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(54) **Retaining straps**

(57) A retaining device (10) suitable, in use, for holding a towel (30) in place on a sun lounge (32), the retaining device (10) comprising a resiliently extendible member (12), such as a resiliently extendible, or elasticated strap, suitably of the flat tape type, having at each end, a connector (14, 16), the connectors (14, 16) being adapted for mutual releasable engagement to form a con-

tinuous band when connected to one another. The connectors can be a hook (54) and an eye (56); a set of hook-and-loop type fasteners; a clip; a set of buckle clip connectors (14, 16); a button (50) and one or more button holes (52); a hook (54) and one or more eyelets (56); and a set of interlocking loops (40, 42). The retaining device can optionally be used as a luggage (38) identifier, a general purpose strap or as a towel roll (30) carrier.

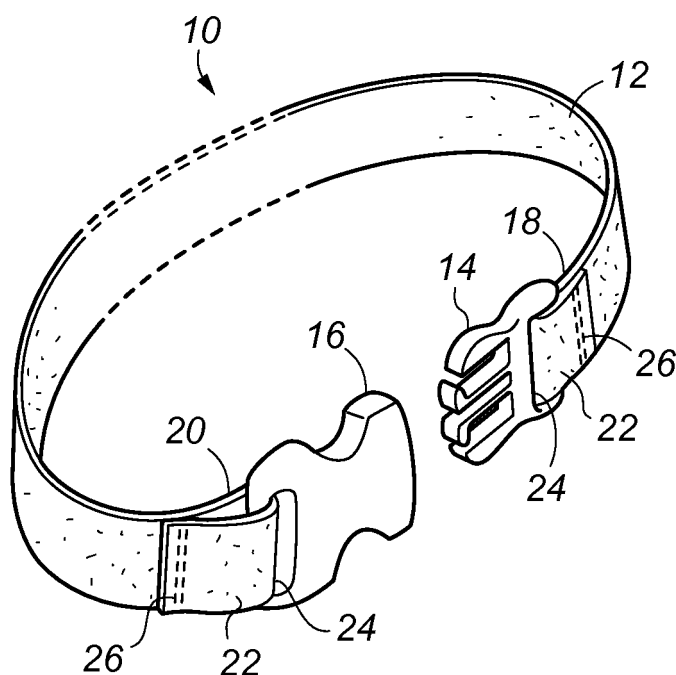


Fig. 1

Description

[0001] This invention relates to retaining straps, and in particular, but without limitation to retaining straps suitable for retaining towels and the like to furniture.

[0002] When a towel is placed on a sun lounger, for example, it is susceptible to being blown off the sun lounger by the wind when it is unattended, or to slip down when a person reclining on the lounger sits up. This can be inconvenient as a wrinkled towel can be uncomfortable to lie on and can expose a user's back to the fabric of the sun lounger, which can often be dirty or rough. A need therefore arises for a device for retaining a towel in place, in particular on a chair, sun lounger or other similar article of furniture.

[0003] In addition, towels can be awkward to transport as they have a tendency to unfold, especially if a user is carrying other items at the same time. A need therefore exists for a device for retaining a towel in a folded state, and which facilitates carrying it by hand.

[0004] Known towel retainers can be integrally formed with the towel itself, for example, by way of an elasticated peripheral seam, which can be stretched to fit over the ends of a sun lounger or other similar item. The problem with retainers of this type is that they are integrally formed with the towel, which means that the towel is somewhat dedicated in functionality and can be difficult to use for drying off with. This type of retainer does not address the problems associated with transporting and carrying the towel, and can be unsatisfactory in many situations.

[0005] Another known type of towel retainer comprises a clip that can be press-fitted over a part of a furniture item, such as the rail or leg of a sun lounger to grip the towel. Clip-type retainers of this type are not very versatile as they cannot be easily fitted to all types of furniture item, are easy to lose and can break relatively easily if over-stretched.

[0006] A yet further known type of towel retainer comprises a continuous elasticated band that can be fitted over a sun lounger and a towel to hold the towel in place. Whilst this type of retainer offers the convenience of quick installation and removal, it cannot easily be used to retain a towel in a folded state, and cannot be fitted to all types of sun lounger. Specifically, sun lounger having their legs at the ends of the seat/back portion may need to be lifted off the ground to pass the band around them to affect gripping of the towel, which can introduce unwanted difficulties, especially for movement impaired users.

[0007] The invention aims to solve one or more of the above problems and/or to provide an improved and/or alternative type of towel retainer.

[0008] According to the invention, there is provided a retaining device suitable, in use, for holding a towel in place on a sun lounger, the retaining device comprising a resiliently extendible member having at each end, a connector, the connectors being adapted for mutual releasable engagement to form a continuous band when connected to one another.

[0009] By providing a retaining device that can be formed into a continuous loop, the retaining device can be easily fitted, for example, over a sun lounger to retain a towel or other similar item in place.

5 **[0010]** The resiliently extendible member may comprise any type of elasticated strap, although elasticated straps of the flat tape type are preferred as they can be arranged to lie flat against the towel or sun lounger, in use, so they are not felt by a user as he or she sits, reclines or lies upon it. In a most preferred embodiment of the invention, the resiliently extendible member comprises a length of elasticated webbing approximately 20 to 40 mm wide, but most preferably approximately 25mm wide (when un-stretched) and 1mm thick (when un-stretched).
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15 The length of the resiliently extendible member is preferably selected to be slightly less than twice the width of a sun lounger, for example, approximately 800 to 1000 mm in length (when un-stretched) and extendible to approximately double its length when stretched, so that it can be stretched to fit over the towel and sun lounger to securely retain the towel in place.

20 **[0011]** The modulus of elasticity of the resiliently extendible member is preferably in the range of 400 to 800 KPa, and most preferably approximately 655 KPa. Such a range of moduli conveniently ensures that the resiliently extendible member is capable of exerting sufficient gripping force to retain the towel in place, whilst being at the same time, easy for a user to stretch without overexerting themselves.
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30 **[0012]** The resiliently extendible member has a connector at each end of it. The connectors are preferably permanently affixed to the ends resiliently extendible member, for example, by stitching a loop formed at each end of the resiliently extendible member back on itself with the loop so formed passing through an eyelet of the connector(s). Additionally or alternatively, the length of the resiliently extendible member may be adjustable, for example, by providing a buckle-type connection to the connectors that a user can adjust to obtain a desired length of, and/or tension in, the resiliently extendible member.
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45 **[0013]** The connectors can be of any suitable type, provided they are adapted for mutual releasable engagement to form a continuous band when connected to one another. For example, the connectors may comprise a hook and an eye, a set of hook-and-loop type fasteners, a clip, a button and an eyelet, etc. Such a configuration enables the continuous band to be temporarily "broken" so that it can, for example, be passed underneath a sun lounger, which can avoid the need to lift the sun lounger to fit the retaining device thereto at a point located between the legs of the lounger. The provision of connectors that are mutually releasably engageable also increases the versatility of the retainer as it can be used in other situations, for example, as a wrap-around band for bundling a rolled towel with items (e.g. wet swimming costumes) rolled into it and thus also providing a convenient carrying handle for the thus rolled/folded towel. Addition-
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ally, the retaining band could be used as an identifying band, for example, on suitcases, to facilitate identifying luggage at an airport. Additionally, because the connectors enable the ends of the retainer to be separated, it is possible to pass the retaining device through a handle of a suitcase, thereby preventing its detachment from the suitcase in transit.

[0014] In a most preferred embodiment of the invention, the resiliently extendible member comprises an elasticated web of a desired colour, bearing indicia thereon. Such a configuration allows the retaining device to serve also, as a convenient identifier. In one example, the resiliently extendible member could be manufactured from an elasticated web of a company, such as an airline's, cruise company or hotel chain's corporate colours, and the indicia may be printed on, woven into, and/or embroidered into the web. The indicia may comprise a corporate slogan, a marketing message, a flight number, a trade mark, a personal name or some other device or wording that can be selected to suit different requirements. As such, an airline may provide corporate branded towel retainers in accordance with the invention that can be affixed to passenger's luggage to easily identify them on, say, a luggage carousel. Additionally or alternatively, a family may choose to have a set of retaining devices made bearing their family name or some other identifier, printed on a distinctly coloured elasticated web to facilitate identification of their luggage at an airport. The retaining devices serving a dual purpose, of course, as a towel retainer/carrier, when they arrive at their destination.

[0015] Preferred embodiments of the invention shall now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is partial perspective view of a first embodiment of a retaining device in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the retaining device of Figure 1, in use, as a towel retainer on a sun lounger;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the retaining device of Figure 1, in use, as a towel roll carrying aid;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the retaining device of Figure 1, in use, as an identifying band on a suitcase;

Figure 5 is partial perspective view of a second embodiment of a retaining device in accordance with the invention;

Figure 6 is partial perspective view of a third embodiment of a retaining device in accordance with the invention; and

Figure 7 is partial perspective view of a fourth embodiment of a retaining device in accordance with the invention.

[0016] In Figure 1, a retaining device 10 comprises an elasticated webbing strap 12 of approximately 1m in

length having, at one end, a male clip buckle connector 14 and at the other end, a female clip buckle connector 16. The male 14 and 15 clip buckle connectors can releasably clip together to form a continuous band that can be used, for example, to retain a towel on a sun lounger, or as a general purpose elasticated strap. The elasticated webbing strap 12 is approximately 30mm wide (when unstretched) and is generally flat.

[0017] The ends 18, 20 of the elasticated webbing strap 12 are connected to the clip buckle connectors by passing their free ends 22 through a loop 24 of the buckle connectors 14, 16 and by folding the free ends 22 back and securing them to form a byte using a line of stitching 26. As such, the size of the loop is substantially fixed, save for the elongation that is possible by stretching the elasticated webbing 12.

[0018] In Figure 2, it can be seen how two retaining devices 10 can be used to secure a towel 30 to sun lounger 32. The retaining device 10 used to secure the towel 30 to the back portion 34 of the sun lounger 32 can simply be stretch fitted over the end of the sun lounger 32 without disconnecting the clip buckle connectors (not visible). The other retaining device 10 located at a position between the legs 36 of the sun lounger 32 can be opened out by disconnecting the clip buckle connectors 14, 16 to facilitate passing the elasticated webbing strap 12 beneath the sun lounger without having to lift it. Once in place, the clip buckle connectors 14, 16 can be re-connected to form an elasticated loop retain the lower portion of the towel 30 in place. It will be noted in Figure 2, that the elasticated webbing strap 12 has a thickness of approximately 1mm, and so lies flat against the towel 30, thereby not presenting an uncomfortable abutment when a user sits or lies on the sun lounger 32.

[0019] The retaining device 10, as shown in Figure 3, also provides a convenient carry strap for a rolled towel 30. The retaining device 10 can be wrapped around the towel 30 several times with the clip buckle connectors 14, 16 disconnected, and then closed to form a continuous loop around the towel 30 by re-connecting the clip buckle connectors 14, 16 to one another. The retaining device 10 thus keeps the towel 30 in a neatly rolled configuration, whilst also providing a grip, whereby a user can slip their fingers between the retaining device 10 and the towel 30 to facilitate carrying it.

[0020] The retaining device 10, as shown in Figure 4, can also be used as a luggage identifying band, that can be stretched or clipped around a suitcase 38. This also means that the retaining device 10 does not need to be packed inside the suitcase 38, and may also provide supplementary protection against the suitcase 38 opening.

[0021] Alternative embodiments of the retaining device 10 are shown in Figures 5 to 7. In Figure 5, the clip buckle connectors 14, 16 have been replaced by a pair of interlocking loops 40, 42 that can be releasably interconnected via a twisting action. One of the loops 42 comprises a pair of spaced apart limb portions 44 that enable the free end 22 of the elasticated web 12 to pass between

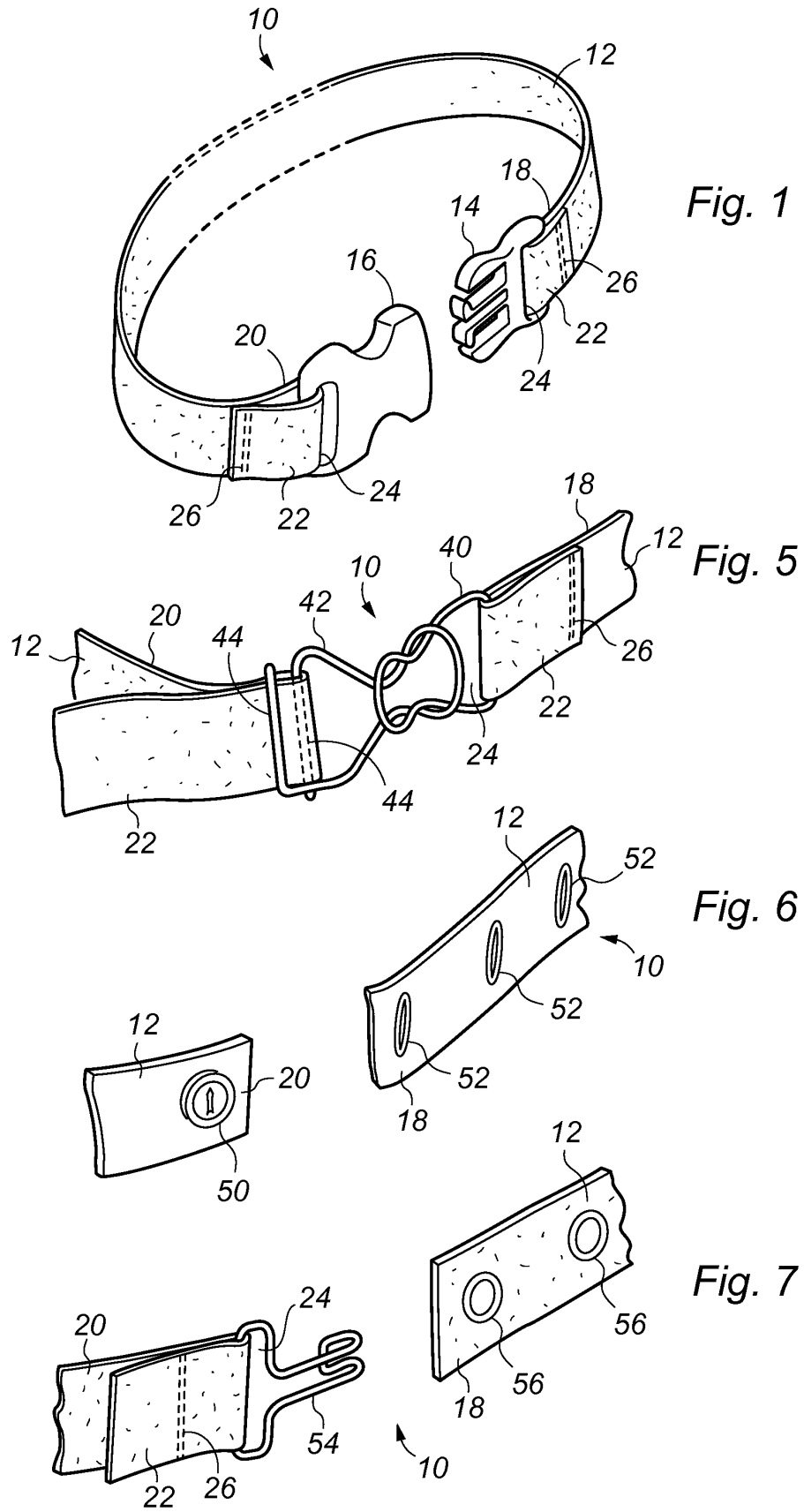
to form an adjustable buckle so that the length of the loop can be adjusted.

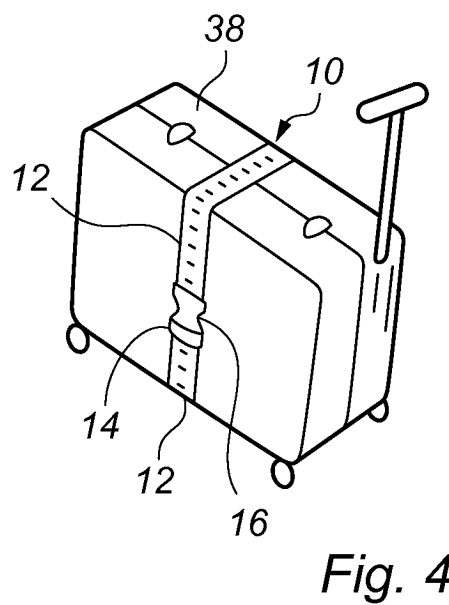
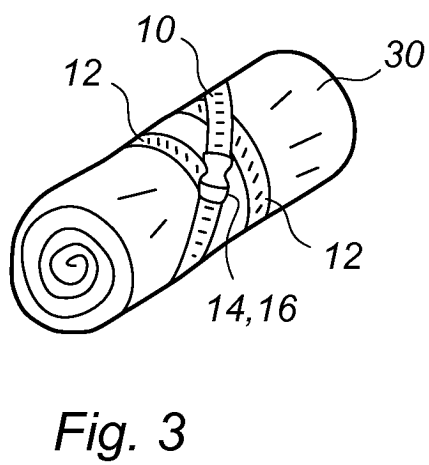
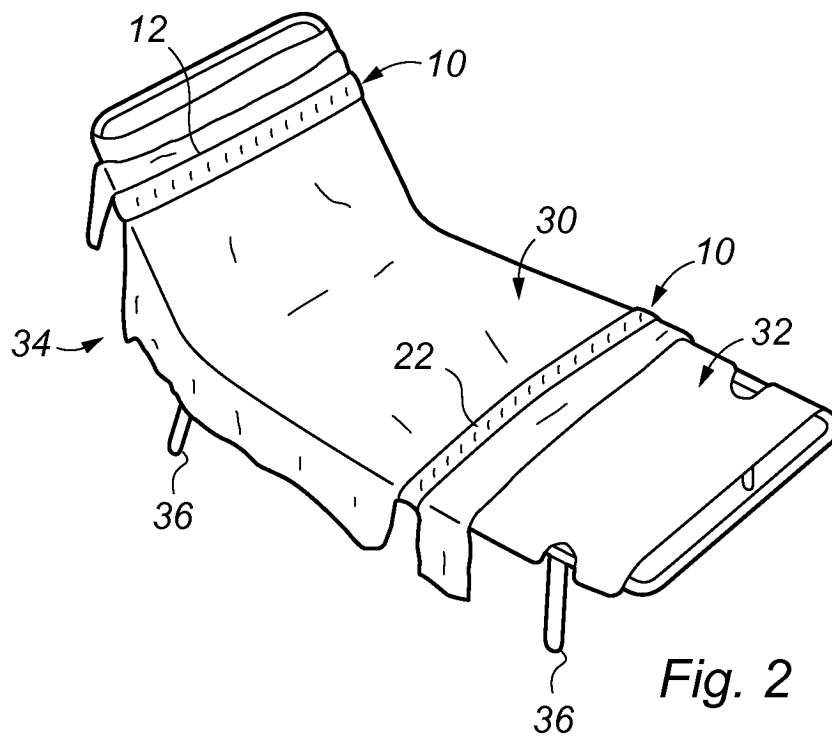
[0022] Figures 6 and 7 also show adjustable connector arrangements, specifically, a button 50 and plurality of button holes 52 in Figure 6, and a hook 54 and a plurality of eyelets 56 in Figure 7.

[0023] The invention is not restricted to the details of the foregoing embodiments, which are merely exemplary of the invention. For example, the dimensions and properties of the webbing strap can be altered to suit different applications, the manner of releasably interconnecting the free ends of the webbing strap could also be altered, and the uses for the retaining device of the invention could also be different, all without departing from the scope of the invention.

Claims

1. A retaining device (10) suitable, in use, for holding a towel (30) in place on a sun lounger (32), the retaining device (10) comprising a resiliently extendible member (12) having at each end, a connector (14, 16), the connectors (14, 16) being adapted for mutual releasable engagement to form a continuous band when connected to one another.
2. A retaining device (10) as claimed in claim 1, wherein the resiliently extendible member (12) comprises an elasticated strap.
3. A retaining device (10) as claimed in claim 2, wherein the elasticated strap (12) is of a flat tape type.
4. A retaining device (10) as claimed in claim 2, wherein the resiliently extendible member (12) comprises a length of elasticated webbing between 25 and 40mm in width, approximately 1mm in thickness and having a length of 800 to 1000mm when un-stretched.
5. A retaining device (10) as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein modulus of elasticity of the resiliently extendible member (12) is in the range of 600 to 800 KPa.
6. A retaining device (10) as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the connectors (14, 16) are permanently affixed to the ends resiliently extendible member (12).
7. A retaining device (10) as claimed in any of claims 1 to 5, wherein the length of the resiliently extendible member (12) is adjustable.
8. A retaining device (10) as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the connectors (14, 16) comprise any one or more of the group comprising: a hook (54) and an eye (56); a set of hook-and-loop type fasteners; a clip; a set of buckle clip connectors (14, 16); a button (50) and one or more button holes (52); a hook (54) and one or more eyelets (56); and a set of interlocking loops (40, 42).
9. A retaining device (10) as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the resiliently extendible member (12) comprises an elasticated web with indicia thereon.
10. A retaining device (10) as claimed in claim 9, wherein the indicia comprises any one or more of the group comprising: a corporate slogan; a marketing message; a flight number; a trade mark; and a personal name.
11. A retaining device (10) as claimed in claim 9 or claim 10, wherein the indicia is printed onto the resiliently extendible member (12).
12. A retaining device (10) as claimed in claim 9 or claim 10, wherein the indicia is woven into the resiliently extendible member (12).
13. A luggage (38) identifying band comprising a retaining device (10) according to any preceding claim.
14. A towel roll (30) carrier comprising a retaining device (10) according to any preceding claim.
15. A general purpose strap comprising a retaining device (10) according to any preceding claim.







EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 13 17 4454

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
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			A47C
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
The Hague		19 August 2013	Monné, Eric
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 13 17 4454

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
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