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(54) **Arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display**

(57) The present invention concerns to an arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display, having a support structure (70) comprising, attached to one another:

- an assembly panel (10) with openings (11, 12) for arranging there through the enclosure body (50) of each push-button switch of the arrangement;
- a printed circuit board (20); and
- a shielding plate (30).

The enclosure body (50) of each pushbutton switch comprises:

- an appendix being arranged through through-openings (11, 23, 31) defined in said assembly panel (10), printed circuit board (20) and plate (30); and
- a connector (57) attached to the enclosure body (50) that is opposite to and engaged with a connector (21) of the printed circuit board (20),

Each enclosure body (50) is attached to the support structure (70) by removable immobilizing means of said appendix with respect to said shielding plate (30).

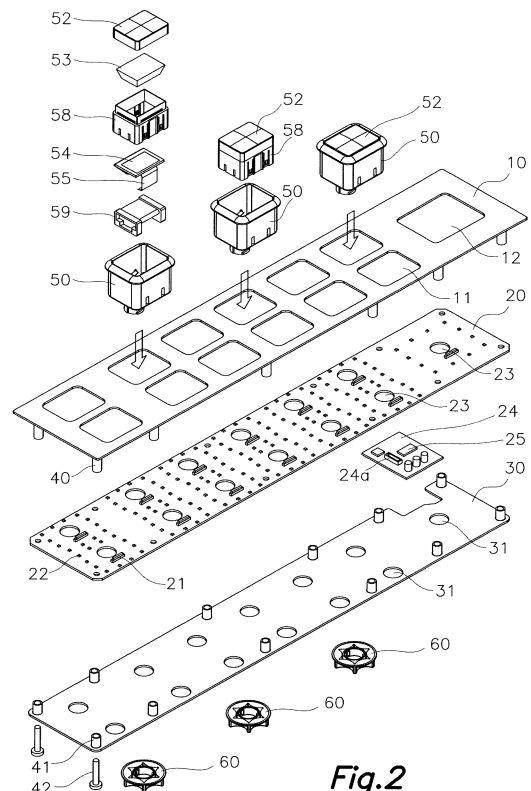


Fig.2

Description

Field of the art

[0001] The present invention relates to an arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display, in particular a display with OLED (short for "organic light-emitting diode") diodes included in the push-button head and supported on a push-button actuator member having limited linear shift play inside an enclosure body that has an affixed micro switch, which is activated by said linear shift when the push-button is operated.

[0002] The invention provides, to that effect, a support structure of a plurality of pushbutton switches that are coupled to a printed circuit board forming a functional arrangement, so that any of the pushbutton switches of the arrangement may be easily replaced without the need of handling connection cables.

[0003] Each of the pushbutton switches further comprises an enclosure body made of a light-conducting material that is associated in said support structure to lighting LED diodes so as to provide lighting to a frame of said enclosure body. Said LED diodes may in turn be connected via said printed circuit board to a control unit for their dynamic activation, generating movement effects in the luminous aureole provided.

State of the prior art

[0004] Switching devices that include a display in their head are known from documents EP-A1-1347363 and EP-A1-1589551.

[0005] Patent applications EP-A1- 2110833 and EP-A1- 2211361 describe such pushbutton switches with and OLED display.

[0006] US-B1-8410383 describes, as prior art, a plurality of pushbutton switches grouped together in a unit via a support structure according to the general characteristics defined in the preamble of claim 1, i.e. formed by an assembly panel, a printed circuit board and a shielding plate fixed to one another in a sandwich arrangement, but where each pushbutton switch is coupled to the support structure through auxiliary boards and support frames attached to the printed circuit board, so that when there is a need of removing one of the pushbutton switches, for example in order to substitute it because of malfunctioning, such a substitution task is a very laborious task, because in order to carry it out it is necessary, first, uncoupling the whole support structure so that the assembly panel can be removed and, then, individually uncoupling the damaged pushbutton switch from its respective support frame.

[0007] In connection with the latter background art, the invention proposes a support structure and integration means of a plurality of push-buttons in an assisting and/or connecting printed circuit board (it may include local control units) that involve a remarkable simplification with respect to said background art and an improvement of

the capabilities, especially with respect to the mentioned substitution of a damaged pushbutton switch, being possible to perform such a task in a simple manner without having to uncouple the whole support structure but only individually the pushbutton switch.

Disclosure of the invention

[0008] According to what has been set forth above, the invention is intended for grouping an arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display in an operating unit or block, each of which comprises a display, visible from outside, installed in an actuator member of the push-button that exhibits limited linear shift play inside an enclosure body that has an affixed micro switch, which is activated by said linear shift when the push-button is operated. Said display is covered by a lens and by a transparent cover.

[0009] In order to group a plurality of pushbutton switches with a display and even other standard pushbutton switches, a support structure has been provided comprising:

- an assembly panel with a plurality of openings for arranging there through the enclosure body of each pushbutton switch of the arrangement, with the support of a bezel on the sides of said opening, on said panel;
- a printed circuit board wherein connection and/or control elements of said display and micro switches of said plurality of pushbutton switches are arranged;
- a shielding plate of said printed circuit board; and
- separating or spacing columns and attachment means linking said panel, printed circuit board and plate in an overlapping arrangement.

[0010] According to the proposal of this invention, the enclosure body of each pushbutton switch comprises, in turn:

- an appendix intended to be arranged through through-openings defined in said panel, printed circuit board and plate, said through-openings facing each other (for example being vertically aligned) in said support structure; and
- the enclosure body includes, attached or integrated thereto, a first insertion connector that is opposite to and engaged with, in an assembled situation, a second connector provided and arranged in said printed circuit board for connecting the corresponding display and the micro switch.

[0011] In addition, removable immobilizing means of said appendix with respect to said shielding plate have been provided, through which each enclosure body is attached to said support structure. According to a preferred embodiment, said immobilizing means comprise a nut with a coupling configuration to be coupled to said

tubular shaft by a respective complementary coupling configuration integrated with or attached to the tubular shaft, so that said nut is tight against said shielding plate, suitably securing the pushbutton switch. Said coupling configurations are, for a preferred embodiment, bayonet coupling configurations, although, for other embodiments, less preferred, other kind of coupling configurations are possible, such as those formed by complementary screw threads.

[0012] The printed circuit board includes one or several LEDs that, in an assembled situation, are close to walls of said enclosure body of each of the pushbutton switches, said enclosure being made of a light-conducting material so that the lighting of said LEDs is transferred through the enclosure body to said bezel above the panel.

[0013] Other characteristics of the invention will appear in the following detailed description of some embodiments.

Brief description of the drawings

[0014] The above and other advantages and characteristics will be more fully understood from the following detailed description of embodiments in reference to the attached drawings, which are to be taken by way of illustration, not limitation, wherein:

Fig. 1A shows an axonometric view of an arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display included in a support structure, the side provided with the push-buttons being visible;

Fig. 1B shows an axonometric view of an arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display included in a support structure, the side provided with the shielding plate and the securing nuts of the push-buttons being visible;

Fig. 2 is an exploded axonometric view wherein the elements conforming the support structure are shown, as well as an exploded view of the first push-button with its main components, a second push-button with the elements conforming the actuator member being mounted, while it is shown removed from the enclosure body, and a third fully mounted push-button, shown removed from the support structure;

Fig. 3 shows an enlarged exploded axonometric view of all the main components of the push-button, together with a portion of the printed circuit board provided with LEDs wherein said push-button is included;

Fig. 4 shows an enlarged cross-sectional view of a push-button engaged with the support structure.

Detailed description of embodiments

[0015] The invention proposes an arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display, wherein said display 54, visible from the outside, is ar-

ranged in an actuator member of the push-button 58 having limited linear shift play inside an enclosure body 50 that includes an affixed micro switch, which is activated by said linear shift when the push-button is operated.

[0016] Said arrangement of pushbutton switches is formed by means of a support structure 70 that comprises, as shown in Figures 1 and 2:

- an assembly panel 10 provided with a plurality of openings 11, 12 for arranging there through the enclosure body 50 of each pushbutton switch of the arrangement, with the support of a bezel 50a on said panel 10;
- a printed circuit board 20 wherein connection and/or control elements of said display 54 and switch are arranged;
- a shielding plate 30 of said printed circuit board 20; and
- separating columns 40 41 and attachment means 42 linking said panel 10, printed circuit board 20 and plate 30 in an overlapping arrangement.

[0017] According to this invention, the enclosure body 50 of each of the pushbutton switches comprises, as shown in Figure 3 and especially in Figure 4:

- at least one appendix being arranged through openings 11, 23, 31 defined in said panel 10, printed circuit board 20 and plate 30, said openings 11, 23, 31 facing each other in said support structure 70, as shown in Figure 4; and
- at least one connector 57 attached to the enclosure body 50 that is opposite to and engaged with, in an assembled situation, a connector 21 provided and arranged in the printed circuit board 20 for connecting said display 54 and said micro switch 16.

[0018] Each enclosure body 50 is attached to the support structure 70 by removable immobilizing means of said appendix relative to said shielding plate 30.

[0019] The enclosure body 50, according to a structure known per se, has a cup shaped configuration that incorporates a connector 56 in its bottom for a flexible, flat, multifilament conductor 55 of said display 54, and said appendix is made up by a tubular shaft 51 that extends from the bottom of the enclosure body 50.

[0020] For the embodiment shown in Figure 4, the enclosure body 50 comprises a second connector 56a for the connection of the micro switch 16, being both connectors 56, 56a electrically connected to the connector 57.

[0021] For another embodiment, not illustrated, at the bottom of the enclosure body 50 a small printed circuit board is arranged, to which the connector 56 and the micro switch 16 are attached (the latter, directly or through the second connector 56a), and their metallic terminals are welded to conductive tracks of the small circuit printed board, said small printed circuit board be-

ing configured and arranged to electrically connect the connector 57 with the connector 56 (and thus with the display 54) and with the micro switch 16.

[0022] On the other hand, although not shown in the appended figures, two connectors are arranged at the lower face of the printed circuit board 20, one for electrical supply thereof and the other for bidirectional data communication (such as a USB connector) with a "host" of central computer, for example of an amusement machine, allowing the hot connexion/disconnection, i.e. the hot swap, of the whole assembly with respect to said host, to which purpose the latter must be prepared, both at a hardware (electrical protection devices) and at a software level.

[0023] Said immobilizing means comprise, in a preferred embodiment, a nut 60, for instance a bayonet coupling one, associable to said tubular shaft 51, which includes a complementary coupling configuration, so that said nut 60 is tight against said shielding plate 30.

[0024] The printed circuit board 20 includes one or several LEDs 22 that, in an assembled situation, are close to walls of said enclosure body 50, which is made of a light-conducting material so that the lighting of said LEDs is transferred through the enclosure body 58 to said bezel 50a above the panel 10. This printed circuit board and/or an auxiliary board includes a microcontroller 25 (in figure 2 it is the auxiliary board 24 the one which includes the microcontroller 25) governing all the displays 54 and the operation of the lighting LEDs 22 of the pushbutton switches of the arrangement. The printed circuit board 20 further includes, in its face opposite the push-buttons, connectors for connecting other standard pushbutton switches lacking an OLED display.

[0025] The display 59 of each pushbutton switch is made up by a set of organic light-emitting diodes OLEDs, and the control device of each display is arranged on the printed circuit board 20 or on said auxiliary board 24 connected to said printed circuit board 20, for example through a connector 24a of the auxiliary board 24 to be coupled to a complementary connector (not shown) of the printed circuit board 20. The display 54 is retained inside an actuator body 58 (constituting the above called actuator member 58) by a support 59 presenting jambs that are clamped by side elastic pins of the push-button actuator 58. The actuator body 58 comprises a first housing for said display 54 and a second housing above thereof for a lens 53 and a cover 52.

[0026] As can be seen in Fig. 2, the panel 10 comprises openings 11, 12 of at least two sizes so as to house pushbutton bodies 50 of different dimensions.

Claims

1. An arrangement of pushbutton switches with a programmable display, said display (54) of each of the pushbutton switches being arranged, visible from the outside, in an actuator member (58) of the push-but-

ton having limited linear shift play inside an enclosure body (50) that includes an affixed micro switch (16), which is activated by said linear shift when the pushbutton is operated, said arrangement of pushbutton switches including a support structure (70) comprising:

- an assembly panel (10) provided with a plurality of openings (11, 12) for arranging there through the enclosure body (50) of each push-button switch of the arrangement, with the support of a bezel (50a) on said assembly panel (10);
- a printed circuit board (20) wherein connection and/or control elements of said display (54) and switch are arranged;
- a shielding plate (30) of said printed circuit board (20);
- separating columns (40) (41) and attachment means (42) linking said assembly panel (10), printed circuit board (20) and plate (30) in an overlapping arrangement,

characterised in that the enclosure body (50) of each of the pushbutton switches comprises:

- at least one appendix being arranged through through-openings (11, 23, 31) defined in said panel (10), printed circuit board (20) and plate (30), said openings (11, 23, 31) being facing each other in said support structure (70); and
- at least one connector (57) attached to the enclosure body (50) that is opposite to and engaged with, in an assembled situation, a connector (21) provided and arranged in the printed circuit board (20) for connecting said display (54) and micro switch (16),

and **in that** each enclosure body (50) is attached to the support structure (70) by removable immobilizing means of said appendix with respect to said shielding plate (30).

2. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said enclosure body (50) has a cup shaped configuration that incorporates a connector (56) in its bottom for a flexible, flat, multifilament conductor (55) of said display (54), and a second connector (56a) for connecting said micro switch (16), and **in that** said appendix is made up by a tubular shaft (51) that extends from the bottom of the enclosure body (50).
3. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 2 **characterised in that** said immobilizing means comprise a nut (60) with a coupling configuration to be coupled to said tubular shaft (51) by a respective complementary coupling configuration integrated with or attached to the tubular shaft (51),

so that said nut (60) is tight against said shielding plate (30).

4. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 3, **characterised in that** said complementary configurations are bayonet coupling configurations. 5

5. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1, **characterised in that** said printed circuit board (20) includes one or several LEDs (22) that, in an assembled situation, are close to walls of said enclosure body (50), which is made of a light-conducting material so that the lighting of said LEDs (22) is transferred through the enclosure body (50) to said bezel (50a) above the panel (10). 10
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6. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said display (54) is made up by a set of organic light-emitting diodes OLEDs, and **in that** the control device of each display is arranged on the printed circuit board (20) or on an auxiliary board (24) connected to said printed circuit board (20). 20
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7. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said display (54) is retained inside an actuator body (58), which constitutes said actuator member (58), by a support (59) presenting jambs that are clamped by side elastic pins of the push-button actuator body (58). 30

8. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said actuator body (58) comprises a first housing for said display (54) and a second housing above thereof for a lens (53) and a cover (52). 35

9. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said printed circuit board (20) includes connectors for connecting other standard pushbutton switches lacking an OLED display. 40

10. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said assembly panel (10) comprises openings (11, 12) of at least two sizes so as to house push-button bodies (50) of different dimensions. 45
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11. An arrangement of pushbutton switches according to claim 1 **characterised in that** said printed circuit board (20) and/or said auxiliary board (24) includes a microcontroller (25) governing all the displays (54) of the pushbutton switches of the arrangement. 55

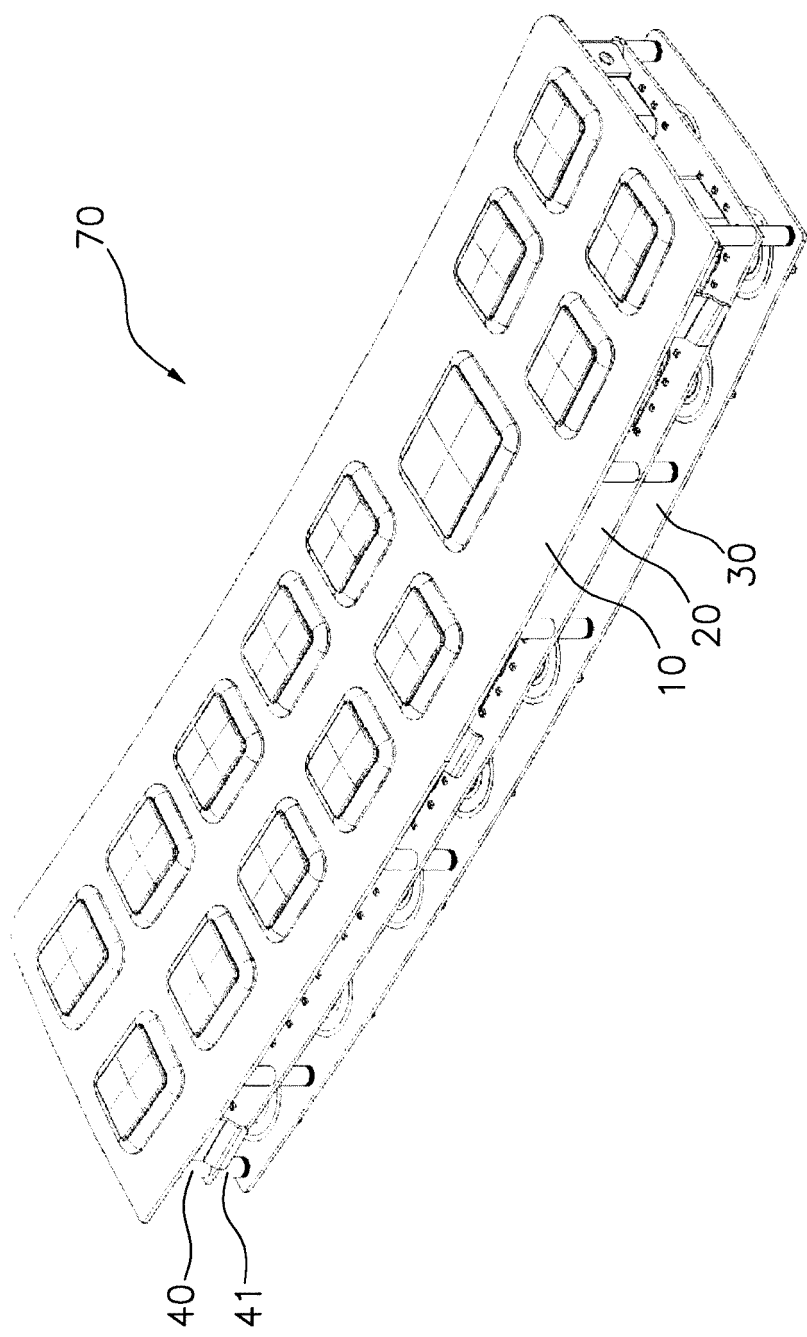


Fig. 1a

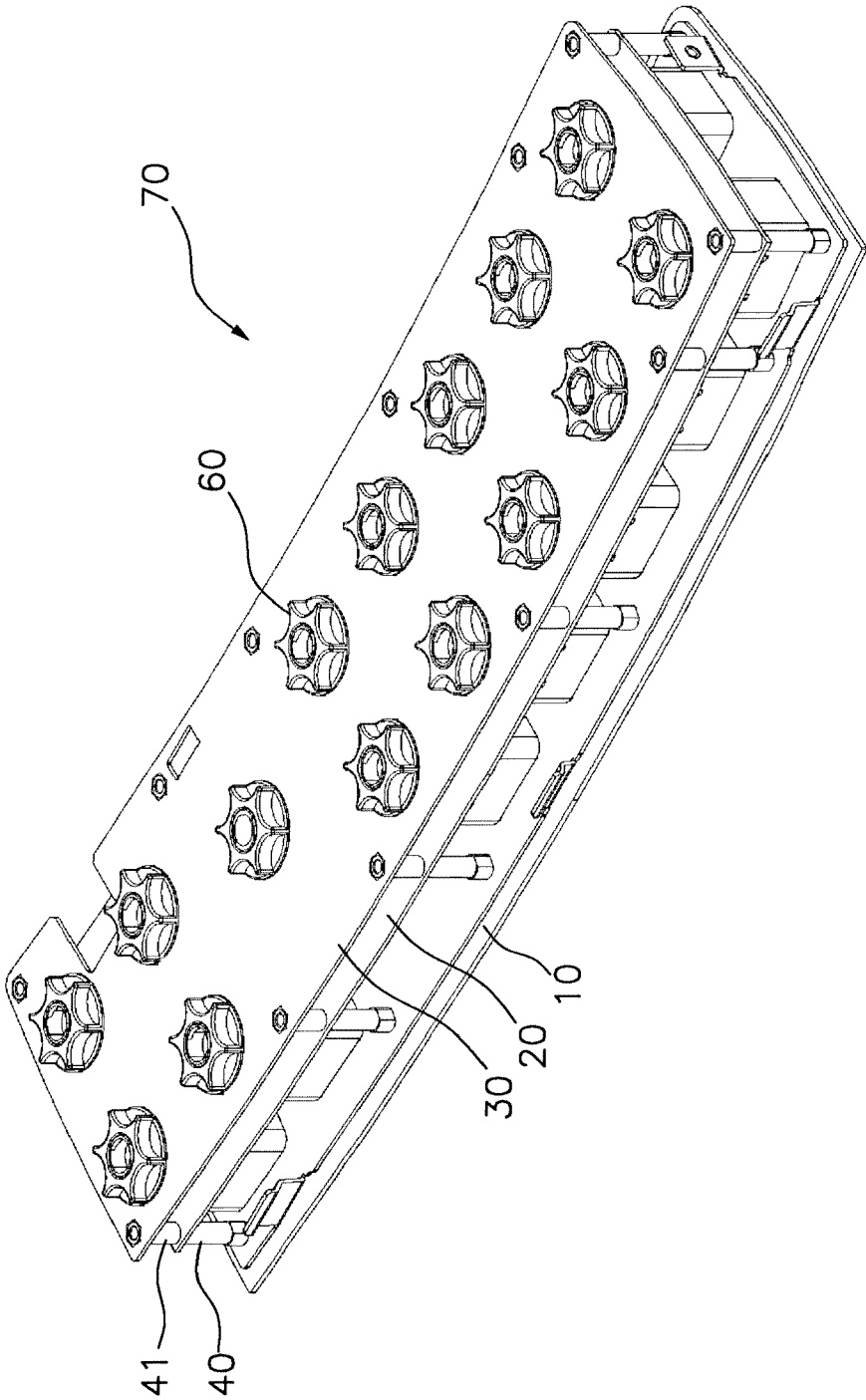


Fig. 1b

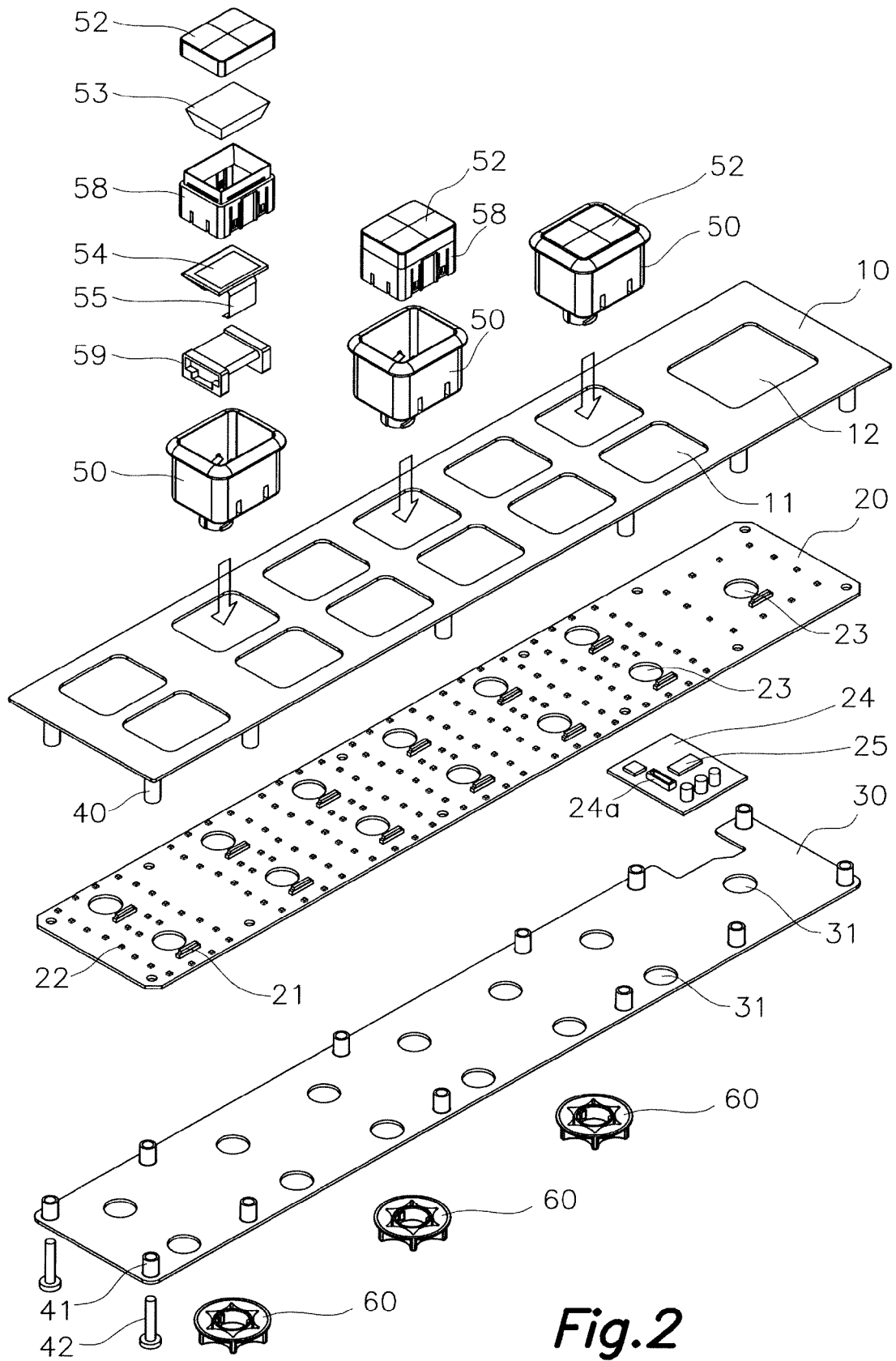


Fig.2

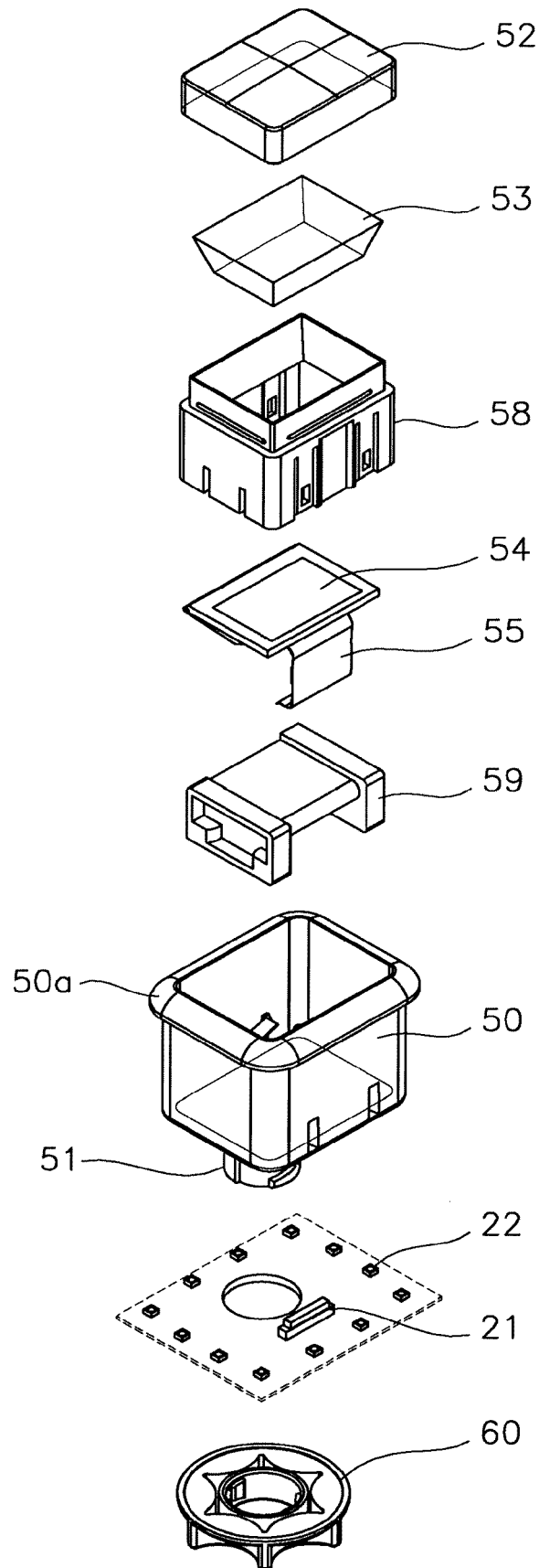


Fig.3

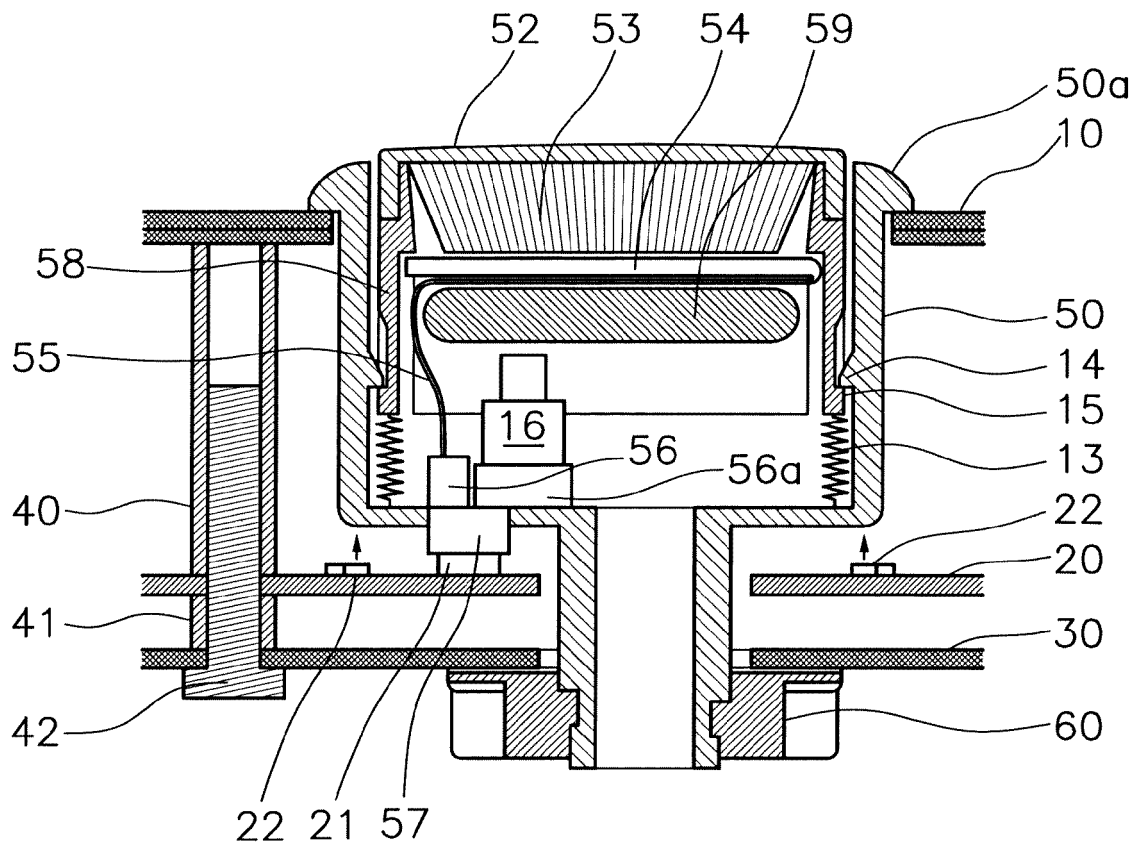


Fig. 4



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EP 14 38 0029

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Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 6 February 2015	Examiner Bilard, Stéphane
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
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