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(54) **Container having a tab and corresponding sheet material and tab**

(57) A container 1 for consumer goods, comprising: a housing 2 comprising a first wall having an edge that defines at least part of an opening 12 through which consumer goods can be removed and a flap 3 for covering the opening 12 in the housing 2. The flap 3 is moveable between a closed position in which the opening 12 is covered and an open position in which consumer goods may be removed through the opening 12. The container 1 further comprises a sheet material 13 comprising a first portion connected to the flap and a second portion having a tab 16 for mechanically engaging with an edge 17 of an engaging wall 6 of the housing to hold the flap 3 in the closed position.

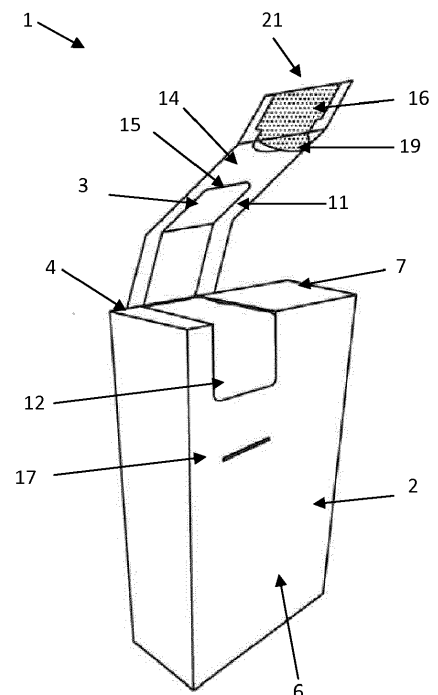


FIG. 1

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a container for consumer goods, the container having a flap for covering an opening in the container. The present invention also relates to a sheet material element or label for use with such a container.

[0002] The invention finds particular application as a container for elongate smoking articles, such as smoking articles (including cigarettes).

[0003] It is known to package consumer articles in containers formed from folded laminar blanks. By way of example, elongate smoking articles, such as cigarettes and cigars, are often sold in rigid box shaped containers, such as hinged lid containers having a box portion and a lid connected to the box about a hinge line extending across the rear wall of the container, a so called Flip-Top™ box. Such packs are typically constructed from one-piece laminar cardboard blanks. In some cases, the container further includes an inner frame at least partly wrapped around the consumer articles. This may provide further rigidity to the container and protect the consumer articles. In use, the lid is pivoted about the hinge line to open the pack and so gain access to the smoking articles held in the box.

[0004] Alternatively, elongate smoking articles are also often sold in soft packs having a box portion wrapped around the consumer articles. Typically, soft packs are constructed from a laminar blank made of a thinner, more easily deformable material, such as paper.

[0005] A first type of soft pack comprises a paper shell wrapped around the front, back and sides of the pack with the inner liner (metal foil wrapper) forming the top wall of the pack. The paper shell for such a soft pack may come off a reel and can optionally include an envelope fold in the bottom of the pack.

[0006] A second type of pack (known as a protected soft pack) is still made with a paper outer shell. However, in such packs the outer shell is made by folding a flat blank that covers all the outer walls of the pack. A hinged cover flap may then be made by perforations in the paper shell. Typically the sheet material (usually paper) used for a protected soft pack is heavier and /or thicker than the sheet material used for the first type of soft pack.

[0007] It is known to enclose consumer goods, for example a bundle of smoking articles, in a resealable wrapper or container. Such a wrapper including the consumer goods may be inserted in a hinge-lid container, a protected soft pack or form part of a soft pack, and/or such a container may be a protected soft pack or a soft pack.

[0008] For example, EP-A-0 944 539 discloses a hinge-lid pack of smoking articles in which the smoking articles are provided in a sealed enclosure of a layer of barrier material having an access opening defined therein. The access opening is covered by a cover layer with a permanently tacky, adhesive or sticky surface, which can be engaged with the layer of barrier material to reseal the enclosure after the first opening. A frame against

which the cover layer may be pressed is provided in the sealed enclosure between the smoking articles and the layer of barrier material.

[0009] DE-A-102 08 026 discloses a pack for smoking articles which is provided with an insert including one or more adhesive labels which can be used to decorate the outer surfaces of the pack after opening.

[0010] WO-A-2011/076405 discloses a wrapped container of consumer goods comprising, a container, at least one bundle of consumer goods housed within the container and wrapped in an inner liner, an outer wrapper, wrapped around the filled container; and at least one adhesive label removably mounted on a separate carrier element and having a resealable adhesive. The carrier element is provided inside the outer wrapper. The inner liner comprises a tab portion defined by one or more lines of weakness, wherein the tab portion can be at least partially separated from the remainder of the inner liner in order to provide an opening through which the consumer goods can be removed. The adhesive label is adapted to retain the tab portion of the inner liner in a closed position over the opening.

[0011] It is known to provide a protected soft pack in which a hinged cover flap can be used to cover or close the access opening when consumer articles are not being removed and access to the inside of the container is not required.

[0012] However, such cover flaps may not form a sufficiently tight seal or bond with the wall of the container with which they engage. Therefore, in some cases, it is known to provide a releasable adhesive sheet material (which may be a label) over at least part of the cover flap to help retain the cover flap in a closed position. However, the effectiveness of the adhesive may diminish, for example, with repeated opening and closing of the flap and associated sticking and unsticking of the adhesive sheet material or label on a wall or walls of the pack.

[0013] It would therefore be desirable to provide a container for consumer goods having a hinged cover flap that can be used to cover or close the access opening in a reliable, repeatable manner. It would also be desirable to provide a container for consumer goods having a hinged cover flap that can be kept closed even if any glue or adhesive on a releasable adhesive sheet becomes contaminated or otherwise loses its effectiveness (for example, because of repeated opening and closing of the flap covering the opening or access opening in the housing or container).

[0014] The present invention in a first aspect provides a container for consumer goods, the container comprising: a housing comprising: a first wall having an edge that defines at least part of an opening through which consumer goods can be removed; and a flap for covering the opening in the housing, the flap being moveable between a closed position in which the opening is covered and an open position in which consumer goods may be removed through the opening; wherein the container further comprises a sheet material comprising a first portion

connected to the flap and a second portion having a tab for mechanically engaging with an edge of an engaging wall of the housing to hold the flap in the closed position.

[0015] The provision of a container including a sheet material having a first portion connected to the flap and a second portion having a tab for mechanically engaging with an edge of a wall of the housing results in a mechanism which can keep the pack closed even if the sheet material of itself does not have any or sufficient adhesion to effectively adhere to the engaging wall and thereby keep the flap in the closed position. This arrangement can also be easily applied to existing container designs using existing production lines and/or production techniques.

[0016] Preferably the tab releasably engages a slot or hole defined by the edge of the engaging wall of the housing. This provides a simple but effective closure.

[0017] Preferably the engaging wall is different from the first wall. This makes for an effective and simple to use opening and closing arrangement. However, alternative embodiments of the invention could also be used in arrangements where the engaging wall is the first wall. For example, it is possible to have a flap which folds from left to right (or right to left) over an access opening in the top wall of the container only. In such embodiments, the flap can be connected to the top wall at a first side, such as the left hand side, of the opening and the tab engages the top wall on a second side, such as the right hand side, of the access opening.

[0018] Preferably the engaging wall is a front wall of the housing. This makes for an effective and simple to use opening and closing arrangement. However, alternative embodiments of the invention could have alternative or additional engaging walls. For example and as discussed above, the engaging wall could be the top wall. Other walls or combinations of walls could also be used.

[0019] Preferably the first wall is a top wall or rear wall of the housing. Again, this helps make for an effective and simple to use opening and closing arrangement. However, alternative embodiments of the invention could have alternative or additional first walls. Other walls or combinations of walls could also be used.

[0020] Preferably the opening extends across at least part of the front wall and at least part of the top wall. This makes for an effective and simple to use closeable access opening. An opening extending from a flap hinge in the rear wall near its top and its edge with the top wall, and then across a portion of the top and front walls makes for an access opening which can allow efficient access to articles inside the container. However, alternative embodiments of the invention could have the opening in alternative walls or combinations of walls. For example and as discussed above, the opening could extend only across part of the top wall. The opening could be provided in any wall or combination of adjacent walls.

[0021] Preferably at least the first portion of the sheet material is provided with an adhesive. This provides a simple way for connecting the first portion of the sheet

material to the flap. In preferred embodiments, other portions of the sheet material, such as the second portion, are also provided with an adhesive. This allows the sheet material to adhere to the housing without necessarily requiring the tab to be engaging with the edge of the engaging wall. This can be particularly advantageous since it allows the sheet to be easily attached and secured to the housing during manufacture and storage, without requiring any complex assembly for locating the tab in a slot or hole on the engaging wall during manufacture. Accordingly, when a consumer first receives the container, they can interact with the sheet material, for example by pulling on the tab, to move the flap into an open position whereby they can access the consumer goods. The consumer can then later engage the tab with the edge of the engaging wall to hold the flap in the closed position, thus closing the access opening. Any adhesive on the sheet material can additionally help to seal the opening to maintain the freshness of the consumer goods.

[0022] Preferably the flap is connected to the edge of the opening in the first wall by a hinge line.

[0023] Preferably the tab comprises a projection for releasably engaging the edge of the engaging wall of the housing. The projection may extend away from the flap to which the sheet material is connected or attached. However, in some preferred embodiments, the projection extends towards the flap to which the sheet material is connected or attached. This can prevent accidental opening of the container, since the projection will counteract any opening movements of the flap, until it is disengaged from the engaging wall.

[0024] Preferably the projection is formed by a cut or slot extending partially across the second portion of the sheet material. Such projections can be easily be made on production lines, for example by laser or mechanical cutting means.

[0025] Preferably the projection includes a curved or angled cut across a portion of the second portion of the sheet material which defines a hinged tab projection. This can facilitate engagement of the flap with the edge of the engaging wall, and can be particularly useful for helping the projection to be inserted into a slot or hole in the engaging wall, if such a slot or hole is present.

[0026] Preferably the projection is provided in an internal region of the sheet material and points towards the flap. This helps ensure that the projection engages the engaging wall or slot in a manner which opposes the opening and closing direction of the flap. This makes for secure closure.

[0027] Preferably the second portion of the sheet material includes a stiffer engaging portion which has an edge matching the edge of the cut and which forms the tab or projection. This helps ensure a resilient tab which is better able to survive repeated opening and closing. The portion of the sheet material defining the projection or tab may be made of a material which is stiffer than the remainder of the sheet material. Alternatively or additionally, the portion of the sheet material defining the projec-

tion or tab may have a thickness that is greater than the remainder of the sheet material, to increase its stiffness. The increased thickness may be achieved by including an extra layer or piece of material on the portion of the sheet material defining the projection or tab.

[0028] Containers according to the invention find particular application as packs for elongate smoking articles such as, for example, cigarettes, cigars or cigarillos. Preferably, the container is a soft pack, such as a protected soft pack. It will be appreciated that through appropriate choices of the dimensions thereof, containers according to the invention may be designed for different numbers of conventional size, king size, super-king size, slim or super-slim cigarettes. Alternatively, other consumer goods may be housed inside the container.

[0029] Through an appropriate choice of the dimensions thereof, containers according to the invention may be designed to hold different total numbers of smoking articles, or different arrangements of smoking articles. For example, through an appropriate choice of the dimensions thereof, containers according to the invention may be designed to hold a total of between ten and thirty smoking articles.

[0030] Preferably the housing is formed from a laminar blank that is folded to define at least front, rear and side the walls of the housing. In some preferred embodiments, the blank additionally defines top and bottom walls of the housing. Preferably the blank is formed from a paper or card material having a basis weight of between 60 and 180 grams per square metre, more preferably between 70 and 160 grams per square metre. In some preferred embodiments the paper or card material has a basis weight of between 75 and 110 grams per square metre, or between 140 and 160 grams per square metre.

[0031] The invention in a second aspect provides a sheet material for use in securing a moveable flap for covering an opening in a container for consumer goods, the sheet material comprising a first portion having an adhesive for connection to the moveable flap and a second portion having a tab for mechanically engaging with an edge on an engaging wall of the housing to hold the flap in a closed position.

[0032] The sheet material having a first portion connected to the flap and a second portion having a tab for mechanically engaging with an edge of or in a wall of the housing results in a mechanism which can keep the pack closed even if the sheet material of itself does not have sufficient adhesion to effectively adhere to the engaging wall and thereby keep the flap in the closed position.

[0033] Preferably the means for mechanically engaging the container is a hinged element defining a projection from the tab.

[0034] It shall be appreciated that any features described with reference to one aspect of the present invention are equally applicable to any other aspect of the invention.

[0035] Preferred embodiments of the invention in its various aspects will now be described by way of non-

limiting example with reference to the attached figures, in which:

Figures 1 and 2 are front schematic perspective views of a container embodying the invention with the mechanical engaging tab disengaged;

Figure 3 is a view corresponding to that of Figures 1 and 2 but with the mechanical engaging tab arranged ready to be engaged;

Figure 4 is a view corresponding to that of Figures 1 to 3 but with the mechanical engaging tab engaged; Figure 5 is an enlarged view of the mechanical engaging tab as shown in Figure 3; and

Figure 6 is a schematic side view of the container shown in Figure 3.

[0036] The terms "front", "back", "upper", "lower", "side", "top", "bottom" and other terms used to describe relative positions of the components of containers according to the invention refer to the container in its upright position with the flap at the top end and the hinge on or near the edge between the top and back walls. The terms "left" and "right" are used as reference to side walls of the container when the container is viewed from the front in its upright position. When the container is in the upright position and open, the cigarettes or other articles contained therein may be removed from the upper end of the container.

[0037] The term "longitudinal" refers to a direction from bottom to top or vice versa. The term "transverse" refers to a direction perpendicular to the longitudinal direction.

[0038] The container is preferably a rectangular parallelepiped comprising two wider walls spaced apart by two narrower walls.

[0039] The term "hinge line" refers to a line about which the flap may be pivoted in order to open the container, or a line about which the tab or projection may pivot to help engagement or disengagement with the engaging wall. A hinge line may be, for example, a fold line or a score line in the panel forming the back wall of the container.

[0040] Referring to Figures 1 to 6, a container 1 has a housing 2 with a flap 3 that is hinged to the housing along a flap hinge line 4 extending substantially horizontally along the back or rear wall 5 of the housing near the housing edge between the top 7 and back walls 5 of the container. The flap 3 is defined by cuts along its three sides 11 other than the hinge edge 4 and can be lifted to create an access opening or opening 12. A bundle of cigarettes (not shown) is housed in the housing 2 of the container 1. The bundle of cigarettes may be wrapped in an inner liner. The overall size and construction of the container is substantially the same as that of a standard soft pack or protective soft pack.

[0041] The container has a front wall 6, a left side wall 10, a right side wall 9, a back wall 5 and a bottom wall 8.

[0042] A sheet material 13 which may be a label is secured to the flap by, for example, adhesive on its un-

derside 14. At its end 21 distal from the flap hinge 4, the sheet material 13 includes a tab 16 which can slip into and thereby mechanically engage a slot 17 in the front wall 6 of the container to thereby secure the sheet material 12 and hence the flap 3 adhered thereto in a closed position over the access opening or opening 12.

[0043] The flap 3 has a rear or back edge 4 along the edge between the top and back walls of the container. The left, front and side edges 11 of the flap are defined by frangible lines of weakness (for example perforations) which are broken to create an opening 12 in the housing 2 on first use of the container to thereby access the cigarettes or other consumer article held within the container housing. The sheet material 13 may contain adhesive along its entire lower surface 14 for releasably connecting the sheet material 13 to the top 7 and front 6 walls of the container to thereby aid the closure of the flap 3 in its closed position. The adhesive of the sheet material 13 should be present to exist on at least the portion of the sheet material which is connected to the flap 3. It should preferably also be on portions 18 of the sheet material 13 which, when the flap 3 is closed, should lie alongside and in contact with the housing 2 so as to help hold it in place. However, the preferred embodiment of the invention does not include adhesive material on or immediately adjacent the tab portion 16 so that a consumer can easily interact with the tab 16 by gripping or holding it without coming into contact with the adhesive.

[0044] The embodiment of the invention shown in the attached figures has a flap 3 and corresponding opening 12 extending from a hinge edge 4 in the back wall 5 near its top edge, along a portion of the top 7 and front 8 walls of the housing 2. However, embodiments of the invention may also include a flap and corresponding opening extending along a portion of only one wall such as for example the top wall with a flap having a hinge edge on its left hand side only on the top wall of the container, with the slot being provided at the right hand side of the top wall to receive the tab, and with the rear, right and front edges of the flap having the frangible lines of weakness which are broken to define a flap and corresponding opening or axis opening. Alternative embodiments of the invention can therefore include an opening or flap in any of the container walls, or in any combination of connected or adjacent walls.

[0045] Referring to Figures 4 to 6, a tab 16 is defined by a curved cut out 19 defined by frangible lines of weakness 20 towards the distal end 21 of the sheet material 13 and arranged to point back towards the flap 3. The curved cut out is hinged about a fold line 22 such that it can be moved relative to the remainder of the sheet material for insertion into the slot 17 in the engaging wall 16 of the housing or container. The attached figures show the tab as including a projection defined by a curved portion facing or pointing back up towards the opening or axis opening. However, alternative embodiments include projections of any shape facing downwards in a way from the opening. Such alternative shapes might include tri-

angular or angular cut outs or projections.

[0046] The portion of the sheet material defining the projection or tab may be made of a material which is stiffer than the remainder of the sheet material. Alternatively or additionally, the portion of the sheet material defining the projection or tab may have a thickness that is greater than the remainder of the sheet material, to increase its stiffness. The increased thickness may be provided by including an extra layer of material on the portion of the sheet material defining the projection or tab.

Claims

1. A container for consumer goods, the container comprising:
 - a housing comprising:
 - a first wall having an edge that defines at least part of an opening through which consumer goods can be removed; and
 - a flap for covering the opening in the housing, the flap being moveable between a closed position in which the opening is covered and an open position in which consumer goods may be removed through the opening;
 - wherein the container further comprises a sheet material comprising a first portion connected to the flap and a second portion having a tab for mechanically engaging with an edge of an engaging wall of the housing to hold the flap in the closed position.
2. A container according to claim 1, wherein the tab releasably engages a slot or hole defined by the edge of the engaging wall of the housing.
3. A container according to claim 1 or 2, wherein the engaging wall is different from the first wall.
4. A container according to claim 3, wherein the engaging wall is a front wall of the housing.
5. A container according to claim 3 or claim 4, wherein the first wall is a top or rear wall of the housing.
6. A container according to claim 5, wherein the opening extends across at least part of the front wall and at least part of the top wall.
7. A container according to any preceding claim, wherein at least the first portion of the sheet material is provided with an adhesive.
8. A container according to any preceding claim where-

in the flap is connected to an edge of the opening by a hinge line.

9. A container according to any preceding claim, wherein the tab comprises a projection for releasably engaging the edge of the engaging wall of the housing. 5

10. A container according to claim 9 wherein the projection is formed by a cut or slot extending partially across the second portion of the sheet material. 10

11. A container according to claim 10 wherein the projection includes a curved or angled cut across a portion of the second portion of the sheet material which defines a hinged tab projection. 15

12. A container according to any of claims 9 to 11 wherein the projection is provided in an internal region of the sheet material and points towards the flap. 20

13. A container according to any of claims 9 to 12 wherein the second portion of the sheet material includes a stiffer engaging portion which has an edge matching the edge of the cut and which forms the tab projection. 25

14. A sheet material for use in securing a moveable flap for covering an opening in a container for consumer goods, the sheet material comprising: 30

a first portion having an adhesive for connection to the moveable flap; and
a second portion having a tab for mechanically engaging with an edge on an engaging wall of the housing to hold the flap in a closed position. 35

15. A tab according to claim 1 wherein the means for mechanically engaging the container is a hinged element defining a projection from the tab. 40

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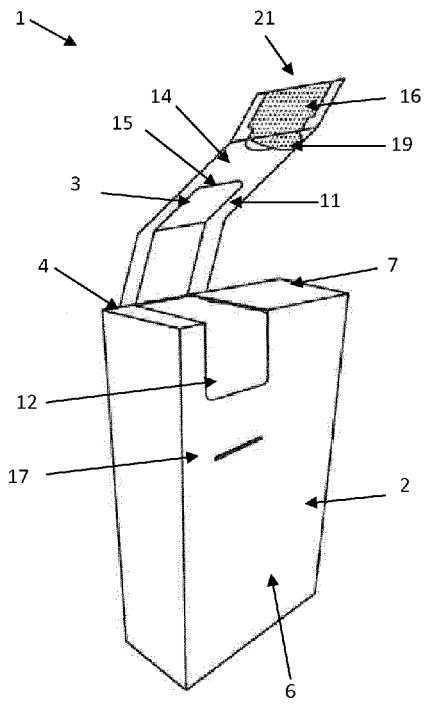


FIG. 1

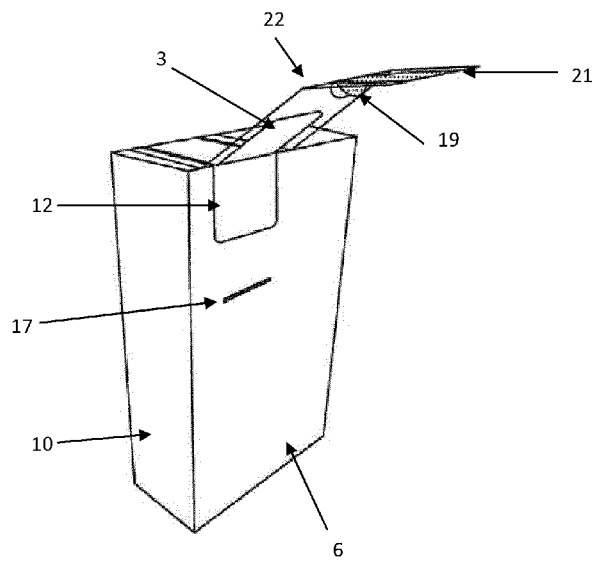


FIG. 2

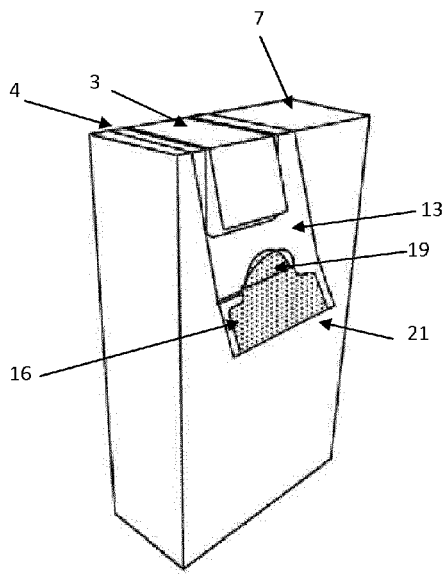


FIG. 3

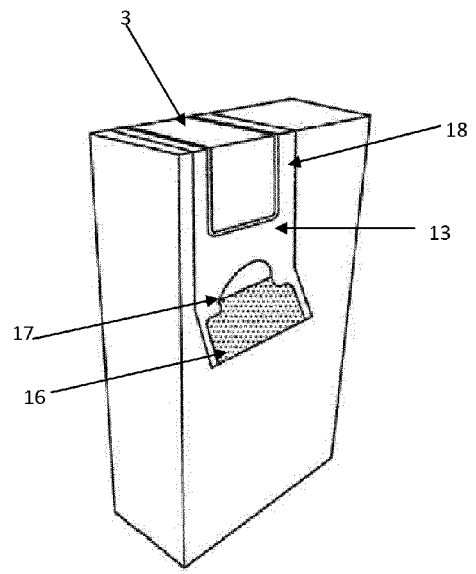


FIG. 4

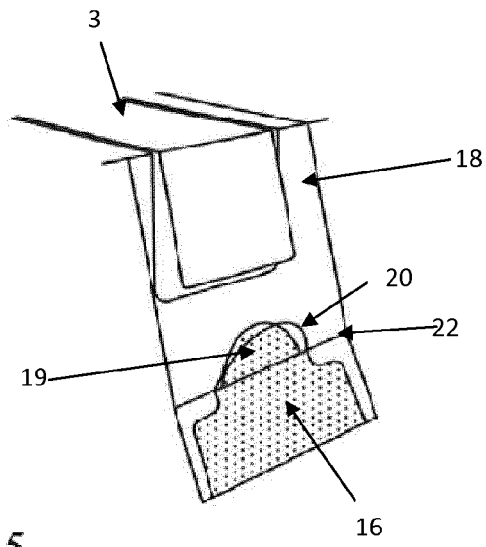


FIG. 5

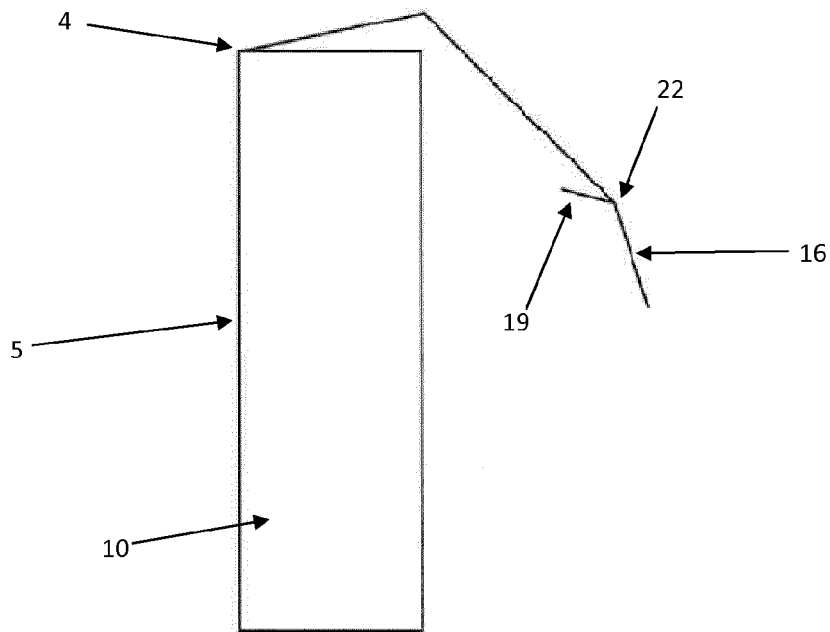


FIG. 6



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 14 20 0100

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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
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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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5 This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
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