures pyrolysis experiments.

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In summary, the present results indicate the formation of S-PAH, additionally to the formation of oxy-PAH and EPA-PAH, which implies that this should be beard in mind when using fuels containing sulphur species in their composition.

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366 Caption of Tables

- **Table 1.** Experimental conditions. Nitrogen is used to close the gas balance.
- 368

Set	C2H4 (%)	H ₂ S (%)	Temperature (K)	Gas residence time (s)
1	3	0.3	1475	2.83
2	3	0.5	1475	2.83
3	3	1	1075	3.88
4	3	1	1175	3.55
5	3	1	1325	3.19
6	3	1	1375	3.05
7a	3	1	1475	2.83
7b	3	1	1475	2.83

Table 1. Experimental conditions. Nitrogen is used to close the gas balance.

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372 Caption of Figures

Fig. 1. Experimental installation: (1) gas feeding system, (2) reaction system, (3) soot
and PAH collecting system, (4) gas analysis system [23].

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Fig. 2. Total EPA-PAH formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S mixtures for different
H₂S inlet concentrations at 1475 K.

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- **Fig. 3.** Total PAH (EPA-PAH and S-PAH) amounts from the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S
- mixtures at: (a) 1% H₂S at different reaction temperatures; and (b) 1475 K for different
 H₂S concentrations.

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Fig. 4. Values of the S-PAH/EPA-PAH mass ratio in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S
mixtures: (a) with 1% H₂S for different reaction temperatures; and (b) for 1475 K for
different H₂S concentrations.

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Fig. 5. Total EPA-PAH amount formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene- H_2S or SO_2 mixtures: (a) Effect of the temperature, for 1% of either H_2S or SO_2 ; (b) Effect of the H_2S or SO_2 inlet concentration at 1475 K.

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Fig. 6. Total S-PAH amount formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S or SO₂ mixtures:
(a) Effect of the temperature, for 1% of either H₂S or SO₂; (b) Effect of the H₂S or SO₂
inlet concentration at 1475 K.

395	Fig. 7. Sulphur yield to S-PAH formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H ₂ S: a) 1% of H ₂ S
396	or SO ₂ at different reaction temperatures; and (b) 1475 K for different H ₂ S or SO ₂
397	concentrations.

399	Fig. 8. Carbon and hydrogen yields to PAH formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H ₂ S
400	mixtures: a) 1% H_2S at different reaction temperatures; and (b) 1475 K for different H_2S
401	concentrations.

403 Fig. 9. Individual total S-PAH concentrations from the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S at
404 different reaction temperatures: (a) in mg and (b) in ppmv. Sets 3-7 in Table 1.

Fig. 10. Individual total S-PAH concentrations from the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S at
1475 K for different inlet H₂S concentrations: (a) in mg and (b) in ppmv. Sets 1, 2 and 7
in Table 1.





411 Fig. 1. Experimental installation: (1) gas feeding system, (2) reaction system, (3) soot

and PAH collecting system, (4) gas analysis system [23].



Fig. 2. Total EPA-PAH formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S mixtures for different

416 H_2S inlet concentrations at 1475 K.



Fig. 3. Total PAH (EPA-PAH and S-PAH) amounts from the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S
mixtures at: (a) 1% H₂S at different reaction temperatures; and (b) 1475 K for different
H₂S concentrations.



Fig. 4. Values of the S-PAH/EPA-PAH mass ratio in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S
mixtures: (a) with 1% H₂S for different reaction temperatures; and (b) for 1475 K for
different H₂S concentrations.



Fig. 5. Total EPA-PAH amount formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S or SO₂
mixtures: (a) Effect of the temperature, for 1% of either H₂S or SO₂; (b) Effect of the
H₂S or SO₂ inlet concentration at 1475 K.





434 Fig. 6. Total S-PAH amount formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S or SO₂ mixtures:
435 (a) Effect of the temperature, for 1% of either H₂S or SO₂; (b) Effect of the H₂S or SO₂
436 inlet concentration at 1475 K.



Fig. 7. Sulphur yield to S-PAH formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S: a) 1% of H₂S
or SO₂ at different reaction temperatures; and (b) 1475 K for different H₂S or SO₂
concentrations.



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Fig. 8. Carbon and hydrogen yields to PAH formed in the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S
mixtures: a) 1% H₂S at different reaction temperatures; and (b) 1475 K for different H₂S
concentrations.





448 Fig. 9. Individual total S-PAH concentrations from the pyrolysis of ethylene- H_2S at

different reaction temperatures: (a) in mg and (b) in ppmv. Sets 3-7 in Table 1.



Fig. 10. Individual total S-PAH concentrations from the pyrolysis of ethylene-H₂S at
1475 K for different inlet H₂S concentrations: (a) in mg and (b) in ppmv. Sets 1, 2 and 7

453 in Table 1.