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- **Esteve, Jerome**
33080, Porcia (PN) (IT)
- **Ostlund, Pelle**
33170, Pordenone (IT)
- **Costantin, Marco**
33085, Maniago (PN) (IT)

(71) Applicant: **Electrolux Home Products Corporation N.V.**
1930 Zaventem (BE)

(74) Representative: **Giugni, Valter**
PROPRIA S.r.l.
P.O. Box 365
Via della Colonna, 35
33170 Pordenone (IT)

(72) Inventors:
• **Reid, Nicola**
33170, Pordenone (IT)
• **Fox, Nick**
33080, Roveredo in Piano (PN) (IT)

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Amended claims in accordance with Rule 86 (2) EPC.

(54) **Household appliance**

(57) Household appliance comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), and at least a drying surface (8) having a plurality of apertures (7) fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments placed over said drying surface (8); said worktop (3) comprises an extendable/collapsible structure (15) adapted to define a drying cabinet for accommodating garments to be dried, said drying surface (8) forming the bottom of the drying cabinet so as to blow air directly into said drying cabinet.

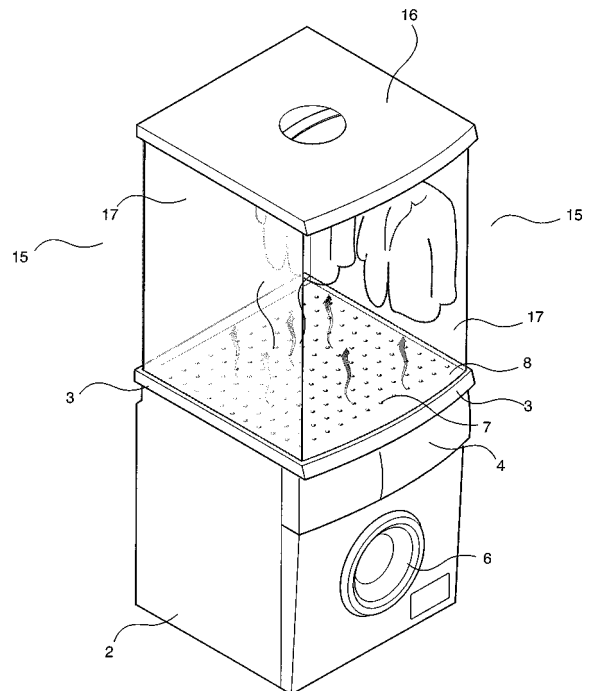


Fig 4

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Description

[0001] The present invention refers to a household appliance and in particular to a household appliance for washing and/or drying clothes.

[0002] It is a largely known fact that garments made of delicate textile materials, such as cashmere, are not adapted to undergo regular drying treatments in a tumble dryer, owing to the mechanical stresses, mainly in the form of impacts, which the textile fibres would be subject to there.

[0003] For these delicate textiles to be properly taken care of, they therefore need to be dried by means of more gentle treatments, such as line-drying or flat drying, which on the other hand are rather time-consuming processes.

[0004] The disclosure in European patent application EP 06 112 671.0, in the name of the same applicant, is effective in eliminating the drawbacks cited above in connection with the prior art by providing a household appliance that comprises an outer casing with a worktop featuring a plurality of apertures, each one of which is fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air towards and through said apertures in view of drying garments that are laid upon the same worktop.

[0005] However, the solution as disclosed and described in said document has anyway a drawback in that, for a quick and effective drying action to be ensured, the need arises for a single garment at a time to be laid upon the surface of the worktop. In addition, in the case that the garment is quite large or extended in size, it may well occur that some portions thereof have to be folded up so as to lay one upon another. As a result, a user will be forced to step in to repeatedly re-arrange the garment on the surface of the worktop so as to ultimately ensure that the whole garment is equally well exposed to the flow of drying air and dries up fully and evenly. As it can be readily appreciated, this has the effect of causing the drying process to take a longer time to be completed, actually.

[0006] It may furthermore be possible for the user to find some difficulties in trying to gain direct access on to the upper portion of the worktop owing to encumbrances being possibly present immediately above the same worktop. In such cases, the solution proposed in EP 06 112 671.0 is not practicable at all.

[0007] The object of the present invention is therefore to provide a household appliance capable of drying clothes in a gentle manner, while eliminating the above-cited drawbacks.

[0008] Within this general object, it is a main purpose of the present invention to provide a novel drying concept and solution for household appliances, which is relatively simple in construction, trouble-free in operation, dependable, flexible in use, and relatively inexpensive to manufacture, operate, service and maintain.

[0009] According to the present invention, these aims are reached in a household appliance incorporating the characteristics as recited and defined in the appended claims.

[0010] Features and advantages of the present invention will anyway be more readily understood from the description that is given below by way of nonlimiting example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a household appliance according to a first embodiment of the present invention, showing the structure in its collapsed position;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of the household appliance according to a first embodiment of the present invention, showing the panel of the structure during a lifting phase;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of the household appliance according to a first embodiment of the present invention, showing the structure in its extended position;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of the household appliance according to a first embodiment of the present invention, showing the drying cabinet in operation;

Figure 5 is a side cross-sectional view of the household appliance shown in Figure 4;

Figure 6 is a perspective view of a household appliance according to a second embodiment of the present invention, showing the arms of the clotheshorse in their first convergent position;

Figure 7 is a perspective view of the household appliance according to a second embodiment of the present invention, showing the arms of the clotheshorse in rotation;

Figure 8 is a perspective view of the household appliance according to a second embodiment of the present invention, showing the arms of the clotheshorse in their second divergent position;

Figure 9 is a side cross-sectional view of the household appliance shown in Figure 8;

Figure 10 is a side cross-sectional view of a household appliance according to a third embodiment of the present invention, showing the drawer-like structure in the inserted position;

Figure 11 is a side cross-sectional view of the household appliance according to a third embodiment of the present invention, showing the drawer-like structure during an extraction phase;

Figure 12 is a perspective view of the household ap-

pliance shown in figure 13 with the drawer-like structure extracted;

Figure 13 is a side cross-sectional view of the household appliance according to a further embodiment of the present invention, showing the drawer-like structure during an extraction phase;

Figure 14 is a perspective view of the household appliance shown in figure 13 with the drawer-like structure extracted;

[0011] The household appliance, in particular for washing and/or drying clothes, according to the present invention, comprises an outer casing 2 with a worktop 3 and a front panel 4 carrying operational input and setting controls 5, a drum rotatably supported inside the outer casing 2 and adapted to be loaded with the items to be washed and/or dried, an opening for loading and unloading the items into and from the drum, and a door 6 for closing said opening.

[0012] The household appliance comprises a drying surface 8 having a plurality of apertures 7, each one of which is fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to direct a flow of air through said apertures 7 for drying garments that are placed over the drying surface 8.

[0013] In particular, the worktop 3 comprises the drying surface 8, over which the garments to be dried are placed, and through the apertures or perforations 7 of which air is caused to flow so as to hit the garments placed thereon, thereby drying it.

[0014] These conveying means comprise at least an air passage 9 adapted to convey the air up to the worktop 3 underneath the drying surface 8, so that the air is then able to flow through the apertures 7 from the bottom upwards, as well as air circulating means 10 adapted to force a flow of air into and through the air passage 9.

[0015] In an advantageous manner, heating means 11 are provided to heat up the air that flows into the air passage 9, so that it is appropriately heated-up air that eventually hits the garment to be dried.

[0016] The air passage 9 extends horizontally along the drying surface 8, so as to be able to supply air to each single aperture 7 at the same time. An end portion 12 of the air passage 9 is blind, i.e. sealed, whereas the other end portion 13 thereof is open and fluidly communicating with the air circulating means 10 to receive the flow of drying air thereinto.

[0017] Advantageously, the drying surface 8 and the air passage 9 can be formed in the worktop 3 integrally.

[0018] The air circulating means 10 may for instance be comprised of at least a blower arranged inside the outer casing 2 of the appliance and adapted to take in air from either the interior or the exterior of the household appliance to convey it into the air passage 9.

[0019] In particular, the blower is housed in a proper accommodation provided to this purpose inside the outer casing of the appliance.

[0020] The conveying means further comprise a communication duct 14 provided in the worktop and/or the outer casing to connect the air circulating means 10 with the air passage 9.

[0021] The heating means 11 may for instance be comprised of one or more electric heating elements arranged downstream from the air circulating means 10 and upstream of the air passage 9. Preferably, the heating means 11 are housed inside the communication duct 14, upstream of the open end portion 13 of the air passage 9.

[0022] As shown in Figure 1 to 5, the worktop 3 comprises an extendable/collapsible structure 15 adapted to define a drying cabinet for accommodating garments to be dried over said drying surface 8, said drying surface 8 forming the bottom of such drying cabinet, so as to blow air directly into the drying cabinet itself.

[0023] The extendable/collapsible structure 15 is comprised of a panel 16, which forms the ceiling, i.e. the top wall of the drying cabinet, and deformable side members 17 that form the side walls of the drying cabinet. The deformable side members 17 connect the panel 16 with drying surface 8 so as to create the delimited inside compartment or cavity of the drying cabinet. As already hinted above, the drying surface 8, as integrally provided on the worktop 3 of the outer casing 2 of the household appliance, forms the bottom surface or floor of the drying cabinet.

[0024] When the structure 15 is not being used, the panel 16 is lowered to seat neatly close to the drying surface 8 of the worktop 3, while the deformable side members 17 are folded up between the panel 16 and the drying surface 8.

[0025] For the drying cabinet to be used, the panel 16 is then capable of being lifted from the drying surface 8, thereby causing also the deformable side members 17 to extend. The panel 16 is adapted to reach - at a pre-established height - a limiting lift-up position at which the deformable side members 17 of the structure 15, owing to them being fully extended, become rigid, thereby providing a stable drying cabinet.

[0026] At least one of the deformable side members 17 is provided so as to enable the drying cabinet to be opened and closed and, therefore, the garments to be dried to be suitably arranged, e.g. hung, inside the same drying cabinet before closing it up for the drying process to take place therein. In particular, such deformable side member used to open/close the drying cabinet is made of a different material as compared with the other deformable side members, such as for example of plain cloth.

[0027] Advantageously, proper hangers with the clothes to be dried hung thereon may be hooked up to a plurality of receptacles provided at the panel 16 for engagement therewith. Alternatively, the clothes to be dried may be laid flat upon proper rack-like or similar support members provided in the drying cabinet.

[0028] Advantageously, the panel 16 further defines a handgrip provision, by means of which the panel 16 can

therefore be conveniently lifted.

[0029] The structure 15 is collapsible, i.e. can be caused to collapse by simply lowering the panel 16 onto the drying surface 8, so that the deformable side members 17 lose their rigidity and can be folded up into position between the panel 16 and the worktop of the household appliance.

[0030] By switching on the air circulating means 10 and the heating means 11, hot air is blown into the extended drying cabinet through the apertures 7 in the drying surface 8. In this manner, the possibility is therefore given for a plurality of garments to be quickly and effectively dried at the same time.

[0031] In a further embodiment of the present invention, which is illustrated in Figures 6 to 9, the worktop 3 comprises a kind of collapsible clothes-horse 18 for the garments to be dried to be laid flat thereupon over the drying surface 8 at a certain distance from the latter. Advantageously, such clothes-horse 18 is comprised of a folding structure adapted to lay flat on the drying surface 8 when the clothes-horse 18 is not in use.

[0032] Namely, the clothes-horse 18 being described and discussed by way of example to illustrative purposes, comprises a pair of arcuate arms 19 that are rotatably associated to the worktop 3, in a lateral position thereupon, and a plurality of lines 20 having their ends linked with, i.e. engaging said arms 19.

[0033] The arms 19 are adapted to rotate from a first position, in which they are convergent and lying flat on the drying surface 8 along with the lines 20, to a second position, in which they are raised from the drying surface 8 and mutually divergent so as to stretch out and tighten the lines 20.

[0034] In the first folded position, the arms 19 and the lines 20 lie completely flat on the drying surface 8, while protruding by just a few millimeters therefrom, so as to take up just a minimum of space. In the second outstretched position, the arms 19 and the lines 20 enable garments to be laid to dry at a short distance above the drying surface, while providing a greater surface area for placing large garments thereupon.

[0035] In a still further embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in Figures 10 to 14, the drying surface 8 is slidable in an accommodation or housing 21 provided in the worktop 3 from a first position, in which the drying surface is contained, i.e. inserted within the accommodation 21 in the worktop 3, to a second position in which the drying surface 8 is extracted and extended horizontally out of the accommodation 21 in the worktop 3 for garments to be dried to be supported thereupon.

[0036] The drying surface 8 is in this case provided integrally on a drawer-like structure 22 adapted to slide within the accommodation 21 along appropriate runner means. Such drawer-like structure 22 is internally hollow so as to integrally form the air passage 9 for conveying the flow of drying air under and along the drying surface 8

[0037] In the first position thereof, the drawer-like structure 22 is fully inserted in the accommodation 21,

so that it is fully placed inside the worktop, wherein solely a handgrip portion 23 provided on the front of the drawer-like structure 22 protrudes from the worktop 3 for enabling the same drawer-like structure 22 to be conveniently extracted when needed for use.

[0038] In the second position thereof, the drawer-like structure 22 is extracted, i.e. pulled out from the accommodation 21, so that the drying surface 8 comes to protrude horizontally from the worktop 3 on the front side thereof. The garments to be dried are then laid upon the drying surface 8 and, upon switching on the air circulating means 10 and the heating means 11, hot air starts to flow through the apertures 7 in the drying surface 8 so as to hit the garments laid thereupon and dry them.

[0039] The accommodation 21 further defines a drying-medium conveying channel adapted to fluidly connect the air passage 9 of the drawer-like structure 22 with the air circulating means 10, when drawer-like structure 22 is extracted, i.e. pulled out from the accommodation 21, in said second position.

[0040] The worktop 3 may itself comprise a plurality of apertures 24 fluidly connected with the air circulating means 10 so as to define a second drying surface 25, so that both the slidable drying surface 8 of the drawer-like structure 22 and the drying surface 8 of the worktop can be used to dry either a plurality of garments at the same time or a single large-sized garment. Alternatively, the worktop can however be provided in the form of a conventional worktop, without any aperture.

[0041] The drying surface 8 provided on the drawer-like structure 22 enables garments to be dried even when the surface of the worktop 3 is not directly accessible owing to encumbrances being present immediately above the same worktop 3.

[0042] In alternative embodiments of the present invention the conveying means are provided outside the casing.

[0043] In particular, for example, the air circulating means 10 and the communication duct 14 are associated to the upper backward portion of the casing in proximity to and below the worktop projecting from the casing.

[0044] The above-described drying arrangements may be provided on a washing machine, a tumble dryer or a so-called washer-dryer, wherein it will be readily appreciated that a perforated worktop as described above may even be applied to top-loading appliances.

[0045] It will however be also readily appreciated that a drying arrangement of the above described kind may be provided in the form of a self-standing, i.e. autonomous household appliance specially intended for drying delicate garments, which is designed to integrally comprise a perforated drying surface and air conveying means as described above.

[0046] The household appliance comprises control means to enable the air circulating means 10 and the heating means 11 to be switched on as required, as well as the different drying modes of the appliance to be properly selected. In this connection, it should in fact be no-

ticed that different drying temperatures and different drying times may be required to most properly handle the various garments to be dried, depending, among other things, on the textile fibres which each single garment is made of.

[0047] Such control means are arranged on the front panel 4 of the washing and/or drying machine or on a specific console provided on the self-standing appliance.

[0048] In another embodiment the control means are directly integrated on the drying surface 8 of the washing and/or drying machine or on the worktop of the self-standing appliance.

[0049] It can therefore be conclusively stated that, with the arrangement according to the present invention, delicate textiles can be gently and effectively dried in a most convenient manner, without this implying any large energy usage, thereby doing away with the drawbacks cited as regard EP 06 112 671.0 document. In this connection, it should further be noticed that the household appliance according to the present invention may advantageously be used to also quickly and effectively warm up and dry bathroom towels or bathrobes before and after using them, respectively, as well as to dry kitchen towels.

[0050] Advantageously the household appliance according to the present invention can be used to warm the room where the appliance is located, in particular, for example, the bathroom. In fact, when no garment is present upon the worktop, hot and dry air is adapted to be discharged to the atmosphere through the apertures 7 by means of the blower and the electric heating elements. For this purpose, control means are provided to operate the air circulating means 10 and the heating means 11 according to a specifically intended warm-up mode in order to heat up the air of the room where the appliance is located.

Claims

1. Household appliance comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), and at least a drying surface (8) having a plurality of apertures (7) fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments placed over said drying surface (8), **characterized in that** said worktop (3) comprises an extendable/collapsible structure (15) adapted to define a drying cabinet for accommodating garments to be dried, said drying surface (8) forming the bottom of the drying cabinet so as to blow air directly into said drying cabinet.
2. Household appliance according to claim 1, wherein said extendable/collapsible structure (15) is comprised of a panel (16), which forms the ceiling, i.e. the top wall of the drying cabinet, and deformable side members (17) that form the side walls of the drying cabinet, said deformable side members (17) connecting the panel (16) with the drying surface (8).
3. Household appliance according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said drying surface (8) is integrally provided on the worktop (3) of the outer casing (2) to form the bottom surface of the drying cabinet.
4. Household appliance according to claim 2, wherein said panel (16) is in a position in which it lies close upon the drying surface (8), and said deformable side members (17) are folded up between the panel (16) and the drying surface (8), when the structure (15) is not being used.
5. Household appliance according to claim 2, wherein said panel (16) is capable of being brought to a raised position relative to drying surface (8) so as to cause the deformable side members (17) to extend, said panel (16) being adapted to reach up to a limiting lift-up position in which, owing to them being fully extended, the deformable side members (17) of the structure (15) become rigid, thereby forming said drying cabinet.
6. Household appliance according to claim 2, wherein at least one of said deformable side members (17) is provided so as to enable the drying cabinet to be opened and closed and, therefore, the garments to be dried to be arranged thereinside and removed therefrom.
7. Household appliance comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), and at least a drying surface (8) having a plurality of apertures (7) fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments placed over said drying surface (8), **characterized in that** the worktop (3) comprises a clothes-horse (18) for laying out garments above the drying surface (8) at a certain distance therefrom.
8. Household appliance according to claim 7, wherein said clothes-horse (18) is comprised of a foldable structure adapted to lie flat upon said drying surface (8) when the clothes-horse is not in use.
9. Household appliance according to claim 8, wherein said clothes-horse (18) comprises a pair of arcuate arms (19) rotatably associated to the worktop (3) and a plurality of lines (20) having their ends engaging said arms (19).
10. Household appliance according to claim 8, wherein said arms (19) are adapted to rotate from a first position, in which they are convergent relative to each other and lie flat on the drying surface (8) along with the lines (20), to a second position, in which they are raised from the drying surface (8) and divergent relative to each other.

ative to each other, so as to stretch out and tighten the lines (20) and enable the garments to be dried to be supported thereupon.

11. Household appliance comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), and at least a drying surface (8) having a plurality of apertures (7) fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments placed over said drying surface (8), **characterized in that** said drying surface (8) is slidable within an accommodation (21) provided in said worktop (3) from a first position, in which the drying surface (8) is contained in the accommodation (21) of the worktop (3), to a second position, in which the drying surface (8) is extracted, i.e. pulled out horizontally from the accommodation (21) of the worktop (3) to support garments to be dried.
12. Household appliance according to claim 11, wherein said drying surface (8) is provided integrally on a drawer-like structure (22) adapted to slide within the accommodation (21).
13. Household appliance according to claim 12, wherein said drawer-like structure (22) is hollow internally so as to integrally form said conveying means for the hot drying air to be conveyed under and along the drying surface (8).
14. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said conveying means comprise at least an air passage (9) adapted to convey the air up to and along the worktop (3) underneath the drying surface (8), so that the air is able to flow through the apertures (7) from the bottom upwards, and air circulating means (10) adapted to force a flow of air into and through the air passage (9).
15. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein heating means (11) are provided to heat up the air, so that it is properly heated-up air that eventually hits the garment to be dried.
16. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said air passage (9) extends along the drying surface (8) and defines an open end portion (13) fluidly communicating with the air circulating means (10) to receive the flow of drying air thereinto.
17. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said heating means (11) are arranged downstream from the air circulating means (10) and upstream of the air passage (9).
18. Household appliance to any of the preceding claims 11 to 17, wherein said accommodation (21) defines

a drying-medium channel adapted to fluidly connect the air passage (9) of the drawer-like structure (22) with the air circulating means (10), when said drawer-like structure (22) is in said second position.

19. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims 11 to 18, wherein said worktop (3) comprises a plurality of apertures (24) that fluidly communicate with the air circulating means (10) to define a second drying surface (25).
20. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said air passage (9) is integrally formed in the worktop (3).
21. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, comprising control means to enable the air circulating means (10) and the heating means (11) to be switched on and operated as required.
22. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said control means are provided to enable different drying temperatures and different drying times to most properly handle the various garments to be dried, depending on the textile fibres which each single garment is made of.
23. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, wherein said control means are provided to operate the air circulating means (10) and the heating means (11) according to a specifically intended warm-up mode in order to heat up the air of the room where the appliance is located.
24. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, comprising a drum rotatably supported inside the outer casing (2) and adapted to be loaded with items to be washed and/or dried.

Amended claims in accordance with Rule 86(2) EPC.

1. Household appliance comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), and at least a drying surface (8) having a plurality of apertures (7) fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments placed over said drying surface (8), **characterized in that** said worktop (3) comprises an extendable/collapsible structure (15) adapted to define a drying cabinet for accommodating garments to be dried, said extendable/collapsible structure (15) comprises a panel (16), which forms the ceiling, i.e. the top wall of the drying cabinet, and deformable side members (17) that form the side walls of the drying cabinet, said deformable side members (17) connecting the panel (16) with the drying surface (8), said drying surface (8) is integrally provided on the

worktop (3) of the outer casing (2) to form the bottom surface of the drying cabinet so as to blow air directly into said drying cabinet.

2. Household appliance according to claim 1, wherein said panel (16) is in a position in which it lies close upon the drying surface (8), and said deformable side members (17) are folded up between the panel (16) and the drying surface (8), when the structure (15) is not being used.

3. Household appliance according to claim 1, wherein said panel (16) is capable of being brought to a raised position relative to drying surface (8) so as to cause the deformable side members (17) to extend, said panel (16) being adapted to reach up to a limiting lift-up position in which, owing to them being fully extended, the deformable side members (17) of the structure (15) become rigid, thereby forming said drying cabinet.

4. Household appliance according to claim 1, wherein at least one of said deformable side members (17) is provided so as to enable the drying cabinet to be opened and closed and, therefore, the garments to be dried to be arranged thereinside and removed therefrom.

5. Household appliance comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), and at least a drying surface (8) having a plurality of apertures (7) fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments placed over said drying surface (8), said drying surface (8) is provided integrally on a drawer-like structure (22) adapted to slide within an accommodation (21) provided in said worktop (3) from a first position, in which the drying surface (8) is contained in the accommodation (21) of the worktop (3), to a second position, in which the drying surface (8) is extracted, i.e. pulled out horizontally from the accommodation (21) of the worktop (3) to support garments to be dried, **characterized in that** said drawer-like structure (22) is hollow internally so as to integrally form at least an air passage (9) adapted to convey the air through the apertures (7) of the drying surface (8), air circulating means (10) are provided to force a flow of air through the air passage (9), said accommodation (21) defines a drying-medium channel adapted to fluidly connect the air passage (9) of the drawer-like structure (22) with the air circulating means (10), when said drawer-like structure (22) is in said second position.

6. Household appliance according to claim 5, wherein heating means (11) are provided to heat up the air, so that it is properly heated-up air that eventually hits the garment to be dried.

7. Household appliance according to claim 5, wherein said air passage (9) extends along the drying surface (8) and defines an open end portion (13) fluidly communicating with the air circulating means (10) to receive the flow of drying air thereinto.

8. Household appliance according to claim 6, wherein said heating means (11) are arranged downstream from the air circulating means (10) and upstream of the air passage (9).

9. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims 5 to 8, wherein said worktop (3) comprises a plurality of apertures (24) that fluidly communicate with the air circulating means (10) to define a second drying surface (25).

10. Household appliance according to any of the preceding claims, comprising a drum rotatably supported inside the outer casing (2) and adapted to be loaded with items to be washed and/or dried.

11. Washing machine comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), a drum rotatably supported inside the outer casing (2) and adapted to be loaded with items to be washed, **characterized in that** said worktop (3) comprises a plurality of apertures (7), each one of which is fluidly connected with conveying means adapted to deliver a flow of air through said apertures (7) for drying garments laid upon the same worktop (3), and a clothes-horse (18) for laying out garments above the worktop (3) at a certain distance therefrom.

12. Household appliance according to claim 11, wherein said clothes-horse (18) is comprised of a foldable structure adapted to lie flat upon said worktop (3) when the clothes-horse is not in use.

13. Household appliance according to claim 12, wherein said clothes-horse (18) comprises a pair of arcuate arms (19) rotatably associated to the worktop (3) and a plurality of lines (20) having their ends engaging said arms (19).

14. Household appliance according to claim 12, wherein said arms (19) are adapted to rotate from a first position, in which they are convergent relative to each other and lie flat on the worktop (3) along with the lines (20), to a second position, in which they are raised from the worktop (3) and divergent relative to each other, so as to stretch out and tighten the lines (20) and enable the garments to be dried to be supported thereupon.

15. Tumble dryer comprising an outer casing (2) provided with a worktop (3), a drum rotatably supported inside the outer casing (2) and adapted to be loaded

with items to be dried, first air circulating means to cause heated drying air to be circulated through the drum, first heating means adapted to heat up the drying air to be sent into the drum, and, in case of a condenser tumble dryer, second air circulating means for cooling condensing means adapted to remove the moisture from the hot moisture-laden drying air exiting the drum after having flown through the items to be dried, said worktop (3) comprises a plurality of apertures (7) through which air is adapted to flow for drying garments laid upon the same worktop, **characterized in that** the tumble dryer comprises auxiliary circulation means (10) fluidly connected with said apertures (7) for taking in air from the ambient where the dryer is located and forcing said air through the apertures (7), at least an auxiliary electric heating element (11) arranged downstream from the auxiliary air circulating means (10) for heating-up the air to be directed through the apertures (7), control means to enable the auxiliary circulation means (10) and the auxiliary electric heating element (11) to be switched on and operated as required and the worktop (3) comprises a clothes-horse (18) for laying out garments above the worktop (3) at a certain distance therefrom.

16. Household appliance according to claim 15, wherein said clothes-horse (18) is comprised of a foldable structure adapted to lie flat upon said worktop (3) when the clothes-horse is not in use.

17. Household appliance according to claim 16, wherein said clothes-horse (18) comprises a pair of arcuate arms (19) rotatably associated to the worktop (3) and a plurality of lines (20) having their ends engaging said arms (19).

18. Household appliance according to claim 16, wherein said arms (19) are adapted to rotate from a first position, in which they are convergent relative to each other and lie flat on the worktop (3) along with the lines (20), to a second position, in which they are raised from the worktop (3) and divergent relative to each other, so as to stretch out and tighten the lines (20) and enable the garments to be dried to be supported thereupon.

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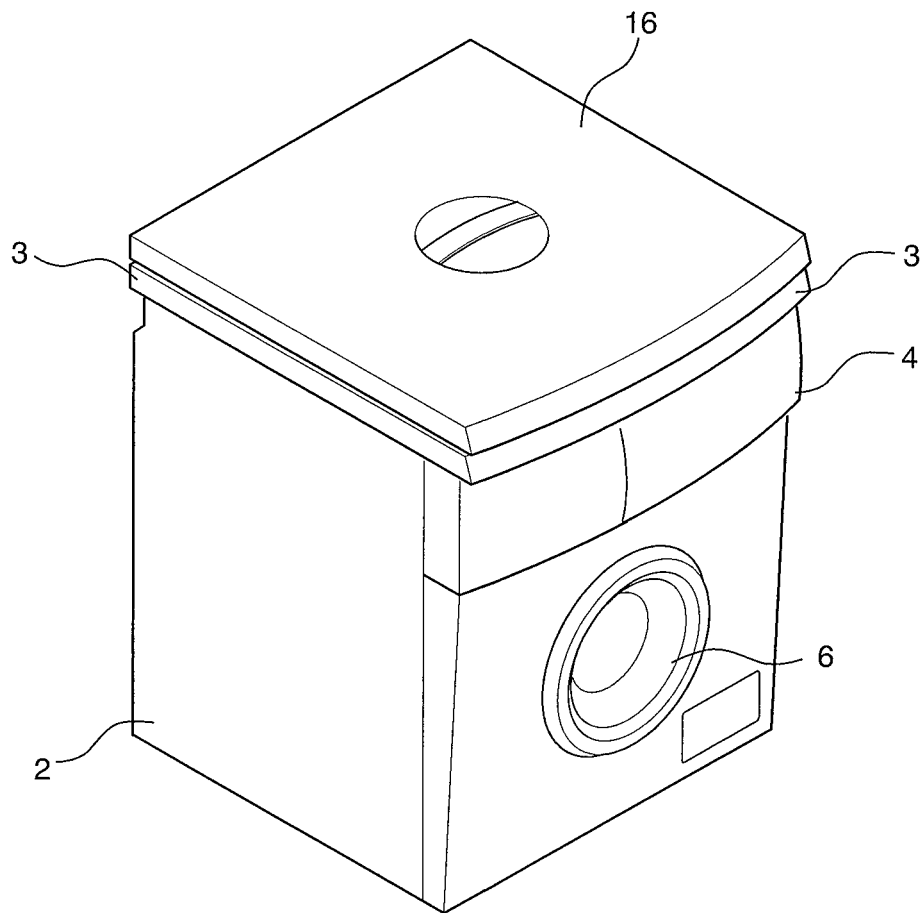


Fig 1

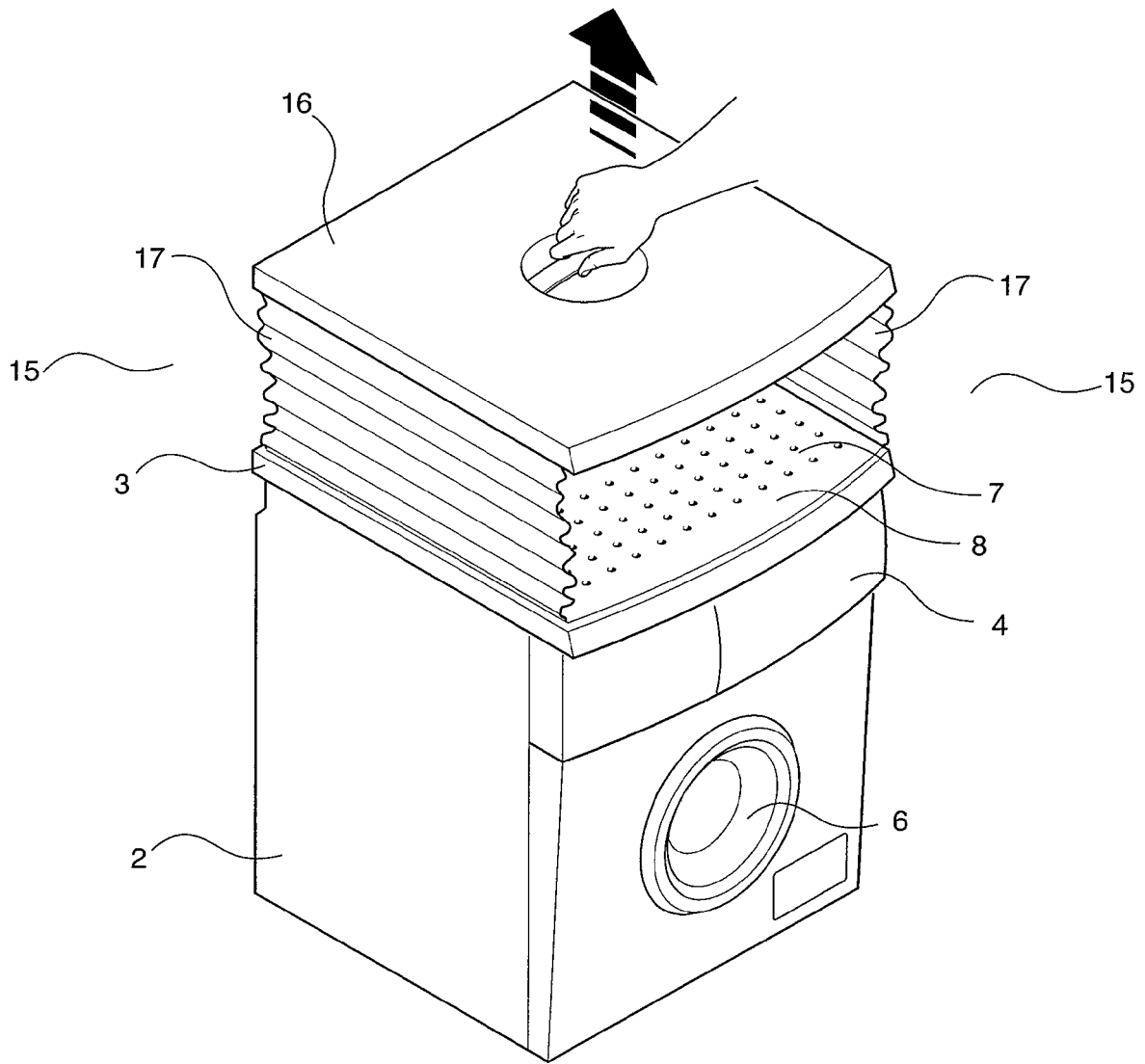


Fig 2

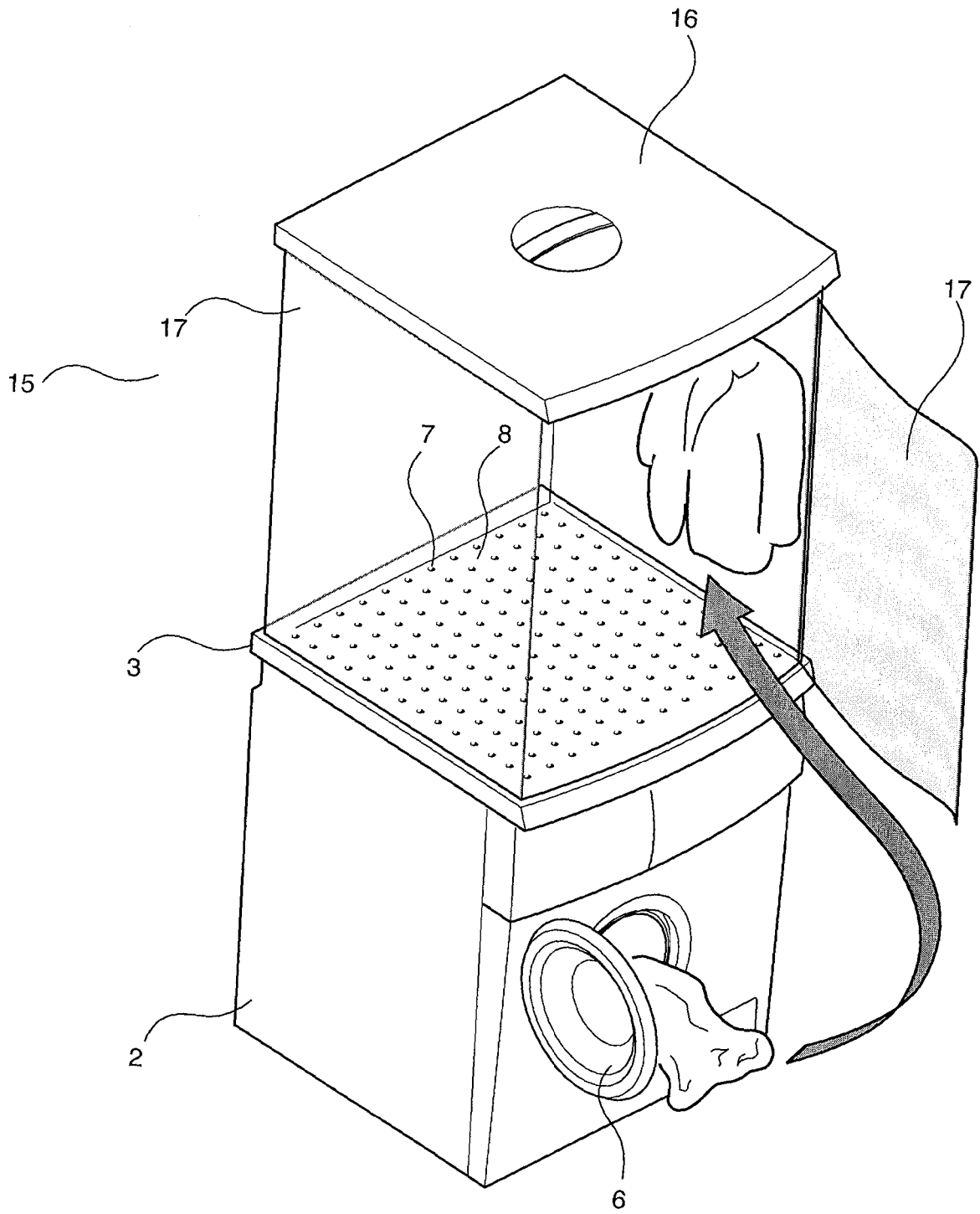


Fig 3

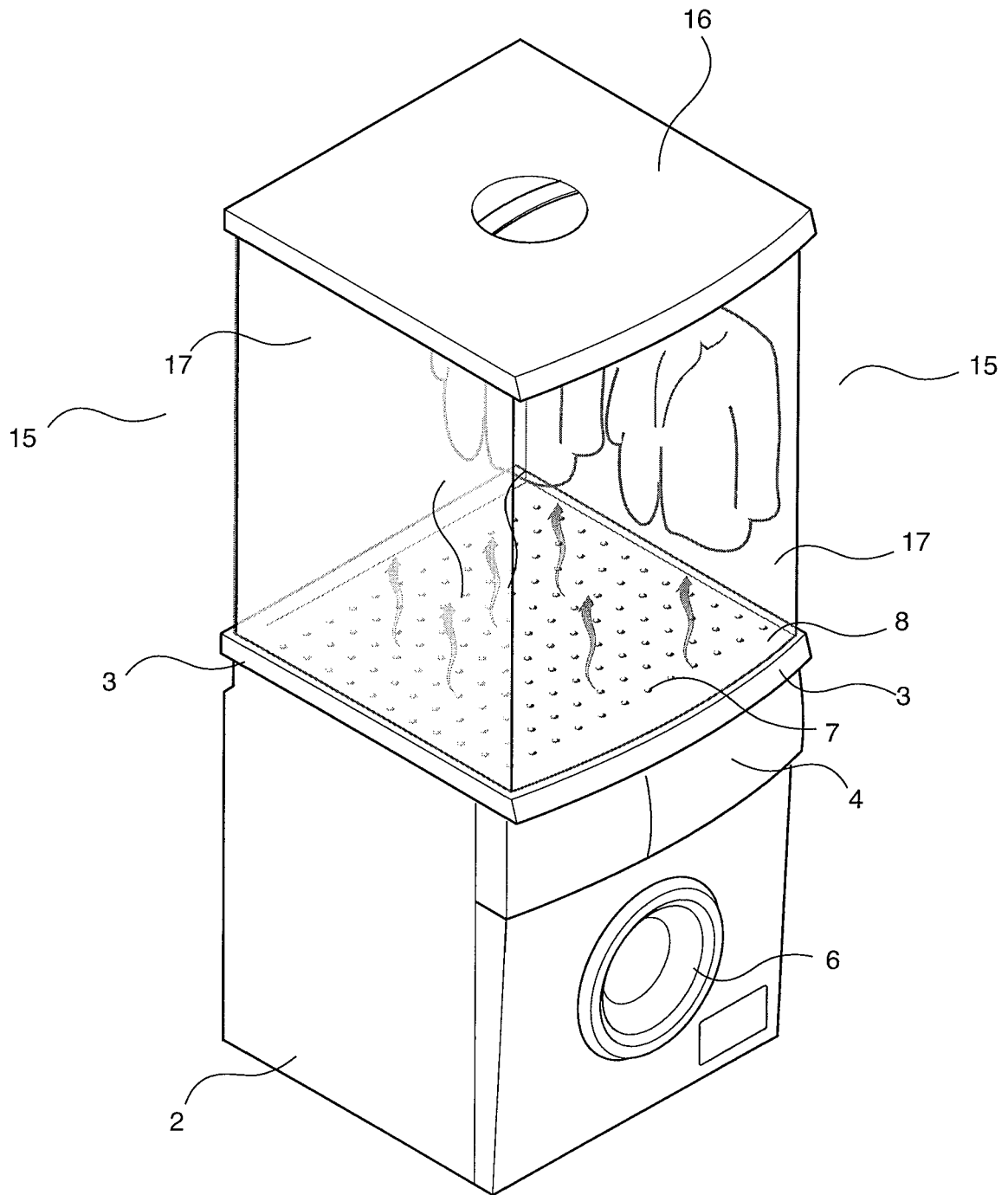


Fig 4

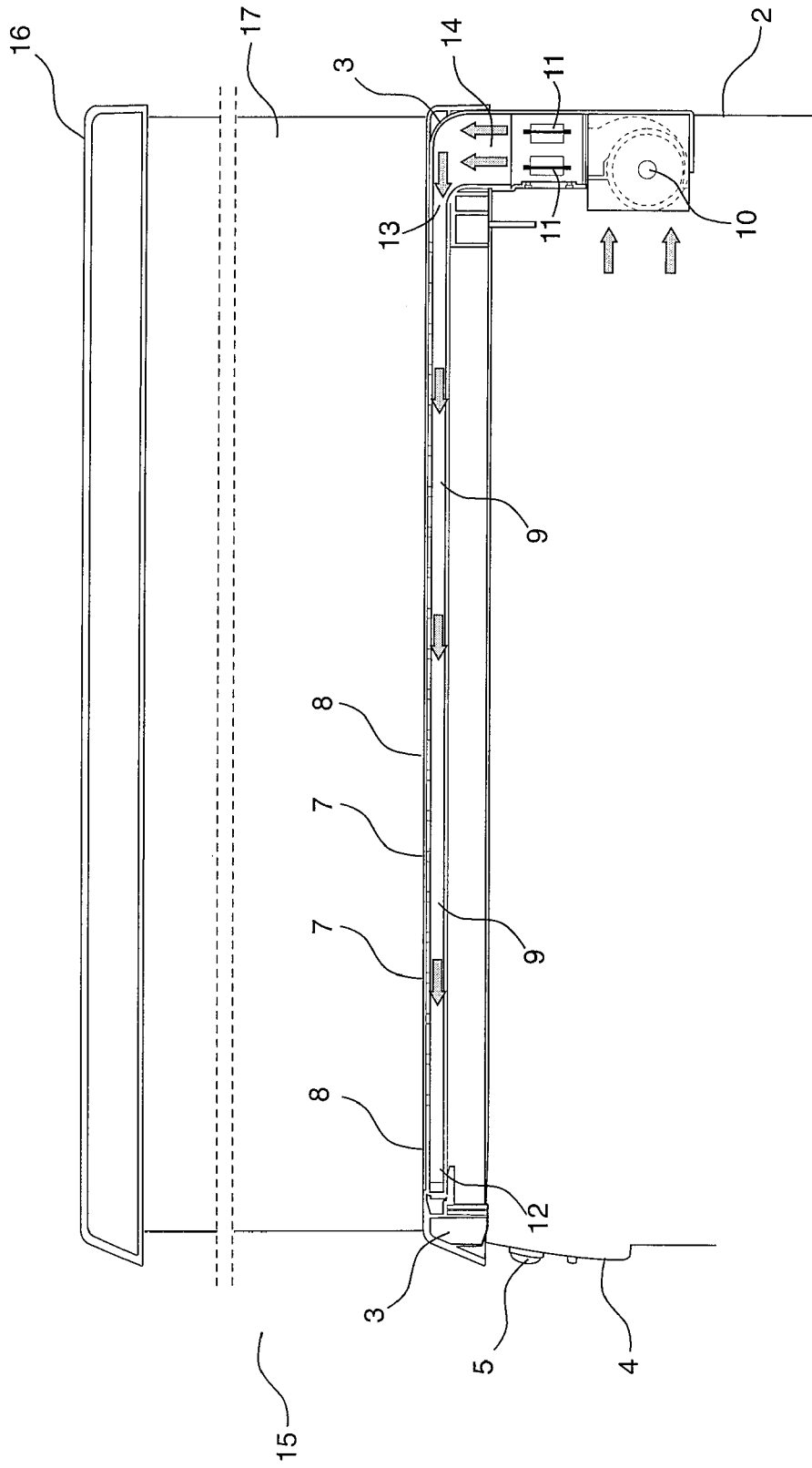


fig. 5

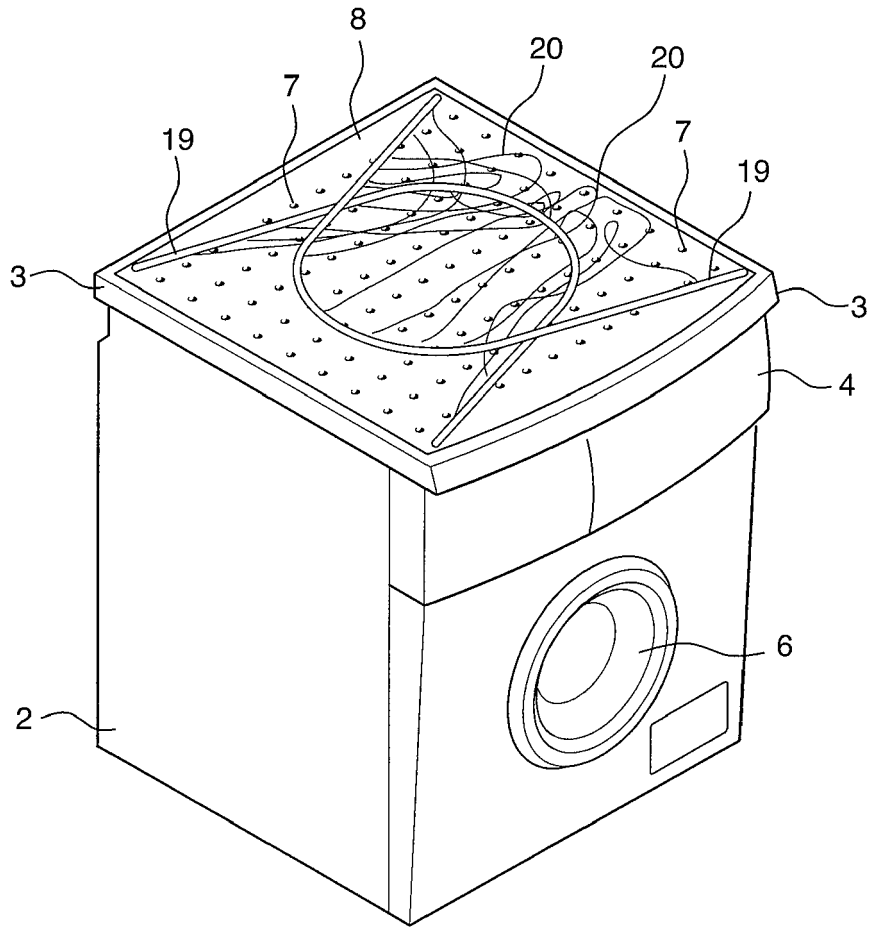


Fig 6

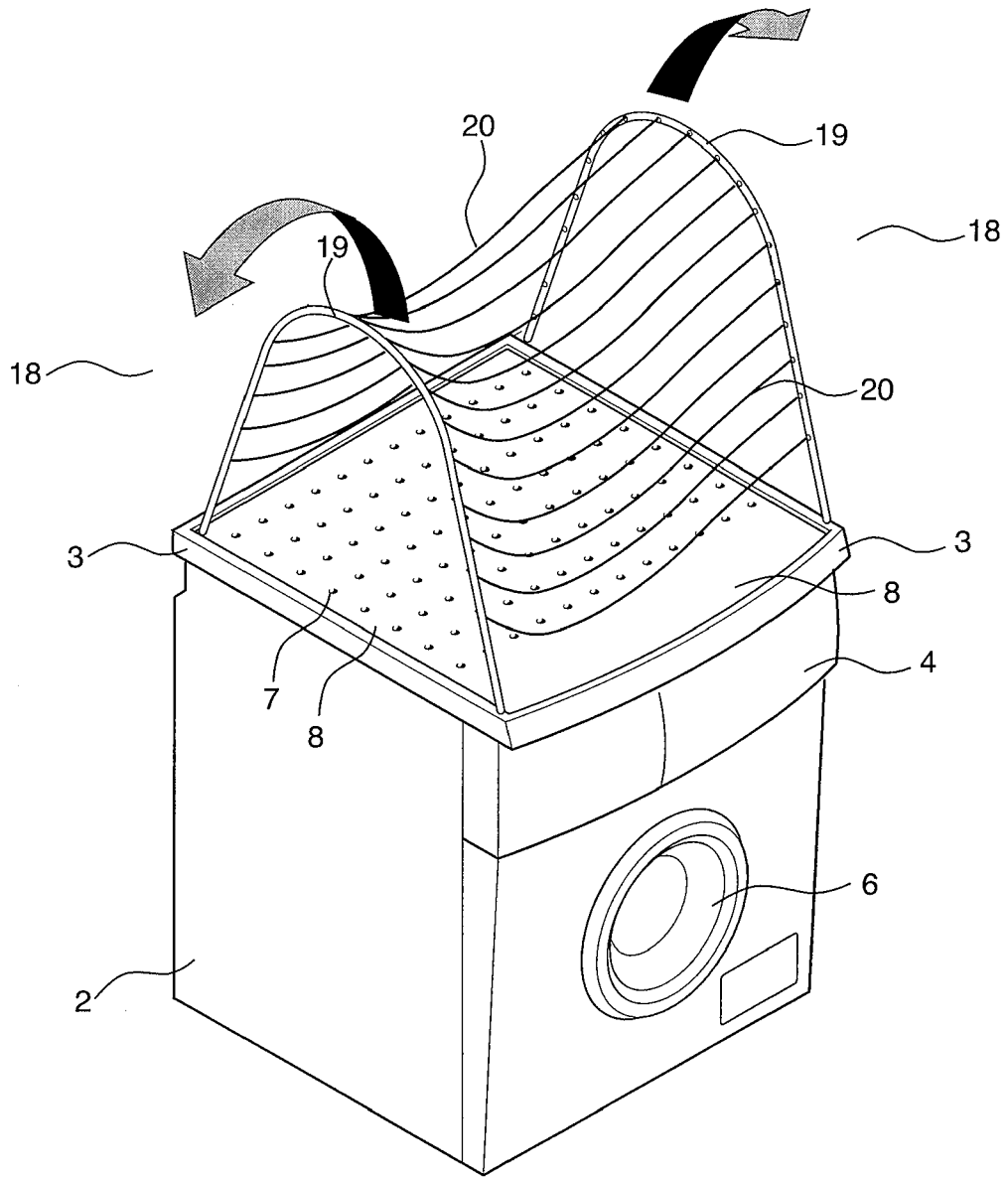


Fig 7

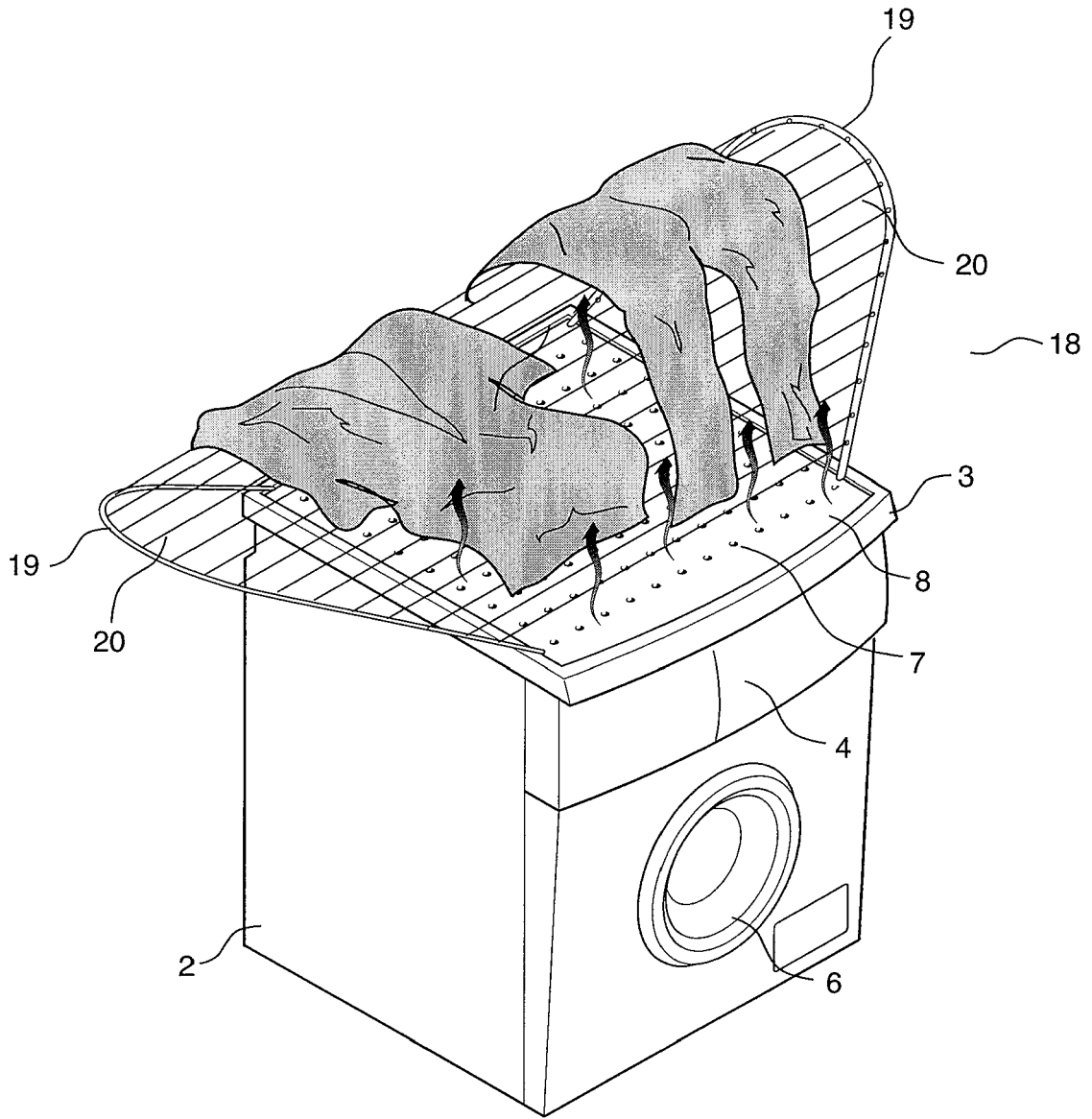


Fig 8

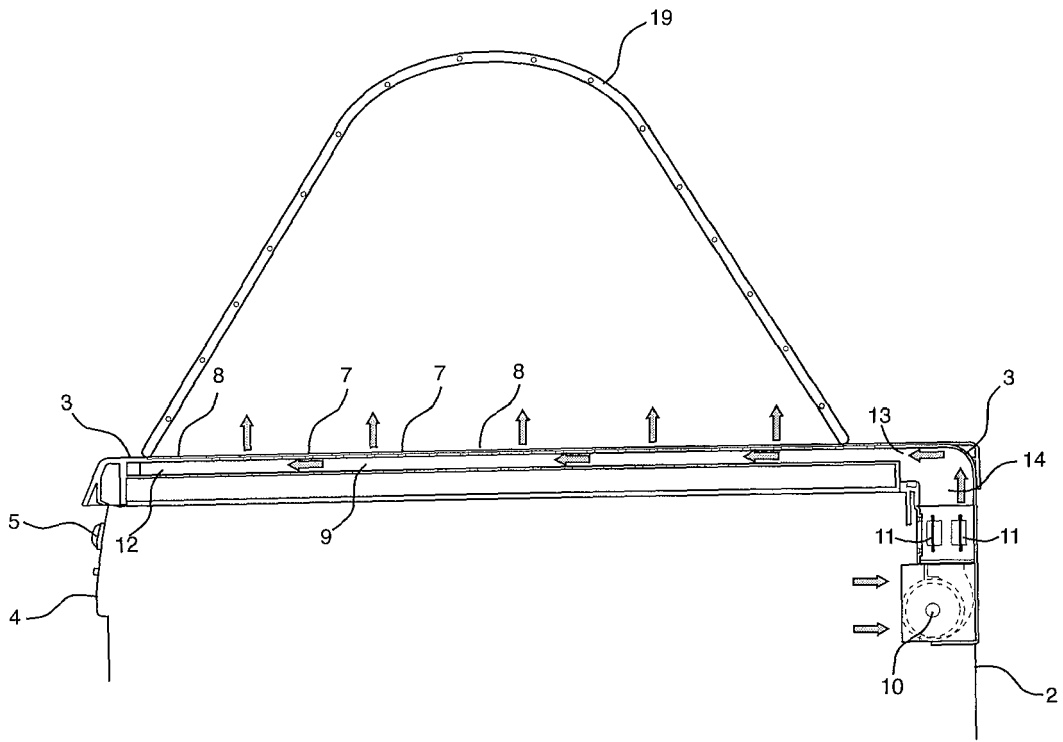


fig. 9

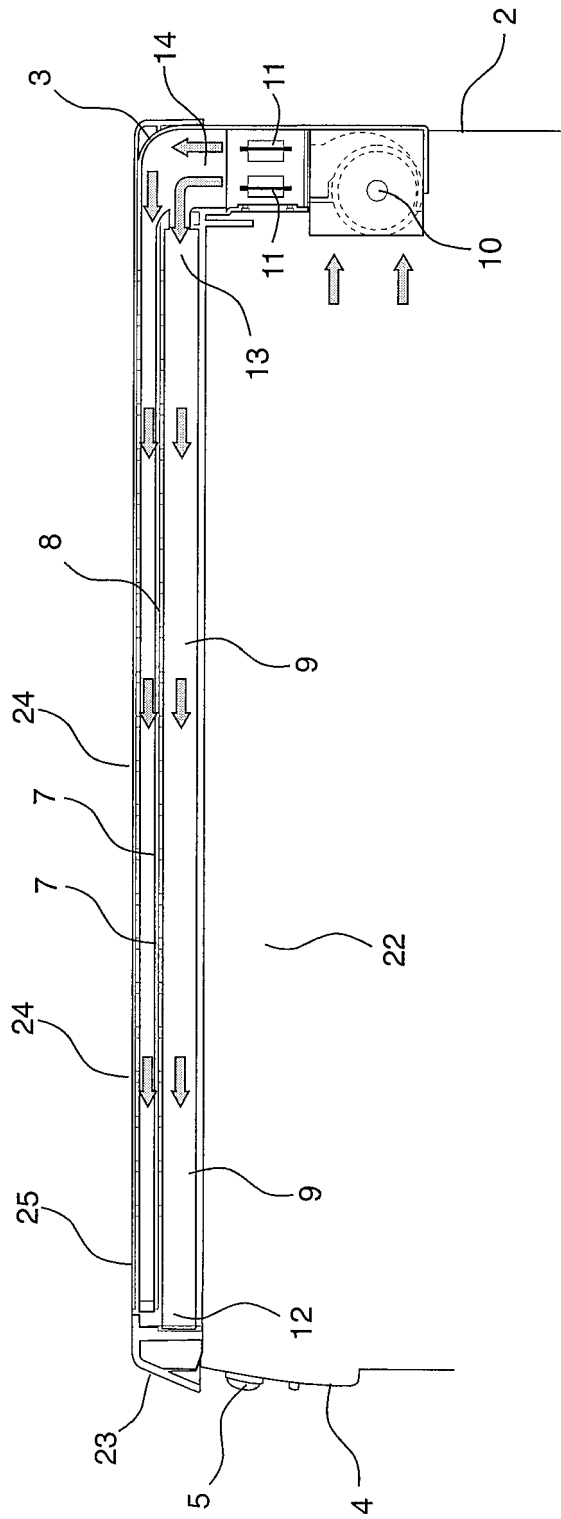


fig. 10

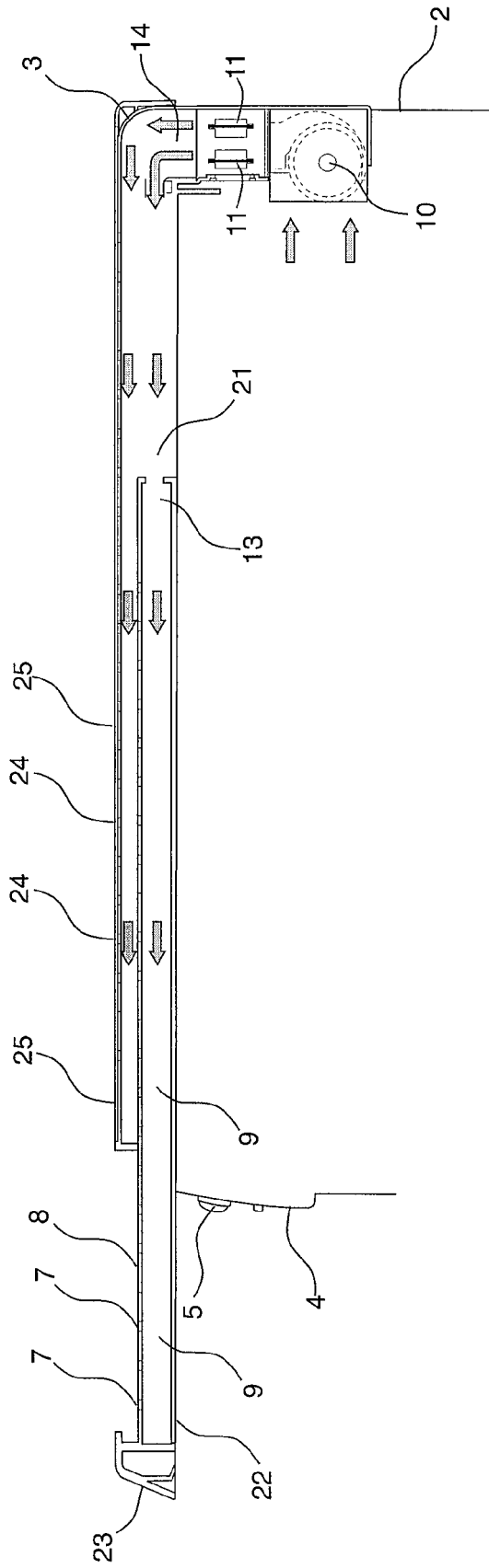


fig. 11

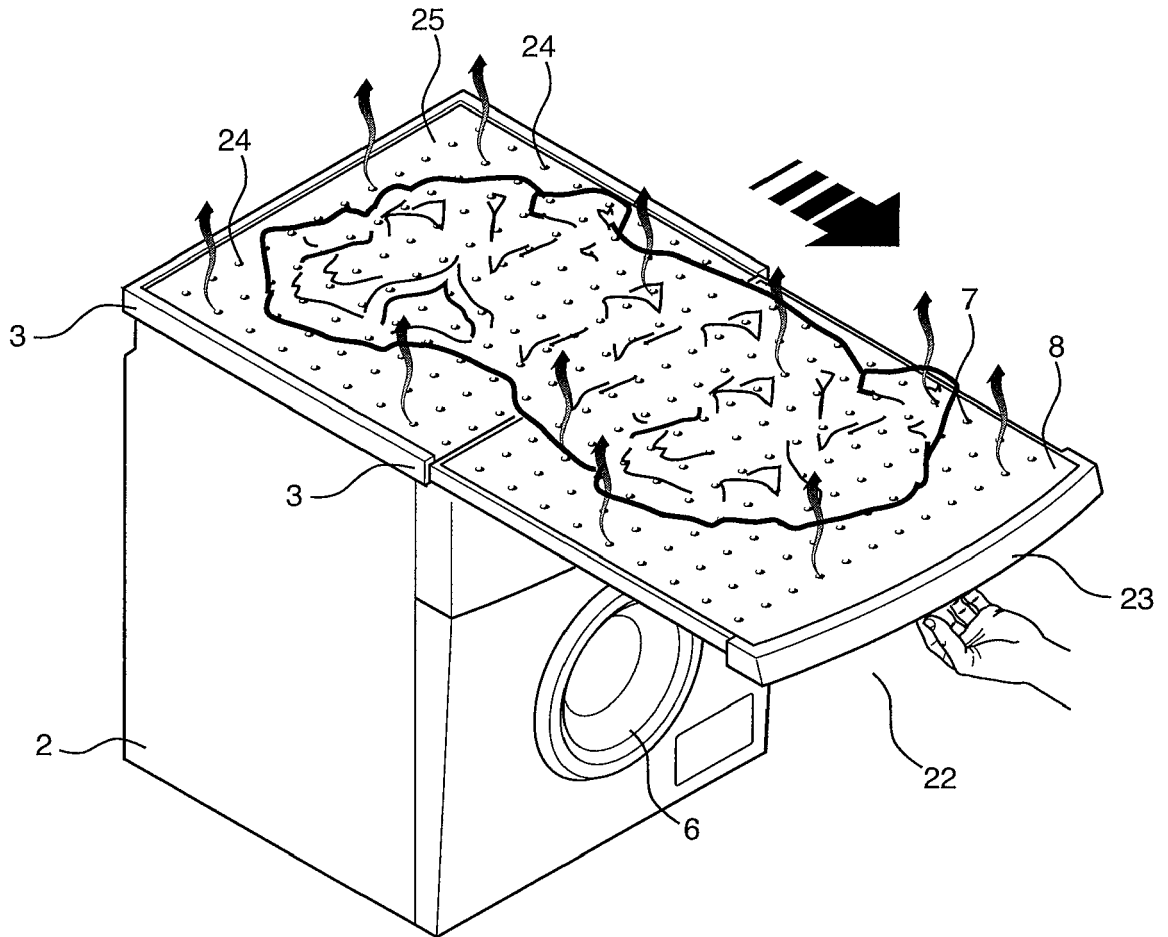


Fig 12

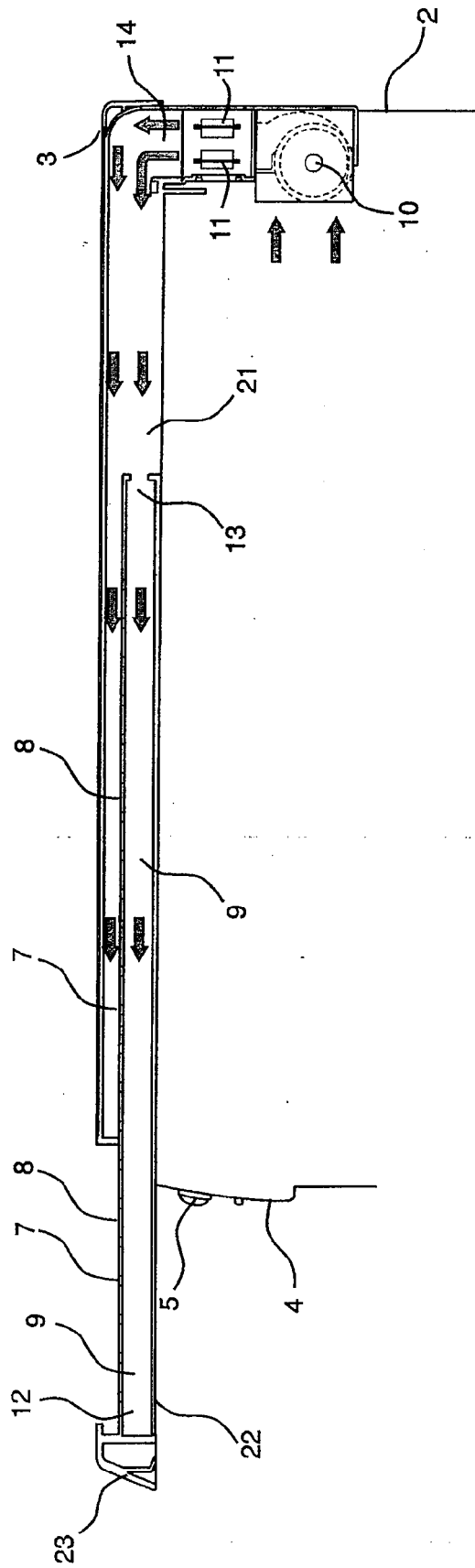


fig. 13

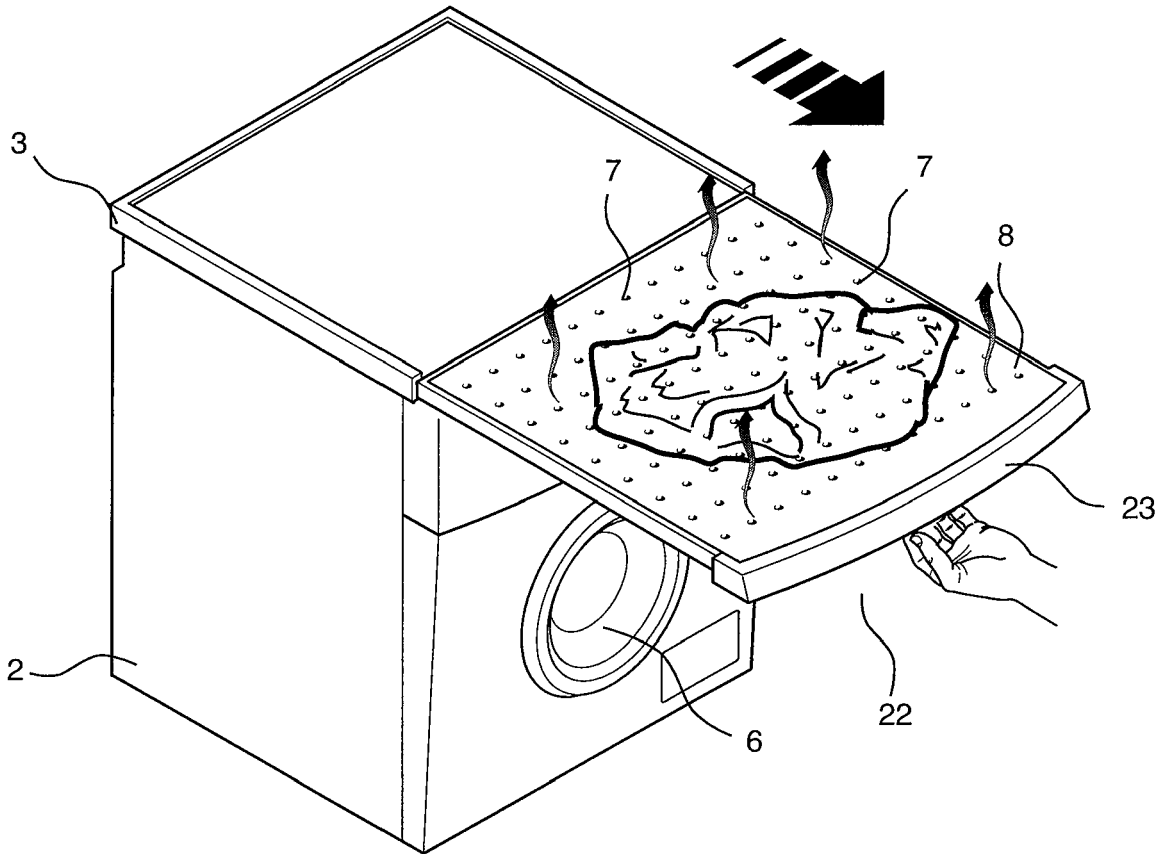


Fig 14



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Place of search Munich		Date of completion of the search 22 September 2006	Examiner DIAZ, M
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