

Hydrogenation of Dy₂Ni₂In and Al- and Ga-substituted derivatives

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Hydrogenation properties of the compounds Dy₂Ni₂In (Mn₂AlB₂ structure type, Pearson symbol *o*S10, space group *Cmmm*) and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}X_{0.2} (X = Al, Ga) (Mo₂FeB₂ structure type, Pearson symbol *t*P10, space group *P4/mbm*) were studied at room temperature under hydrogen pressures below ambient. Hydrides of compositions Dy₂Ni₂InH_{4.5}, Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}H_{4.2}, and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2}H_{3.7} were synthesized. In all cases, the arrangement of the metal atoms was preserved after hydrogenation. Hydrogenation resulted in anisotropic lattice modification, which prevailed in one direction (along the *a*-axis) for the Mn₂AlB₂-type compound and in a plane (*ab*-plane) for the Mo₂FeB₂-type compounds. The role of individual structure fragments in the hydrogenation process is discussed.

Intermetallic / Hydride / X-ray diffraction / Crystal structure

1. Introduction

The structure types Mn₂AlB₂ (Pearson symbol *o*S10, space group *Cmmm*, atomic coordinates Mn in 4*j* (0, *y*, ½), B in 4*i* (0, *y*, 0), Al in 2*a* (0, 0, 0) [1]) and Mo₂FeB₂ (Pearson symbol *t*P10, space group *P4/mbm*, atomic coordinates Mo in 4*h* (*x*, *x* + ½, ½), B in 4*g* (*x*, *x* + ½, 0), Fe in 2*a* (0, 0, 0) [2]) belong to a structure series with the general formula *R_{m+n}T_{2m}M_n*, based on the binary types AlB₂ (face-sharing filled trigonal prisms *TR*₆) and CsCl (filled deformed cubes *MR*₈), where *R*, a rare-earth element, represents the largest atoms, *T*, a *d*-element, the smallest atoms, and *M*, a main-group element, the atoms of intermediate size [3]. Mn₂AlB₂ is an inhomogeneous 1D intergrowth structure, while Mo₂FeB₂ is an inhomogeneous 2D intergrowth structure (Fig. 1). Both structure types are formed in *R*-Ni-In systems [4]. The orthorhombic structure type Mn₂AlB₂ is adopted by the R₂Ni₂In compounds with *R* = Y, Gd-Lu in as-cast state and after annealing, while for Sm₂Ni₂In it corresponds to the low-temperature modification (after annealing at 600°C or lower temperatures). For other conditions and/or rare-earth metals, the tetragonal type Mo₂FeB₂ is observed. Moreover, vacancies in the position of Ni lead to the formation of off-stoichiometric compounds R₂Ni_{2-x}In

(*x* ≈ 0.22) with Mo₂FeB₂-type structure for the full rare-earth metal series, both in as-cast state and after annealing.

Compounds crystallizing with the tetragonal Mo₂FeB₂-type structure have been widely studied for hydrogenation. It was found that their hydrogenation properties strongly depend on the chemical composition [5,6]. Within the series R₂Ni₂In, hydrogenation properties have been reported for the compounds where *R* = La, Ce, Pr, Nd [7,8]. They absorb up to 4.5-5 hydrogen atoms per formula unit (H at./f.u.) at hydrogen pressures below ambient, and 7 H at./f.u. at a hydrogen pressure of 7 bar. Hydrogenation is accompanied by a decrease in symmetry to orthorhombic (space group *Pbam*). The hydrogen atoms occupy four independent positions: one inside an octahedron [R₄NiIn], one inside a trigonal bipyramid [R₃Ni₂], and two inside tetrahedra [R₂Ni₂] and [R₂In₂].

There are no data available on hydrogenation properties of compounds with the closely related structure type Mn₂AlB₂. The aim of the present work was to study the hydrogenation properties of the compound Dy₂Ni₂In, crystallizing with the orthorhombic Mn₂AlB₂ structure type, and to compare them with those of related compounds with the tetragonal Mo₂FeB₂ structure type.

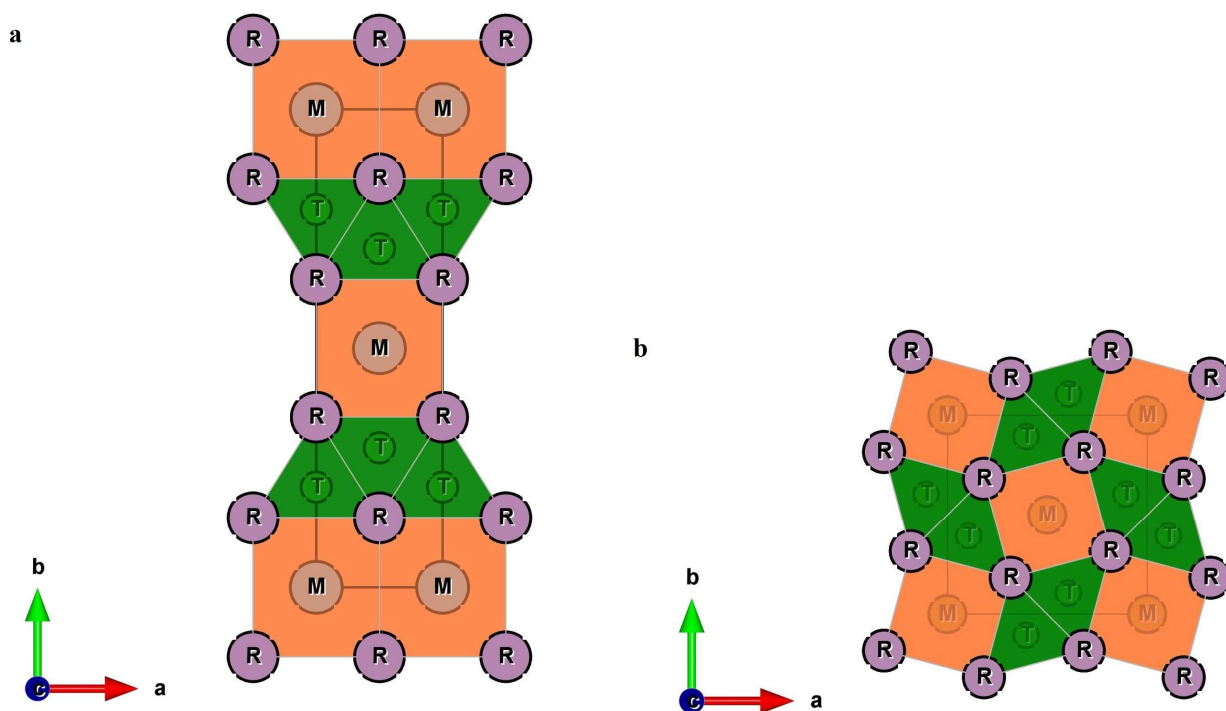


Fig. 1 Representation of the Mn₂AlB₂ (a) and Mo₂FeB₂ (b) structure types belonging to the structure series $R_{m+n}T_{2m}M_n$, based on the binary types AlB₂ (m , green) and CsCl (n , orange).

2. Experimental details

The intermetallic compounds were synthesized by arc-melting elemental metals of at least 99.9 % purity under argon atmosphere. Selected samples were later annealed in evacuated quartz ampoules at 600°C for two months. The composition was checked by estimating the weight losses after melting. The samples were further examined by scanning electron microscopy, using a Vega 3 LMU (Tescan) microscope, equipped with an X-ray energy-dispersive analyzer Flash (Bruker) for quantitative probe microanalysis by energy-dispersive spectroscopy (EDS).

Hydrogenation was performed exposing the alloy, crushed before into submillimeter particles and activated by heating up to 250°C for 2 h in oil-free vacuum ($\approx 5 \cdot 10^{-6}$ mbar), to H₂ gas ($p = 700$ –870 mbar). The hydrogen absorption was estimated by measuring the pressure drop in a closed system. The thermal stability of the hydride was subsequently checked by heating up to 700°C in a closed system.

The crystal structures were studied at room temperature by X-ray powder diffraction, on a STOE Stadi P diffractometer (Cu $K\alpha_1$ radiation) or a Bruker D8 Advance diffractometer (Cu $K\alpha$ radiation). The crystal structure refinements were based on the Rietveld algorithm, using the program package FullProf Suite [9]. Differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) curves were obtained using a Linseis STA PT 1600 system in dynamic argon atmosphere (5 L/h)

with heating and cooling rates of 10 K/min in the temperature range 20–1100°C.

3. Results

3.1 Hydrogenation of Dy₂Ni₂In

Hydrogenation of the Dy₂Ni₂In sample (Mn₂AlB₂ structure type), annealed at 600°C, was performed at room temperature under hydrogen at a pressure of 700 mbar. The reaction started after an incubation time of ~2 h and went on for another 3 h. The total pressure drop corresponded to the hydride composition Dy₂Ni₂InH_{4.5}. The results of the X-ray diffraction analysis showed that after hydrogenation the sample contained a main phase with the Mn₂AlB₂ structure type, and a minor amount of Dy₂O₃, which could have formed after exposing the sample to air. The peak broadening in the X-ray powder pattern indicates a non-negligible reduction of the size of the crystalline grains, or even some amorphization of the sample (Fig. 2a,b).

The type of crystal structure of the metallic matrix is preserved after hydrogenation. However, hydrogenation leads to strongly anisotropic lattice modification (Table 1). The prevailing direction of lattice expansion is the a -axis, meaning simultaneous stretching of the intergrown slabs with CsCl- and AlB₂-type structures along a single direction. At the same time, in the direction of the stacking of the slabs, *i.e.* along the b -axis, even a certain lattice contraction is observed.

The decomposition curve for the hydride Dy₂Ni₂InH_{4.5} (Fig. 3) revealed the start of the desorption process already at 130°C. A second step of hydrogen release developed at 270°C. However, temperature increase above 480°C resulted in a pressure drop in the system, meaning reversed hydrogen sorption, which can be explained by a decomposition of the intermetallic with the formation of a simpler hydride. Further heating up to 700°C resulted in more hydrogen gas released, but

upon cooling some amount of the hydrogen was reabsorbed. The reflections of the X-ray powder pattern collected for the sample after desorption denied the presence of the phase Dy₂Ni₂In or its hydride. Instead, the sample contained the phases DyNiIn (50.3 %), DyNi₂ (25.3 %), DyH₂ (11.2 %), and Dy₂O₃ (13.2 %) (Fig. 2c), meaning that the hydride Dy₂Ni₂InH_{4.5} decomposes upon heating with the formation of the binary hydride DyH₂, which exists up to 840°C [10].

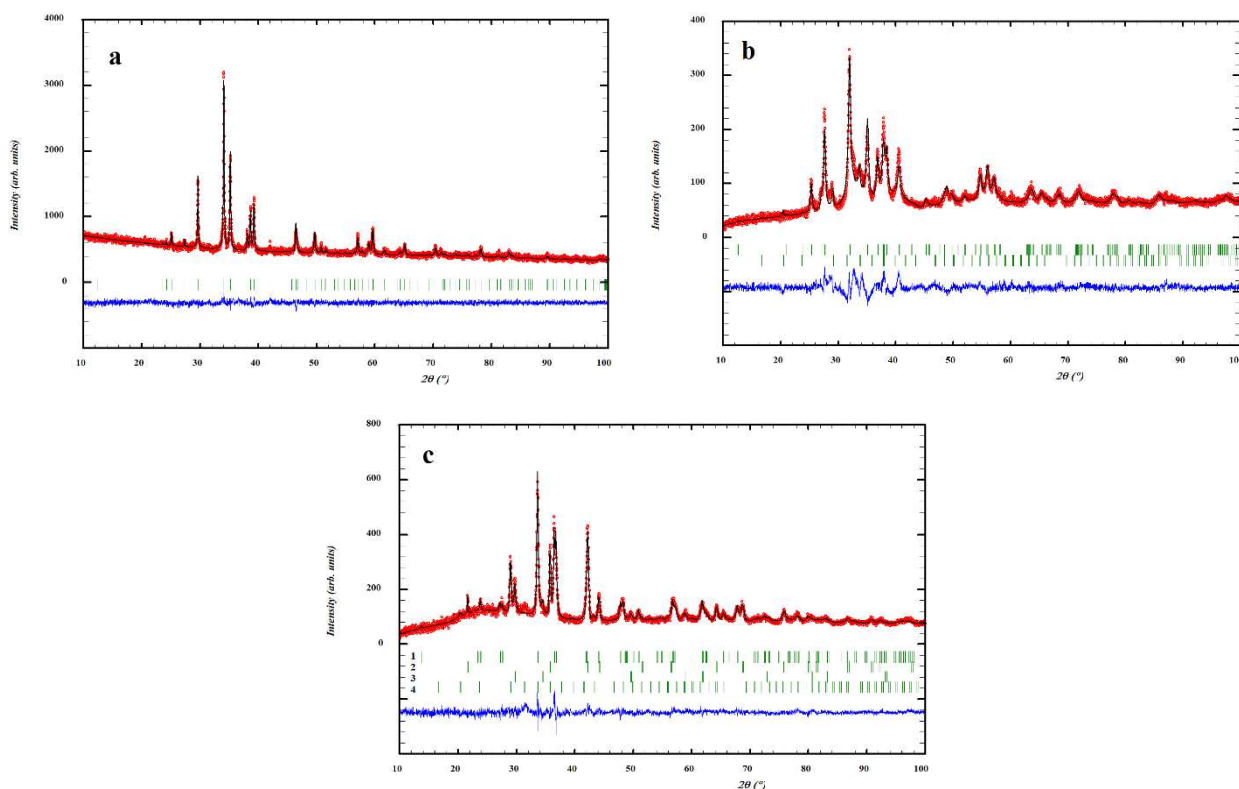


Fig. 2 X-ray powder patterns and positions of the Bragg reflections of the phases, for the samples Dy₂Ni₂In (Cu K α_1 radiation) (a), and Dy₂Ni₂InH_{4.5} (b), and the products of the thermal desorption of the hydride (Cu K α radiation): 1 – DyNiIn, 2 – DyNi₂, 3 – DyH₂, 4 – Dy₂O₃ (c).

Table 1 Cell parameters a , b , c , V , their relative change upon hydrogenation $\Delta a/a$, $\Delta b/b$, $\Delta c/c$, $\Delta V/V$, atomic coordinates x , y , z of the metal atoms, Bragg and profile reliability factors R_B , R_p for Dy₂Ni₂In and its hydride.

Dy ₂ Ni ₂ In (space group $Cmmm$), $R_B = 7.65\%$, $R_p = 3.91\%$ $a = 3.904(1)\text{ \AA}$, $b = 14.145(3)\text{ \AA}$, $c = 3.664(1)\text{ \AA}$, $V = 202.35(9)\text{ \AA}^3$				
Atom	Site	x	y	z
Dy	4j	0	0.3638(2)	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ni	4i	0	0.1953(5)	0
In	2a	0	0	0
Dy ₂ Ni ₂ InH _{4.5} (space group $Cmmm$), $R_B = 9.81\%$, $R_p = 5.36\%$ $a = 4.440(1)\text{ \AA}$, $b = 14.045(4)\text{ \AA}$, $c = 3.722(1)\text{ \AA}$, $V = 232.1(1)\text{ \AA}^3$ $\Delta a/a = 13.7\%$, $\Delta b/b = -0.7\%$, $\Delta c/c = 1.6\%$, $\Delta V/V = 14.7\%$				
Atom	Site	x	y	z
Dy	4j	0	0.3604(3)	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ni	4i	0	0.1841(7)	0
In	2a	0	0	0

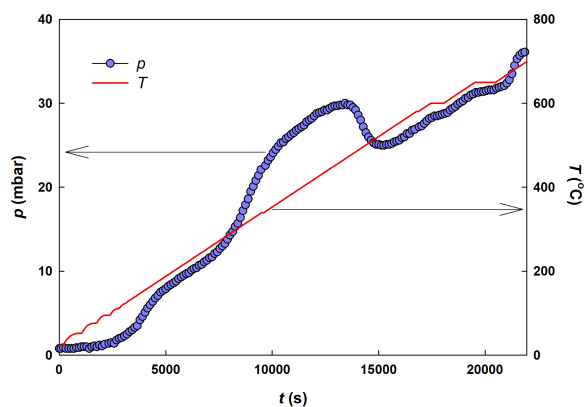


Fig. 3 Decomposition curve for the hydride Dy₂Ni₂InH_{4.5}, obtained in a closed system.

3.2 Hydrogenation of Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}X_{0.2} (X = Al, Ga)

The partial replacement of In atoms in Dy₂Ni₂In by atoms of another *p*-element, here Al or Ga, led to the formation of a phase with the tetragonal structure type Mo₂FeB₂. However, annealing at 600°C removed the tetragonal phase while a phase with the orthorhombic Mn₂AlB₂ structure type was formed. Differential scanning calorimetry was used to determine the temperature of the phase transition. For the sample Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}, a sharp peak was observed at 892°C, both on the heating and cooling curve, which can indicate that the tetragonal phase forms above this temperature (Fig. 4). The transition takes place at a still higher temperature in the case of Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} (around 924°C). For this reason, as-cast samples were selected for the studies of the hydrogenation properties of tetragonal phases close in composition to Dy₂Ni₂In.

The solubility of Al in Dy₂Ni₂In was confirmed by electron microscopy and EDS analysis. The element mapping of the surface of the as-cast sample Dy₂Ni₂Al_{0.2}In_{0.8} is shown in Fig. 5a. The main phase is

In-rich, and the EDS analysis yielded the following composition: Dy – 37(2) at.%, Ni – 37.1(7) at.%, Al – 5.7(1) at.%, In – 20.2(1) at.%. The results exclude the formation of the previously reported off-stoichiometric phase with vacancies on the Ni site, and confirm the incorporation of Al. The Al:In ratio is close to the nominal composition. A spurious Al-rich phase with the following composition: Dy – 36(2) at.%, Ni – 45.1(9) at.%, Al – 14.5(3) at.%, In – 4.4(2) at.%, was observed. Besides, trace amounts of Dy₂O₃ were present in the sample, shown as red spots on the map.

The solubility of Ga in Dy₂Ni₂In was also confirmed by EDS analysis (Fig. 5b). The main phase is rich in In, and its composition is Dy – 38(2) at.%, Ni – 39.1(6) at.%, Ga – 1.9(1) at.%, In – 21.0(7) at.%. The composition of the spurious Ga-rich phase is Dy – 39(2) at.%, Ni – 44.6(7) at.%, Ga – 12.9(3) at.%, In – 3.5(1) at.%. The *M*:In ratio is somewhat lower than for the Al compound, meaning a lower Ga solubility limit in Dy₂Ni₂In.

The phase analysis of the as-cast samples Dy₂Ni₂Al_{0.2}In_{0.8} and Dy₂Ni₂Al_{0.2}Ga_{0.8} revealed minor amounts of the impurity phases Dy₂Ni₂Al_{1-x}In_x and Dy₂Ni₂Ga_{1-x}In_x, respectively, with crystal structures of the W₂CoB₂ type (space group *Immm*).

Hydrogenation of the alloys Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} was performed at room temperature under hydrogen pressures of 850 mbar and 870 mbar, respectively. In the case of Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} hydrogenation started 300 s after introducing hydrogen into the system and reached saturation in 1800 s (Fig. 6). The amount of hydrogen absorbed corresponds to the formula Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}H_{4.2}. The hydrogenation process was more sluggish for Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2}. Hydrogen sorption started only after 45 minutes and lasted for another 30 minutes. The hydrogen content was 3.7 H at./f.u., which is lower, than for the Al compound.

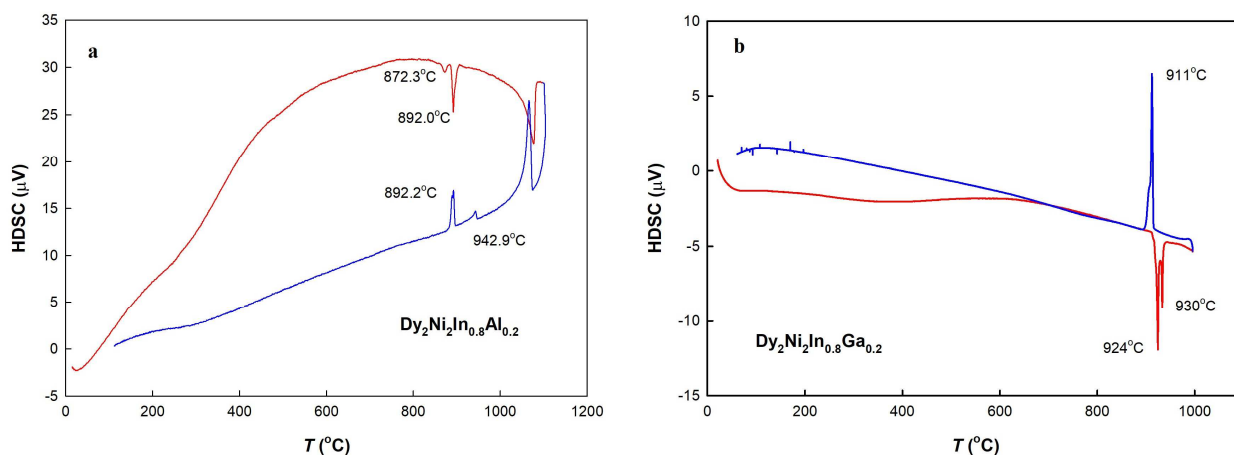


Fig. 4 DSC curves for Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} (a) and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} (b) samples (heating (red) and cooling (blue) rate 10 K/min).

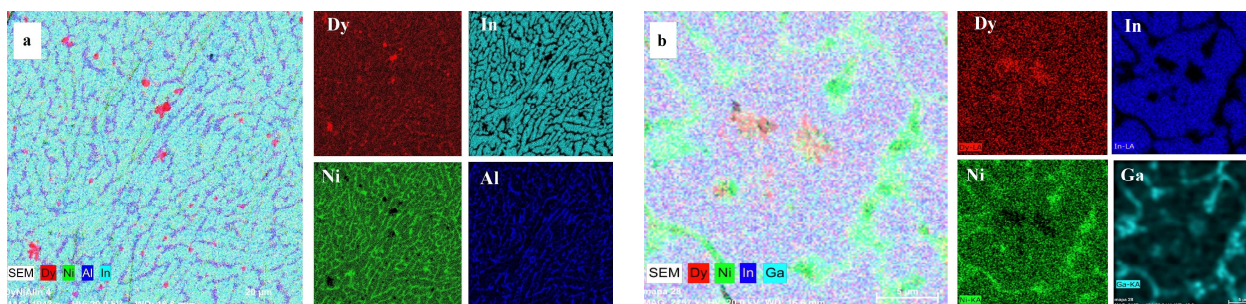


Fig. 5 Element mapping from EDS analysis of the as-cast alloys Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} (a) and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} (b).

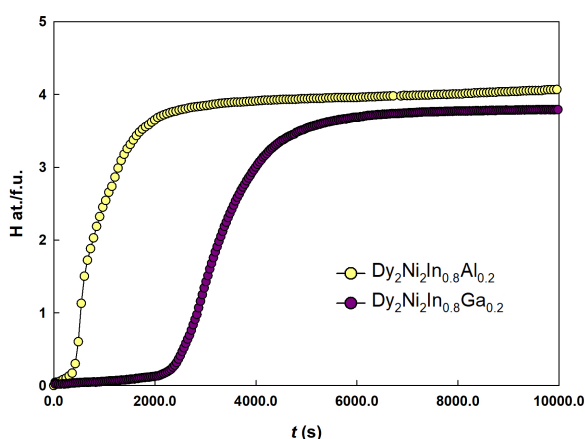


Fig. 6 Hydrogenation curves for Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} ($p(\text{H}_2) = 850$ mbar) and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} ($p(\text{H}_2) = 870$ mbar) at room temperature.

The effect of hydrogenation on the crystal structure of Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} was studied by X-ray powder diffraction. The results of the structure refinement are given in Table 2, and the X-ray powder patterns of Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}H_{4.2} are shown on Fig. 7. The structure of the metal atom matrix was not changed upon hydrogenation. The relative volume expansion exceeds 9 % in both cases, and the lattice expansion is more pronounced in the *ab* plane. The peaks on the X-ray pattern are not substantially broadened after hydrogenation, meaning that, unlike Dy₂Ni₂In, there is no indication for a systematic decrease of the grain size.

4. Discussion

Dy₂Ni₂In, with orthorhombic Mn₂AlB₂-type structure, opens a new group of compounds that can form hydrides. The compound absorbs hydrogen from the gas phase under relatively mild conditions: room temperature and a hydrogen pressure below ambient. However, the process rate is relatively slow (several hours) and does not surpass that of related tetragonal

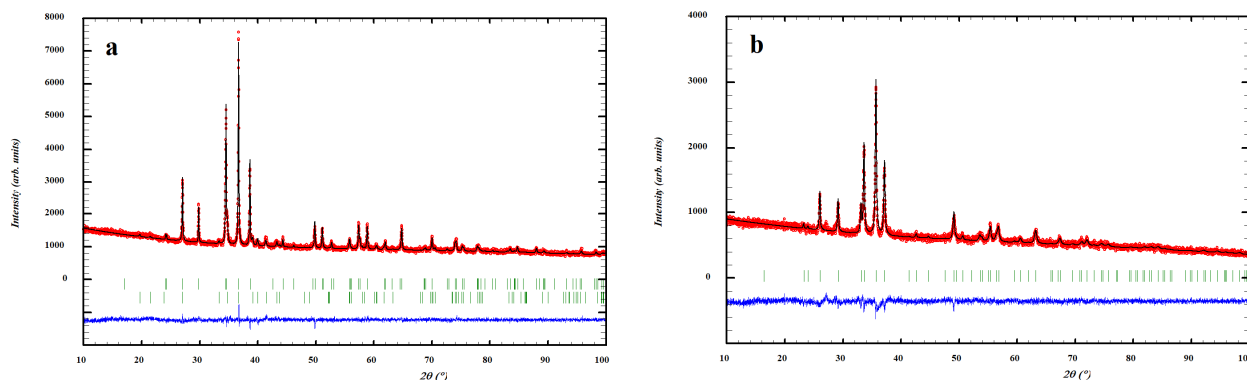
compounds. A special feature of these compounds is strong uniaxial lattice deformation upon hydrogenation.

Doping Dy₂Ni₂In with atoms of other *p*-elements (Al or Ga) reveals new possibilities to stabilize the tetragonal phase at elevated temperatures. Taking into account the equal number of valence electrons for the elements belonging to the 13 group, we assume the size factor predetermines the evolution of the Mo₂FeB₂ structure type. Al appears to be a more efficient choice, compared to Ga, as seen from the lower transition temperature and more extended homogeneity region. The nature of the doping *p*-element affects the hydrogenation behaviour of the intermetallic as well. Here again, Al demonstrated better performance than Ga: higher hydrogenation rate, and higher hydrogen content in the hydride. This observation goes in line with the extremely active behaviour of the compounds *R*₂T₂Al upon hydrogenation (orthorhombic W₂CoB₂ structure type), which absorb up to 6 H at./f.u. within several seconds at room temperature under hydrogen pressures below 100 mbar [11]. Their hydrogenation activity substantially surpasses that of the isotypic Ga- or Sn-containing compounds.

A comparison of the effect of hydrogenation on the crystal structures of the Mn₂AlB₂- and Mo₂FeB₂-type compounds shows that hydrogenation has similar impact on the height of the constituent AlB₂- and CsCl-type slabs ($\Delta c/c = 1.6$ % for the Mn₂AlB₂ type and $\Delta c/c = 1.3$ -1.9 % for the Mo₂FeB₂ type structures), but the arrangement of the fragments (columns) in the tetragonal structure type maintains the structure tighter, than the parallel slabs in the orthorhombic structure. In both cases hydrogenation hardly affects the distance from the *p*-element atom in the CsCl-type structure fragment to the nearest Ni atom (the distance even decreases for orthorhombic Dy₂Ni₂In). Instead, the distance that is significantly affected upon hydrogenation is the Ni–Ni distance between atoms inside the trigonal prisms forming the AlB₂-type slabs. Hence, one can presume similar positions for the hydrogen atoms in the two structures and the defining role of the AlB₂-type fragments in the formation of hydrides.

Table 2 Cell parameters a , c , V , their relative change upon hydrogenation $\Delta a/a$, $\Delta c/c$, $\Delta V/V$, atomic coordinates x , y , z of the metal atoms, Bragg and profile reliability factors R_B , R_p for Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}, Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2}, and their hydrides.

Dy ₂ Ni ₂ In _{0.8} Al _{0.2} (space group $P4/mbm$), $R_B = 5.88\%$, $R_p = 2.59\%$ $a = 7.3586(8)\text{ \AA}$, $c = 3.6561(4)\text{ \AA}$, $V = 197.97(4)\text{ \AA}^3$				
Atom	Site	x	y	z
Dy	4h	0.1751(2)	0.6751(2)	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ni	4g	0.3783(5)	0.8783(5)	0
(In _{0.8} Al _{0.2})	2a	0	0	0
Dy ₂ Ni ₂ In _{0.8} Al _{0.2} H _{4.2} (space group $P4/mbm$), $R_B = 9.99\%$, $R_p = 3.58\%$ $a = 7.639(3)\text{ \AA}$, $c = 3.705(2)\text{ \AA}$, $V = 216.2(2)\text{ \AA}^3$ $\Delta a/a = 3.8\%$, $\Delta c/c = 1.3\%$, $\Delta V/V = 9.2\%$				
Atom	Site	x	y	z
Dy	4h	0.1752(4)	0.6752(4)	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ni	4g	0.3764(9)	0.8764(9)	0
(In _{0.8} Al _{0.2})	2a	0	0	0
Dy ₂ Ni ₂ In _{0.8} Ga _{0.2} (space group $P4/mbm$), $R_B = 4.55\%$, $R_p = 5.20\%$ $a = 7.3570(6)\text{ \AA}$, $c = 3.6598(4)\text{ \AA}$, $V = 198.08(3)\text{ \AA}^3$				
Atom	Site	x	y	z
Dy	4h	0.1754(4)	0.6754(4)	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ni	4g	0.3766(9)	0.8766(9)	0
(In _{0.8} Ga _{0.2})	2a	0	0	0
Dy ₂ Ni ₂ In _{0.8} Ga _{0.2} H _{3.7} (space group $P4/mbm$), $R_B = 7.55\%$, $R_p = 6.40\%$ $a = 7.627(1)\text{ \AA}$, $c = 3.7293(6)\text{ \AA}$, $V = 216.95(5)\text{ \AA}^3$ $\Delta a/a = 3.7\%$, $\Delta c/c = 1.9\%$, $\Delta V/V = 9.5\%$				
Atom	Site	x	y	z
Dy	4h	0.1705(3)	0.6705(3)	$\frac{1}{2}$
Ni	4g	0.3718(9)	0.8718(9)	0
(In _{0.8} Ga _{0.2})	2a	0	0	0

**Fig. 7** X-ray powder patterns for the samples Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} (a) and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}H_{4.2} (b) (Cu $K\alpha_1$ radiation).

Conclusions

The orthorhombic compound Dy₂Ni₂In opens a new group of intermetallics that can form hydrides at room temperature under hydrogen pressures below ambient, absorbing up to 4.5 H at./f.u. Hydrogenation results in strongly anisotropic (uniaxial) lattice expansion, while the relative volume expansion reaches 14.7 %.

A tetragonal phase based on the Dy₂Ni₂In compound can be obtained by substituting small

amounts of Al or Ga for In. The compounds Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2} and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2} also absorb hydrogen at room temperature under hydrogen pressures of ~850 mbar, forming hydrides of composition Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Al_{0.2}H_{4.2} and Dy₂Ni₂In_{0.8}Ga_{0.2}H_{3.7}, respectively. Hydrogenation results in anisotropic lattice expansion prevailing in the ab plane.

Both structure types, Mn₂AlB₂ and Mo₂FeB₂, belong to a series of intergrowth structures containing

AlB₂- and CsCl-type structural fragments. We believe that the AlB₂-type related fragments primarily define the hydrogenation properties of intermetallics belonging to the structure series $R_{m+n}T_{2m}M_n$.

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