



(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

(43) Date of publication:
16.08.2017 Bulletin 2017/33

(51) Int Cl.:
E04B 1/348 (2006.01) **E04G 27/00** (2006.01)
E04B 1/343 (2006.01) **E04B 1/344** (2006.01)
E04B 1/100 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **16155590.9**

(22) Date of filing: **12.02.2016**

(84) Designated Contracting States:
**AL AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB
GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MK MT NL NO
PL PT RO RS SE SI SK SM TR**
Designated Extension States:
BA ME
Designated Validation States:
MA MD

(72) Inventors:
• **Svedberg, Joakim**
832 53 FRÖSÖN (SE)
• **Sunnerheim Sjöberg, Hanna**
832 42 Frösön (SE)
• **Nilsson, Helena**
831 47 Östersund (SE)

(71) Applicant: **Safety Solutions Jonsereds AB**
832 96 Frösön (SE)

(74) Representative: **Awapatent AB**
P.O. Box 665
831 27 Östersund (SE)

(54) **ACCESS STRUCTURE FOR MODULAR BUILDINGS**

(57) A mountable and demountable access structure for modular buildings, wherein the access structure is self-contained and comprises a stackable framework module, which has an overall box shape in a mounting state. The framework module comprises vertical and horizontal edge beams, top interconnection portions, for interconnection with another framework module stacked on top of the framework module, bottom interconnection portions, for interconnection with another framework module on top of which the framework module is stacked, an entrance stairway connection portion, a floor and a roof.

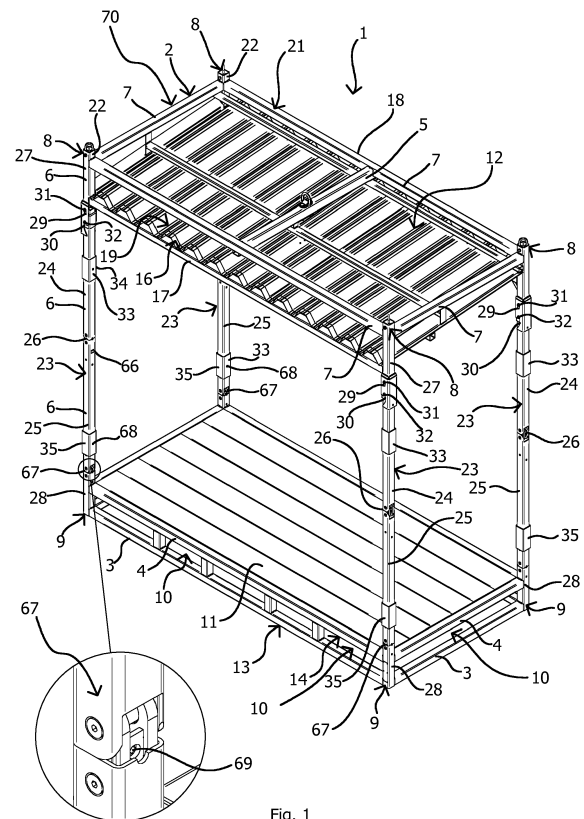


Fig. 1

Description

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to an access structure for modular buildings.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] A modular building is a building which is manufactured as individual modules, which can be arranged in different ways to form the building, by means of a single module or several modules. Often these kinds of buildings are temporarily used for some weeks up to some years. Modular buildings include many different buildings, from small site cabins to large multi storey buildings. The modular buildings have to be complemented on site with an access structure, in particular for floors above ground floor, where people otherwise have no access. The access structure includes some kind of base platform, outside the entrance door of the module, and, at least above ground floor, a stair.

[0003] Current access structures are often built of wood, which is not satisfactory. The problems are inter alia that the strength of the wooden structures is never calculated, and they are not fire-rated. Besides, they are time consuming to build. There are also access structures built of steel by means of scaffolding, which are neither strength calculated for these kind of applications, nor adapted for use by any person. Therefore, application specific arrangements and complements must be done. Further alternatives are steel structures, which are primarily fastened in the modules, and more particularly in their fork lift pockets. If there are no forklift pockets they are impossible or most difficult to use at all. When the modular building is to be demounted and removed, the current access structures are cumbersome to remove.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] It would be advantageous to provide a solution for an access structure, which is quick to mount and causes no or little damage to the modular building.

[0005] To better address this concern, in a first aspect of the invention there is presented an access structure for modular buildings, wherein the access structure is self-contained and comprises a stackable framework module, which has an overall box shape in a mounting state. The framework module comprises vertical and horizontal edge beams, top interconnection portions, for interconnection with another framework module stacked on top of the framework module, bottom interconnection portions, for interconnection with another framework module on top of which the framework module is stacked, an entrance stairway connection portion, a floor and a roof. Thereby, an access structure is provided, which can be used with both single story and multi storey modular buildings, and which is easy to mount and demount at

the modular building.

[0006] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure the framework module is positionable at a distance from the modular building, in order to facilitate access to the connections at the wall of the modular building. The framework module has a front side and a rear side, and the roof comprises a sliding part, which is slidable between a position where it has been slid to protrude at the front side, thereby providing an opening through the roof letting a person pass and a position where it has been slid to protrude at the rear side. It is common that the modular building has for instance wall connections for sanitary conduits at floor level, which are hereby given space for. In addition to facilitating mounting, the slidable part of the roof adds a flexibility to the structure as regards the positioning of the structure relative to the modular building with a similar weather protection.

[0007] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure it comprises an additional floor part, which is arrangeable to cover the distance between the framework module and the modular building at floor level.

[0008] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure the edge beams comprise bottom beams defining a bottom frame, and floor beams defining a floor frame carrying the floor, wherein the floor frame is positioned a distance above the bottom frame. Thereby the floor is levelled with the entrance door of the module, and room is created beneath the floor for providing fork lift pockets and connection possibilities for additional parts stairways and fence posts, which may be included in the access structure.

[0009] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure the edge beams comprise vertical corner beams defining four corners of the framework module, and top beams defining a top frame, wherein the corner beams comprise end protrusions, which protrude above the top frame, wherein the top interconnection portions comprise the end protrusions. Thereby a simple yet reliable structure is obtained, and the stacking of the access structures is facilitated.

[0010] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure the framework module is collapsible and raisable between a collapsed state and a raised state. This embodiment has the advantage of reduced storage and transporting volume.

[0011] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure the edge beams comprise corner posts defining four corners of the framework module, and top beams defining a top frame connected with the vertical corner beams at a top portion of corner posts, wherein each corner post is foldable.

[0012] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure each corner post comprises an upper portion and a lower portion, which are hingedly interconnected at a first hinge portion, wherein the upper portion is hingedly and displaceably connected with the top portion, which is fixedly connected with the top frame, and where-

in the lower portion is hingedly interconnected with a fixed bottom portion of the corner post at a second hinge portion.

[0013] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure each top portion comprises a recess, and wherein each upper portion comprises a pin at an upper end of the upper portion, wherein the pin is arranged to be engaged with the recess when the framework module is in the raised state, and thereby to lock the interconnection between the upper portion and the top portion.

[0014] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure the framework module comprises a first sleeve, which is arranged at one of the corner posts, and which is movable along the corner post.

[0015] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure each of the corner posts is provided with a first sleeve, which, in the raised state, is arranged to be positioned at the first hinge portion and lock the first hinge portion. By being positioned at the first hinge portion and thereby covering the hinge portion, the sleeve locks the upper and lower parts in the unfolded straight position and thereby prevents the corner post from folding.

[0016] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure each corner post is provided with a second sleeve, which is movable along the corner post, and which is arranged to lock the second hinge portion when the framework module is in the raised state. Consequently, the second sleeves serve a similar purpose for the second hinge portions as the first sleeves serve for the first hinge portions.

[0017] In accordance with an embodiment of the access structure each one of the first hinge portions comprises a stiffening element, which is operable to stiffen the first hinge portion in the raised state. The stiffening elements are an additional security detail. The hinge portions are already secured by the sleeves to prevent them from folding. However, by additionally stiffening the hinge portions a second folding prevention is provided and additionally, the user perceives the structure as more rigid and safer since the minor play in the hinge portions when not stiffened is removed.

[0018] According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a method of mounting an access structure for modular buildings. The method provides corresponding problem solutions and advantages as the access structure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] The invention will now be described in more detail and with reference to the appended drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic perspective view of an embodiment of the access structure according to the present invention:

Fig. 2 is a schematic perspective view of an embod-

iment of the access structure according to the invention mounted at a modular building;

Fig. 3 is a schematic perspective view of an embodiment of the access structure according to the invention mounted at a modular building;

Fig. 4 is a schematic perspective view of an embodiment of the access structure according to the invention showing an alternative mounting;

Figs. 5 to 8 are schematic perspective views illustrating raising a framework module included in the access structure from a collapsed state to a raised state.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

[0020] According to an embodiment of the access structure 1 it comprises a stackable framework module 2, which has an overall box shape in a mounting state, as shown for example in Fig. 1. The framework module 2 comprises vertical and horizontal edge beams 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, top interconnection portions 8, for interconnection with another framework module 30, also included in the access structure 1, as shown in Fig. 2, stacked on top of the framework module 2, bottom interconnection portions 9, for interconnection with another framework module on top of which the framework module 2 is stacked, an entrance stairway connection portion 10, 70 a floor 11 and a roof 12. The edge beams are e.g. made by square tubes, but any useful beam profile will do as recognized by the person skilled in the art. Some of the edge beams constitute bottom beams 3, which define a bottom frame 13, and floor beams 4, which define a floor frame 14. More particularly, the bottom frame 13 and the floor frame 14 are two rectangles of edge beams, one on top of the other, with a distance between them. The floor 11 is attached to the floor frame 14. The bottom frame 13 rests on the ground.

[0021] The roof 12 comprises a fixed part 16 extending from a front side 17 of the framework module 2 and towards a rear side 18 of the framework module 2, covering a fraction of the distance between the front side 17 and the rear side 18. The front side 17 can also be defined as a vertical side plane defined by some of the edge beams, and the rear side 18 can also be defined as a vertical side plane defined by the some other of the edge beams. The fixed part 16 covers about half the depth of the framework module 2, i.e. the distance from between the front side 17 and the rear side 18. Further, the roof 12 comprises a sliding roof part 19, which is slidable between an open position, and a rearwards protruding position. In the open position, the sliding roof part 19 provides an opening extending across about a rear half of the depth of the framework module 2. The opening provides for the passage of a person who is to fasten the framework module 2 at the modular building, as will be explained below, or do some other work requiring access to the top area of the framework module 2, the modular building, or another framework module 75 placed on top

of the first one. In the rearwards protruding position, the sliding roof part 19 protrudes from the rear side 18. Typically, the sliding roof part 19 has been pushed into abutment against the wall of the modular building in order to shield the entrance to the modular building from rain.

[0022] Furthermore, the edge beams 2-7 comprise vertical corner beams 6 defining four corners of the framework module, and top beams 7 defining a top frame 21. Each one of the vertical corner beams 6 comprises an end protrusion 22, which protrudes above the top frame 21. The end protrusions 22 are comprised in the above-mentioned top interconnection portions 8.

[0023] Furthermore, in this embodiment, the framework module 2 is raisable and collapsible, and it is shown in a collapsed state in Fig. 5, and in a raised state in, for instance, Fig. 1. In order to obtain this the edge beams 2-7 comprise corner posts 23, comprising the corner beams 6, and defining four corners of the framework module 2, wherein each corner post 23 is foldable. The corner posts 23 are connected with the top frame 21 at a top portion 27 of each corner post 23.

[0024] Each corner post 23 comprises an upper portion 24 and a lower portion 25, which are hingedly interconnected, at a common first hinge portion 26. Additionally, the upper portion 24 is hingedly and displaceably connected with the top portion 27, which is fixedly connected with the top frame 21. The lower portion 25 is hingedly connected, at a second hinge portion 67, with a fixed bottom portion 28 of the corner post 23. Furthermore, each top portion 27 comprises a vertically, i.e. along the length of the top portion 27, elongated through hole 29, and a recess 30, which opens to one side of the top portion 27. The recess 30 is positioned below the through hole 29. Each upper portion 24 comprises two pins 31, 32, an upper pin 31 and a lower pin 32, at an upper end of the upper portion 24. The upper pin 31 extends through the through hole 29, and thereby forms a hinge. The lower pin 32 is arranged to be engaged with the recess 30 when the framework module 2 is in the raised state, and thereby to lock the interconnection between the upper portion and the top portion. The length of the through hole 29 exceeds the width of the upper pin 31, which is thus arranged with a play in the through hole 29. The recess 30 extends obliquely towards the top of the top portion 27 forming a seat where the lower pin 32 can be retained.

[0025] The framework module 2 further comprises at least one first sleeve 33, and in this embodiment four first sleeves, each arranged at a respective one of the corner posts 23. The sleeves 33 are movable along the corner posts 23. The first sleeve 33 is meant to be positioned at the first hinge portion 26 to enclose and lock the first hinge portion 26 when the framework module 2 is in the raised state.

[0026] Each corner post 23 is, additionally, provided with a second sleeve 35, which is movable along the corner post 23, and which is arranged to lock a second hinge portion 67, i.e. the hinged interconnection between the lower portion and the bottom portion when the frame-

work module is in the raised state.

[0027] Furthermore, the each one of the first and second hinge portions 26, 67 comprises a stiffening element 69, such as a screw acting on a locking member. In this embodiment, the hinge portion 26, 67 has two hinges and a middle element, admitting the upper and lower parts 24, 25 fold 180 degrees, and the stiffening element 69 is a screw arranged in the middle element. When the screw is tightened it protrudes into abutment against the inner wall of the sleeve 33, 35. Thereby the hinge portion 26, 67 is simultaneously forced against the opposite inner wall of the sleeve 33, 35 and a stiff portion is achieved. In other words, when the stiffening element 69 at the first hinge portion 26 is tightened the first hinge portion 26 is stiffened, i.e. the upper and lower portions 24, 25 are fixed relative to each other by the locking element clamping them towards the inner wall of the sleeve 33. The similar stiffening is obtained at the second hinge portion 67 by tightening the stiffening element 69 at the second hinge portion 67. Thereby the user perceives the framework module 2 more stable and rigid, although it is not necessary from a perspective of strength. The first and second sleeves 33, 35 are each provided with a hole giving access to the stiffening element 69 through the wall of the sleeve 33, 35 when the sleeves 33, 35 are positioned at the first and second hinge portions 26, 67.

[0028] It should be noted that even if all sleeves 33, 35 are moved away from the hinge portions 26, 67, and no stiffening element 69 has been tightened, the framework module 2 will keep standing due to the pin locking arrangement at the top of the corner posts 23.

[0029] According to an embodiment of the access structure 15 shown in Fig. 2 it comprises first and second framework modules 2, 30; fences 36, 37 for the respective framework module 2, 30; a first stairway 38 for the first framework module 2; and a second stairway 39 for reaching the second framework module 75. Both stairways 38, 39 are however mounted at the first framework module 2, at respective bottom and top entrance stairway connection portions 10, 70. Thus, in this embodiment, the bottom entrance stairway connection portion 10 used by the first stairway 38 simply is provided by the edge beams 3, 4 of the bottom frame 13 and the floor frame 14, while the top entrance stairway connection portion 70 used by the second stairway 39 is an end beam 7 of the top frame 21. Each stairway 38, 39 comprises a hook portion, which engages with the edge beams to hold the stairway 38, 39 in place. The second stairway 39 is a long stairway adapted to reach the first floor, from the ground. In order to have the second stairway 39 mounted at about the same angle irrespective of unevenness of the ground, it is provided with an extension bottom part 40.

[0030] Referring to Fig. 3, the framework module 42 is provided with a fixed roof part 43, as however best seen in Fig. 4, and a sliding roof part 44 comprising three roof pieces 45, 46, 47, constituted by two side pieces 45, 46 arranged at either side of a middle piece 47. When the

side pieces 45, 46 are pulled forwards, i.e. out from the modular building 49 at which the framework module 42 is mounted, openings 50, 51 in the roof are obtained. In this mounting example the access structure 41 has been mounted at a long side of the modular building 49. A person is able to pass the openings 50, 51 from below and secure the framework module 42 to the modular building 49. For instance, the securing is made by means of straps 52, which are fastened on one hand at a centre loop 53 at a centre beam 5 of the top frame 55, and on the other hand at fork lift pockets of the modular building 49. The centre loop 53 can also be used for raising the framework module from the collapsed state. When no fork lift pockets are available other attachment are arranged, such as borings in the bottom portion of the modular building 49.

[0031] As shown in Fig. 4, the access structure 57 has been mounted at a minor distance from the modular building 58, and an end wall of the modular building 58, in order to make room for external connections of for instance water and sanitary conduits to a connection port 59 of the modular building 58 arranged at floor level thereof. The sliding roof part 44, i.e. all three roof pieces 45-47, has been pushed rearwards to protrude from the framework module 60 into abutment against the end wall of the modular building 58. Furthermore, the access structure 57 comprises an additional floor part 62, and additional fence parts 64. Thus, the floor 61 of the framework module 57 has been completed with the additional floor part 62, which has been mounted at the rear side of the framework module to cover the distance up to the entrance door of the modular building 58 at floor level, while leaving a floor opening at the connection port 59. Similarly, the fence 63 has been completed with the additional fence parts 64 closing the gaps.

[0032] As illustrated in Figs. 5-8, the framework module 2 is raised in the following way. In the collapsed state the corner posts 23 have been folded inwards and rest on the floor 11, extending along the floor 11 with the upper portions 24 on top of the lower portions 25. Thereby the framework module 2 is very compact with a height that is only a fraction of its height in the raised state. The framework module 2 is locked in the collapsed state by means of a cotter pin 72 at each corner post 23. The cotter pin 72 works as a transport locking device. The cotter pin 72 extends through an apertures of the top portion 27 and the bottom portion 28 of the corner post 23. The framework module 2 can be raised with any suitable aid, such as a crane lorry. When using straps they can be fastened in for example merely the centre loop 53, or in corner loops 65 at the upper ends of the corner posts 23.

[0033] During the raising of the framework module 2 the corner posts 23 automatically unfolds, as illustrated in Fig. 6. When the corner posts 23 have been fully unfolded and have become straight, as shown in Fig. 7, the lower pin 32 at the upper end of the upper portion 24 of each corner post 23 has entered the recess 30 of the

associated top portion 27. Similarly, the upper pin 31 is at a lower edge of the through hole 29. Then, the top frame 21 is slightly lowered causing the through hole 29 and the recess 30 to move relative to the upper and lower pins 31, 32. This movement results in that the lower pin 31 is fully received in the recess 30, as shown in Fig. 8, which thereby locks the lower pin 32, and consequently the upper and lower pins 31, 32 keeps the corner post 23 straight and prevents the corner post 23 from folding. This pin lock provides enough stability to the corner posts 23 to keep them from folding again when the lifting device is lowered to be loosened from the framework module 2. When the framework module 2 has been raised, the first sleeve 33 of each corner post 23 has moved down, by gravity, to a position where it locks the first hinge portion 26 between the upper and lower portions 24, 25 of the corner post 23. The first sleeve 33 is prevented from moving further down by a stop lug 66 comprised in the lower portion 25 just below the first hinge portion 26, see also Fig. 1. The second sleeve 35 of each corner post 23 has moved downwards as well, and locks the second hinge portion 67. Finally, the locking elements 69 of the first and second sleeves 33, 35 are tightened. The framework module 2 is now ready to be lifted in place at a modular building.

[0034] While the invention has been illustrated and described in detail in the drawings and foregoing description, such illustration and description are to be considered illustrative or exemplary and not restrictive; the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments.

[0035] Other variations to the disclosed embodiments can be understood and effected by those skilled in the art in practicing the claimed invention, from a study of the drawings, the disclosure, and the appended claims. In the claims, the word "comprising" does not exclude other elements or steps, and the indefinite article "a" or "an" does not exclude a plurality. The mere fact that certain measures are recited in mutually different dependent claims does not indicate that a combination of these measures cannot be used to advantage. Any reference signs in the claims should not be construed as limiting the scope.

Claims

1. A mountable and demountable access structure for modular buildings, wherein the access structure is self-contained and comprises a stackable framework module, which has an overall box shape in a mounting state, wherein the framework module comprises vertical and horizontal edge beams, top interconnection portions, for interconnection with another framework module stacked on top of the framework module, bottom interconnection portions, for interconnection with another framework module on top of which the framework module is stacked, an entrance stairway connection portion, a floor and a roof.

2. The access structure according to claim 1, wherein the framework module is positionable at a distance from the modular building, in order to facilitate access to the connections at the wall of the modular building, wherein the framework module has a front side and a rear side, wherein the roof comprises a sliding part, which is slidable between a position where it has been slid to protrude at the front side, thereby providing an opening through the roof letting a person pass, and a position where it has been slid to protrude at the rear side. 5
3. The access structure according to claim 2, comprising an additional floor part, which is arrangeable to cover the distance between the framework module and the modular building at floor level. 10
4. The access structure according to claim 1, 2, or 3, wherein the edge beams comprise bottom beams defining a bottom frame, and floor beams defining a floor frame carrying the floor, wherein the floor frame is positioned a distance above the bottom frame. 15
5. The access structure according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the edge beams comprise vertical corner beams defining four corners of the framework module, and top beams defining a top frame, wherein the corner beams comprise end protrusions, which protrude above the top frame, wherein the top interconnection portions comprise the end protrusions. 20
6. The access structure according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the framework module is collapsible and raisable between a collapsed state and a raised state. 25
7. The access structure according to claim 6, wherein the edge beams comprise corner posts defining four corners of the framework module, and top beams defining a top frame connected with the corner posts at a top portion of corner posts, wherein each corner post is foldable. 30
8. The access structure according to claim 7, wherein each corner post comprises an upper portion and a lower portion, which are hingedly interconnected at a first hinge portion, wherein the upper portion is hingedly and displaceably connected with the top portion, which is fixedly connected with the top frame, and wherein the lower portion is hingedly interconnected with a fixed bottom portion of the corner post at a second hinge portion. 35
9. The access structure according to claim 8, wherein each top portion comprises a recess, and wherein each upper portion comprises a pin at an upper end of the upper portion, wherein the pin is arranged to be engaged with the recess when the framework module is in the raised state, and thereby to lock the interconnection between the upper portion and the top portion. 40
10. The access structure according to claim 8 or 9, wherein the framework module comprises a first sleeve, which is arranged at one of the corner posts, and which is movable along the corner post. 45
11. The access structure according to claim 10, wherein each of the corner posts is provided with a first sleeve, which, in the raised state, is arranged to be positioned at the first hinge portion and lock the first hinge portion. 50
12. The access structure according to any one of claims 8 to 11, wherein each corner post is provided with a second sleeve, which is movable along the corner post, and which is arranged to lock the second hinge portion when the framework module is in the raised state. 55
13. The access structure according to any one of claims 8 to 12, wherein each one of the first hinge portions comprises a stiffening element, which is operable to stiffen the first hinge portion in the raised state.
14. A method of mounting an access structure for modular buildings, wherein the access structure comprises a stackable framework module, which has an overall box shape in a mounting state, wherein the method comprises:
 - lifting a first framework module in place at a modular building;
 - lifting a second framework module in place on top of the first access structure, wherein bottom interconnection portions of the second framework module are engaged with top interconnection portions of the first framework module; and
 - mounting an entrance stairway at an entrance stairway connection portion at an upper portion of the first framework module.
15. The method according to claim 14, further comprising:
 - moving a slidable part of a roof of the framework module to obtain an opening, and securing a top portion of the framework module at the modular building through the opening.

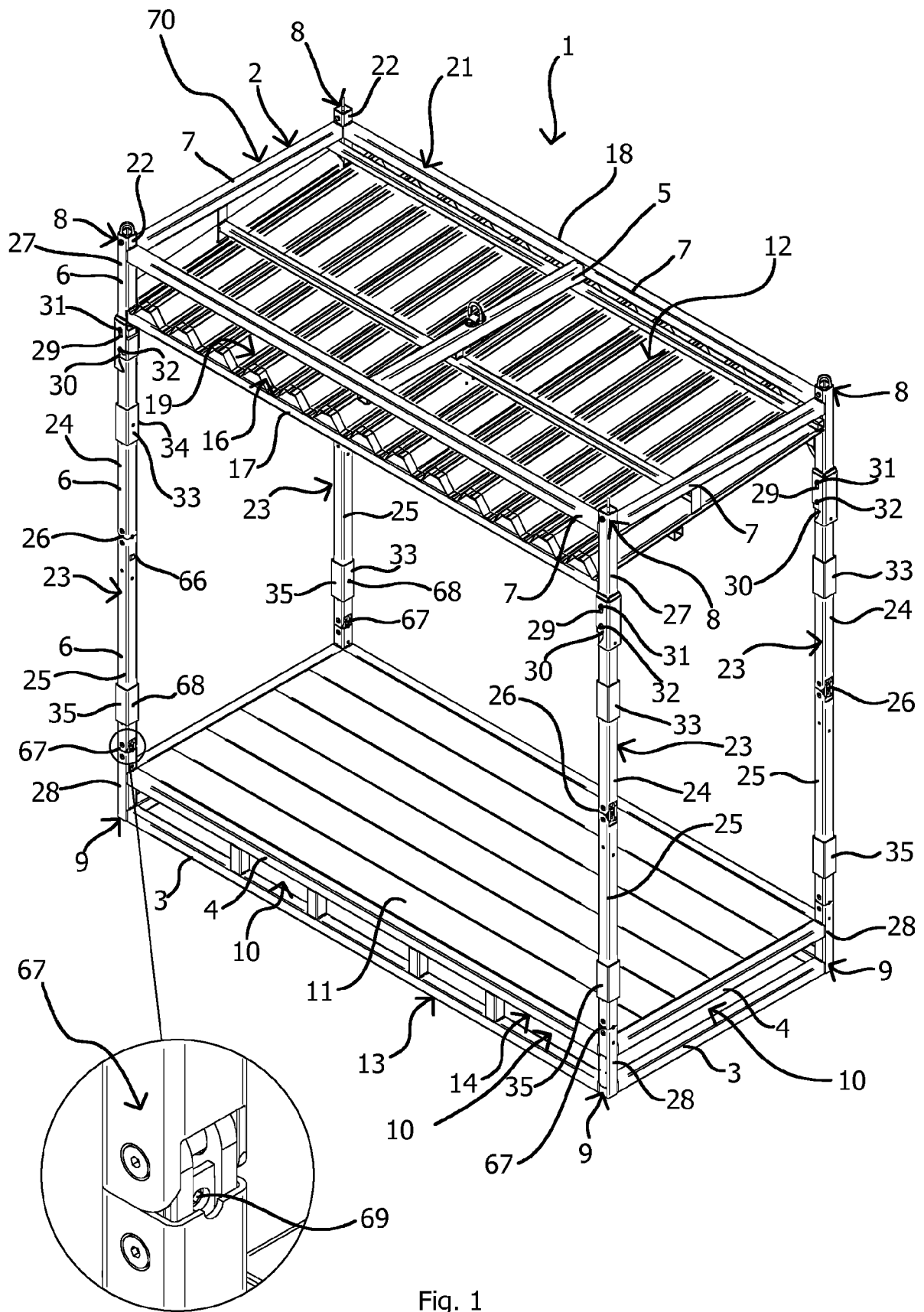


Fig. 1

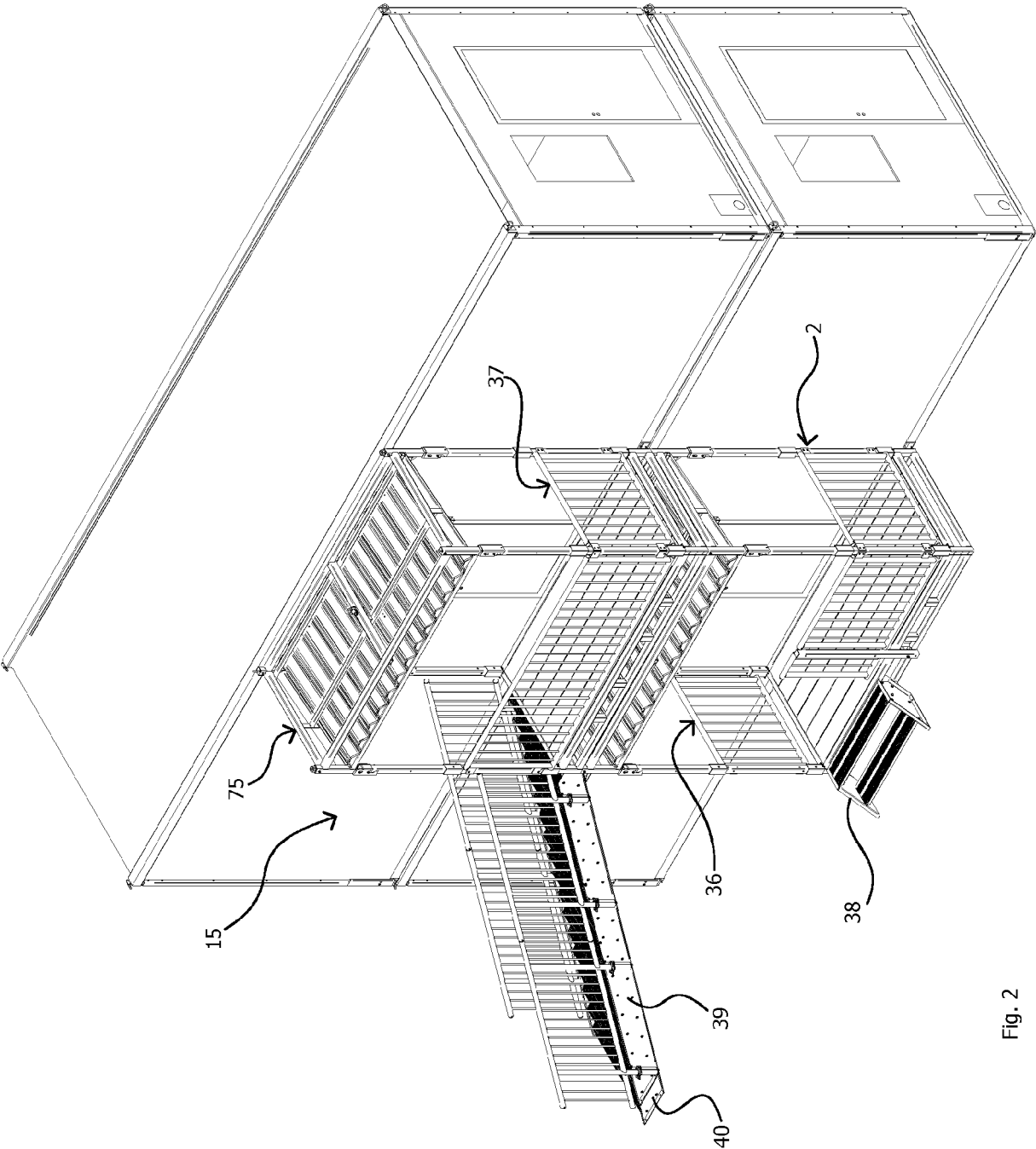


Fig. 2

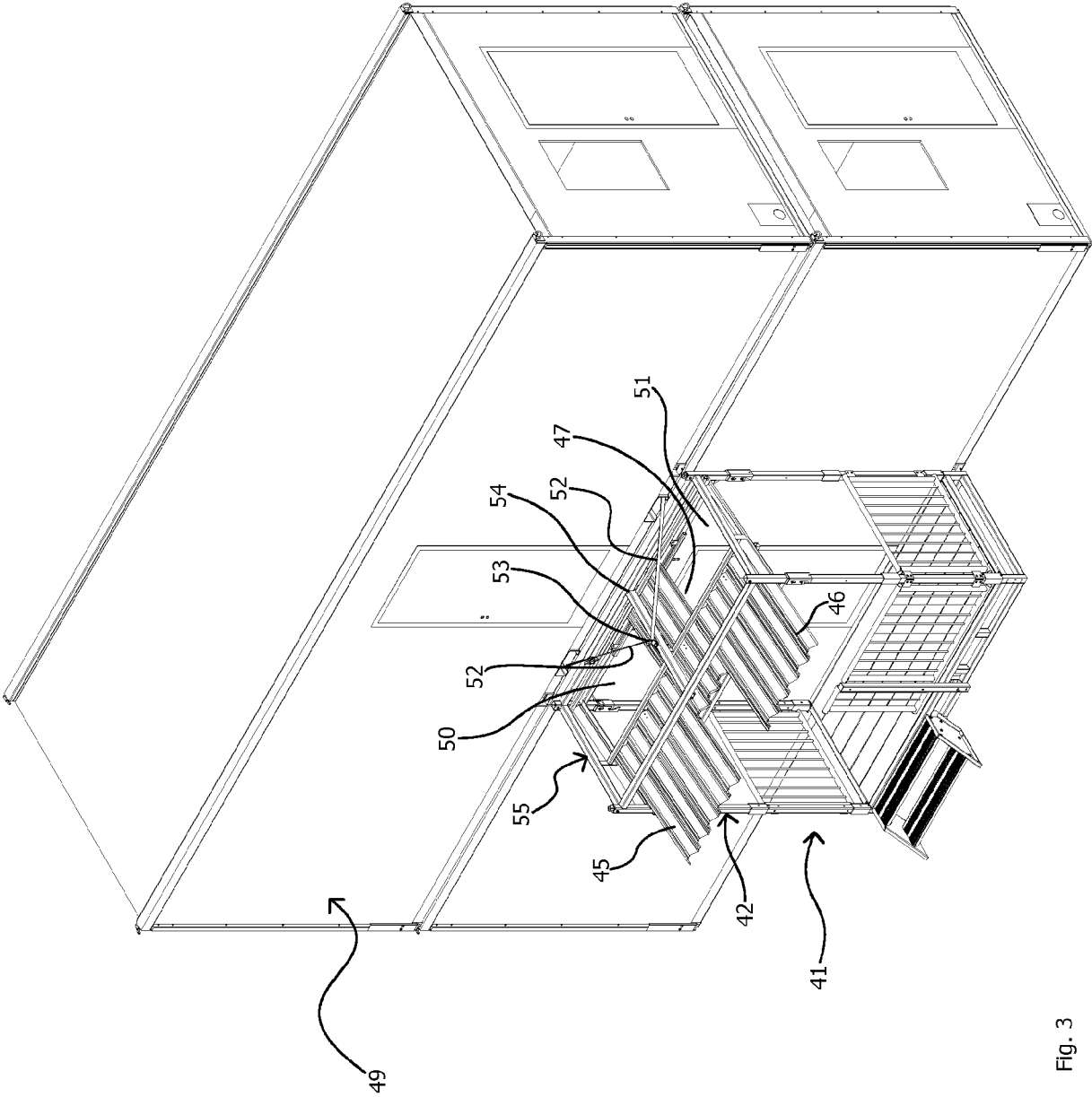


Fig. 3

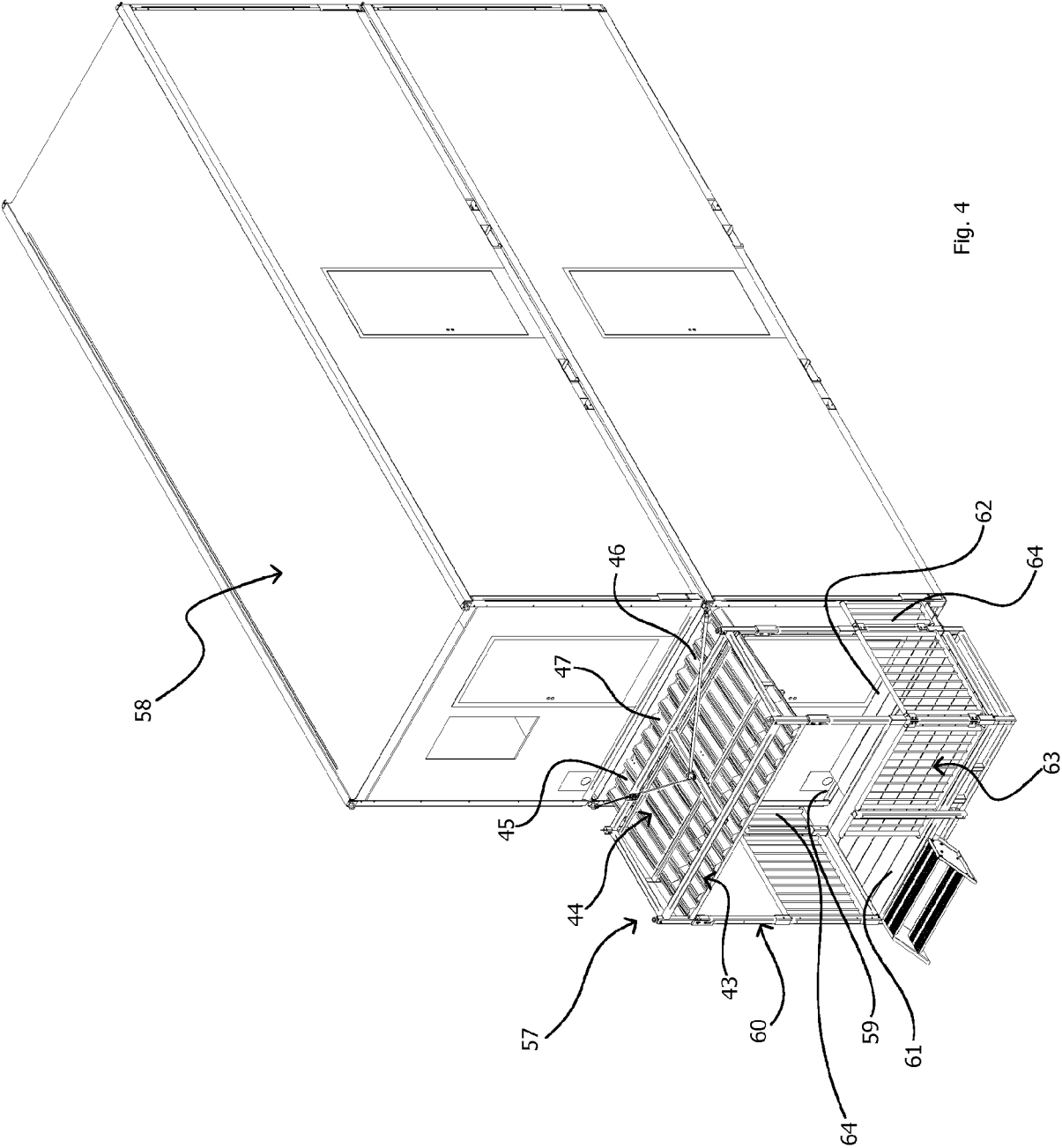


Fig. 4

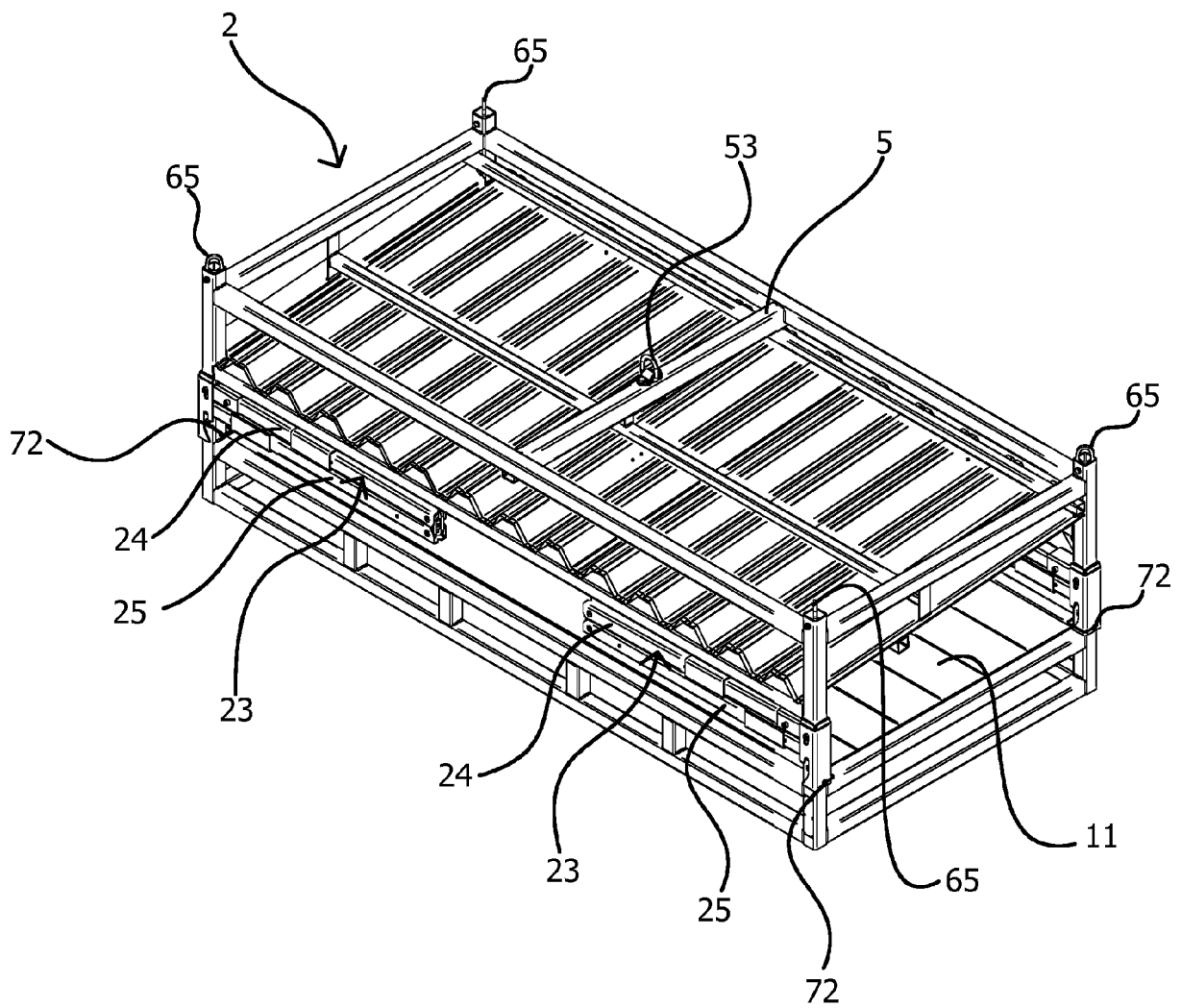


Fig. 5

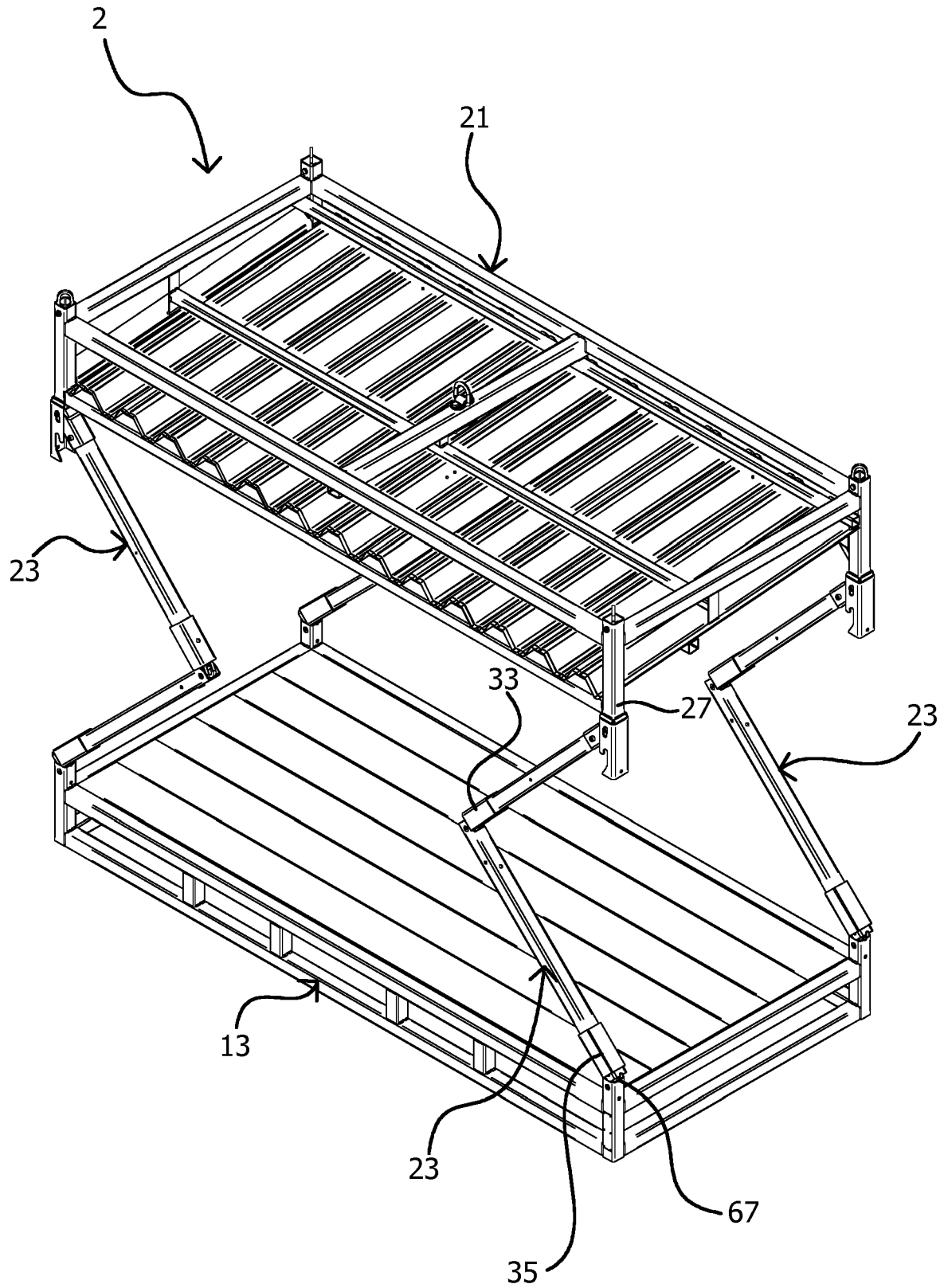


Fig. 6

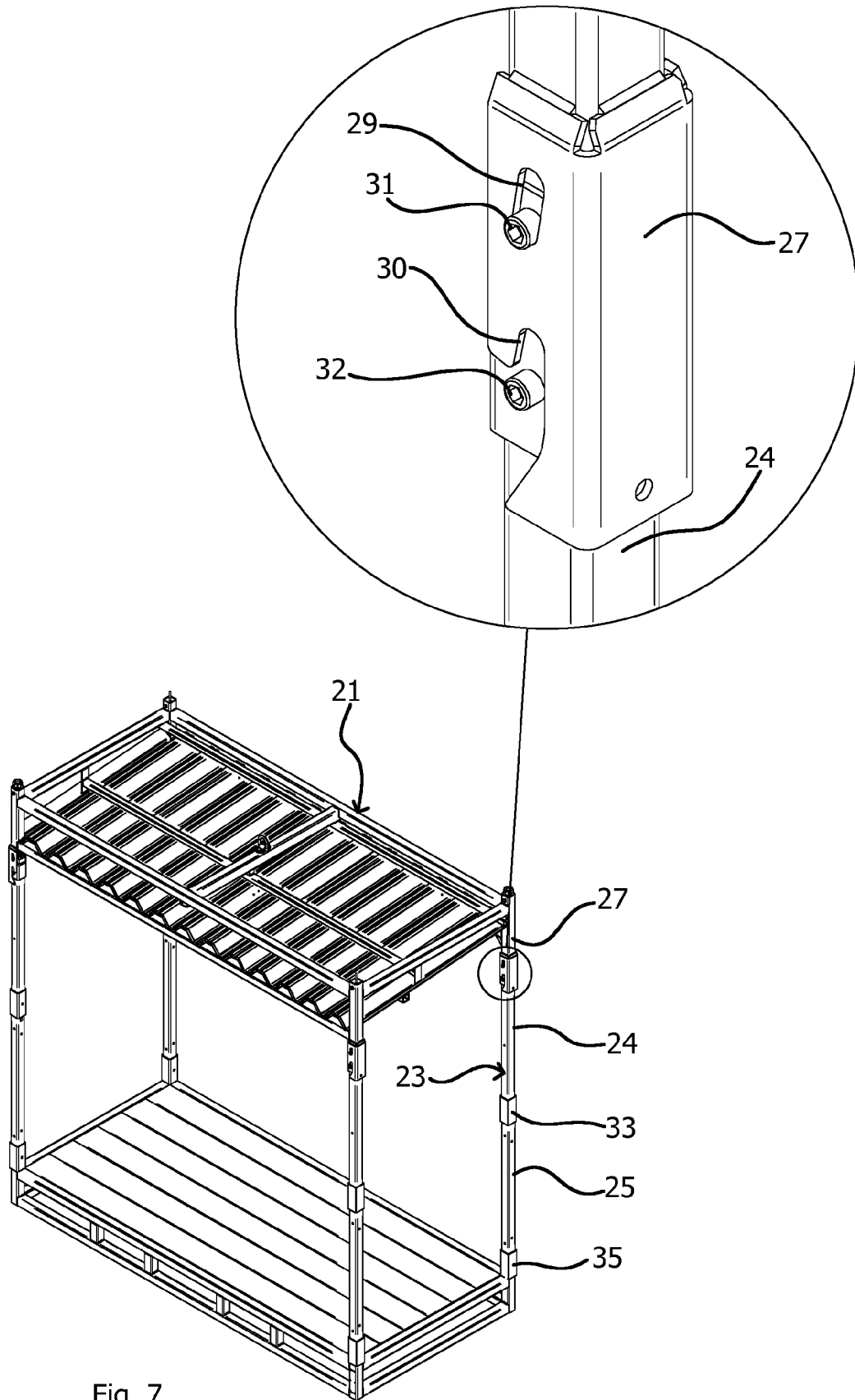


Fig. 7

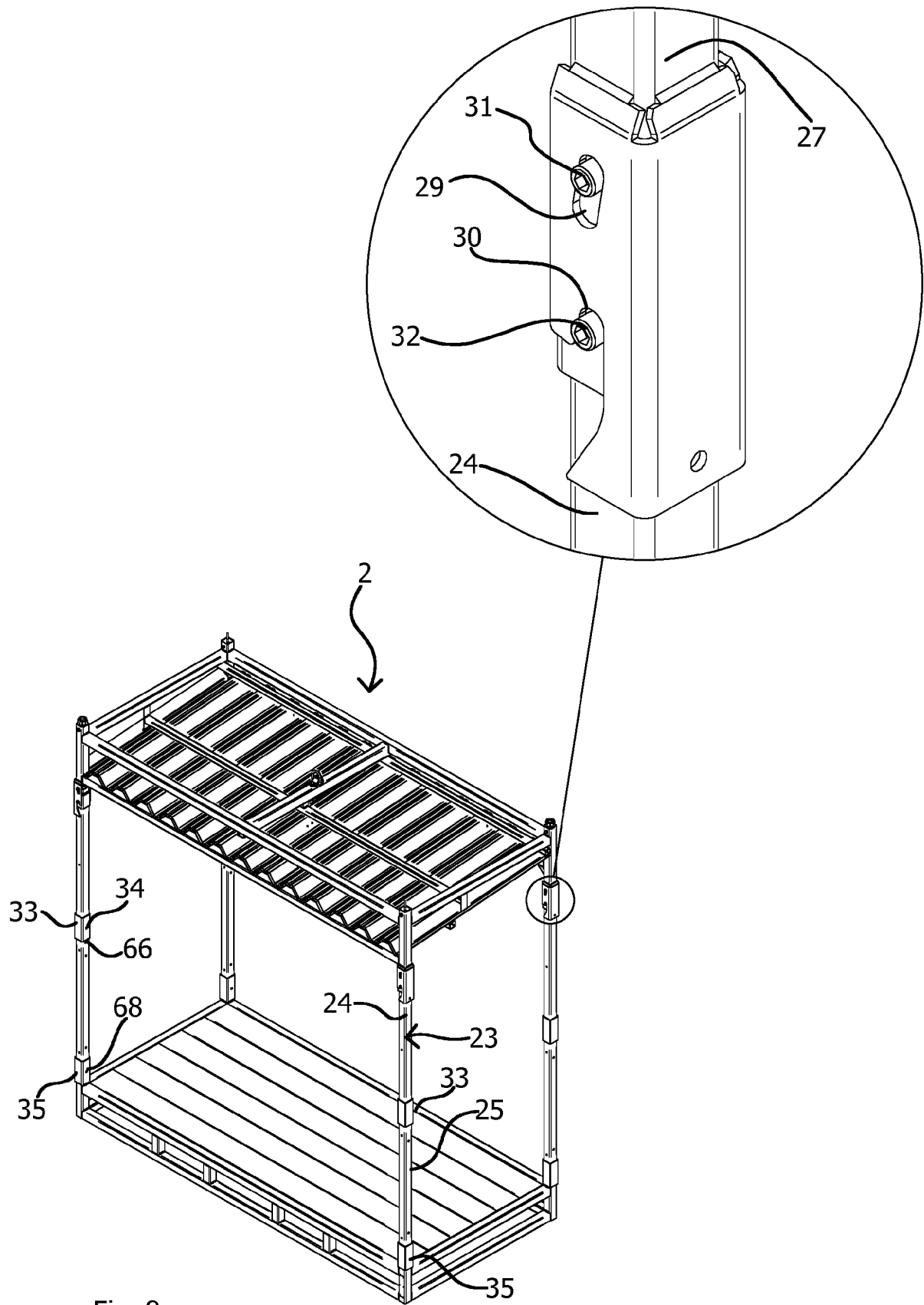


Fig. 8



EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 16 15 5590

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DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
A	US 3 788 016 A (RICHARDSON J) 29 January 1974 (1974-01-29) * column 2, line 8 - column 5, line 41; figures 1-3 *	1-15	INV. E04B1/348 E04G27/00 E04B1/343 E04B1/344 E04B1/00
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			E04B E04G
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 14 July 2016	Examiner Manera, Marco
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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 16 15 5590

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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82