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Improvement of Mechanical Properties by a Polydopamine Interface in Highly Filled Hierarchical Composites of Titanium Dioxide Particles and Poly(vinyl butyral)

P. Georgopoulos,^{1†} E. Eichner,^{2†} V. Filiz,¹ U.A. Handge,¹ G.A. Schneider,³ S. Heinrich,² V. Abetz^{1,4*}

¹*Helmholtz-Zentrum Geesthacht, Institute of Polymer Research, Max-Planck-Strasse 1, 21502 Geesthacht, Germany*

²*Hamburg University of Technology, Institute of Solids Process Engineering and Particle Technology, Denickestrasse 15, 21073 Hamburg, Germany*

³*Hamburg University of Technology, Institute of Advanced Ceramics, Denickestrasse 15, 21073 Hamburg, Germany*

⁴*University of Hamburg, Institute of Physical Chemistry, Martin-Luther-King-Platz 6, 20146 Hamburg, Germany*

* Corresponding author: volker.abetz@hzg.de

† The authors contributed equally.

Abstract: In this work, the preparation and properties of hierarchical composites of titanium dioxide (TiO₂) particles (rutile modification) and poly(vinyl butyral) (PVB) are discussed. The volume fraction of the ceramic particles was approximately 60%. Two types of composites with different fillers were examined, i.e. TiO₂ particles with and without a thin coating of polydopamine (PDA). A variety of characterization methods was applied in order to analyze the properties of the particles and the composites. Infrared spectroscopy is used to verify the functionalization of the particles with a thin polydopamine layer. Thermal analysis provides information on the thermal stability and the degree of functionalization of the coated particles and the composites. Scanning electron microscopy investigations reveal that the functionalized TiO₂ particles with PDA form larger agglomerates which enable the coating of the TiO₂ particles with PVB *via* the spouted bed technique. Nanoindentation experiments show that the final hierarchical composite material with the use of non-coated TiO₂ particles exhibits a hardness of 0.75 ± 0.04 GPa and a Young's modulus of 29.5 ± 1.0 GPa. The composites containing polydopamine coated TiO₂ particles show an increase of

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