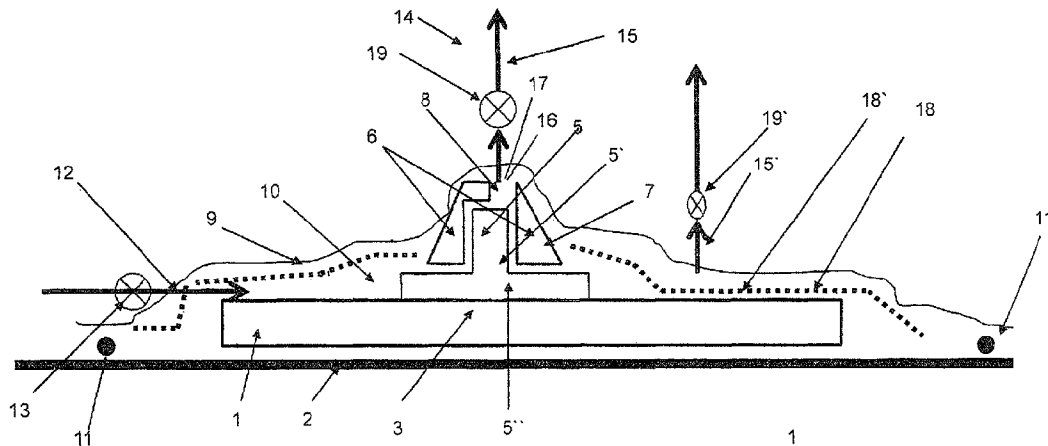




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(54) Titre : PROCEDE DE PRODUCTION D'UNE PIECE STRUCTURALE EN COMPOSITE FIBREUX, ET ENSEMBLE OUTIL UTILISE A CETTE FIN
(54) Title: METHOD FOR PRODUCING A FIBRE COMPOSITE COMPONENT, AND A TOOL ARRANGEMENT FOR SAME



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

The invention relates to a method for producing a fibre composite component (1) and to a tool arrangement for same, a planar fibre scrim (3) being arranged on a carrier mould (2) and provided, on a side that faces away from said carrier mould (2), with at least

(57) **Abrégé(suite)/Abstract(continued):**

one reinforcement section (5) that protrudes from the longitudinal plane of said fibre scrim (3) and is pressed between corresponding tool parts (6) of a moulding tool (7), a chamber (10) sealed with regard to the carrier mould (2) being formed by an air-tight film (9) that encloses the moulding tool (7), the fibre scrim (3) and the at least one reinforcement section (5), and said chamber being connected to at least one resin supply line (12) and at least one vacuum line (15). Resin is aspirated by means of negative pressure being applied to the vacuum line (15), and the fibre scrim (3) and the reinforcement section (5) are saturated by the resin so as to form the fibre composite component (1). Air and resin are drawn between the tool parts (6) of the moulding tool (7), through the at least one reinforcement section (5), and into a suction channel (16) which extends in the moulding tool (7) and is connected to the at least one vacuum line (15) via a suction opening (17) of said moulding tool (7), such that air and/or resin can be conducted.

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(54) Title: METHOD FOR PRODUCING A FIBRE COMPOSITE COMPONENT, AND A TOOL ARRANGEMENT FOR SAME

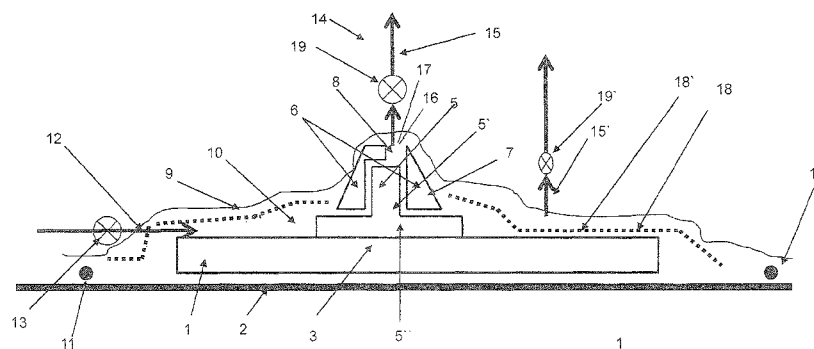
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Fig. 1

(57) Abstract: The invention relates to a method for producing a fibre composite component (1) and to a tool arrangement for same, a planar fibre scrim (3) being arranged on a carrier mould (2) and provided, on a side that faces away from said carrier mould (2), with at least one reinforcement section (5) that protrudes from the longitudinal plane of said fibre scrim (3) and is pressed between corresponding tool parts (6) of a moulding tool (7), a chamber (10) sealed with regard to the carrier mould (2) being formed by an air-tight film (9) that encloses the moulding tool (7), the fibre scrim (3) and the at least one reinforcement section (5), and said chamber being connected to at least one resin supply line (12) and at least one vacuum line (15). Resin is aspirated by means of negative pressure being applied to the vacuum line (15), and the fibre scrim (3) and the reinforcement section (5) are saturated by the resin so as to form the fibre composite component (1). Air and resin are drawn between the tool parts (6) of the moulding tool (7), through the at least one reinforcement section (5), and into a suction channel (16) which extends in the moulding tool (7) and is connected to the at least one vacuum line (15) via a suction opening (17) of said moulding tool (7), such that air and/or resin can be conducted.

(57) Zusammenfassung:

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WO 2012/119163 A1

WO 2012/119163 A1**Erklärungen gemäß Regel 4.17:**

— *Erfindererklärung (Regel 4.17 Ziffer iv)*

Veröffentlicht:

— *mit internationalem Recherchenbericht (Artikel 21 Absatz 3)*

Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Faserverbundbauteils (1) und Werkzeuganordnung hierfür, wobei auf einer Tragform (2) ein flächiges Fasergelege (3) angeordnet wird, welches auf einer von der Tragform (2) abgewandten Seite mit zumindest einem von der Längsebene des Fasergeleges (3) abstehenden Versteifungsprofil (5) versehen wird, das zwischen entsprechenden Werkzeugteilen (6) eines Formwerkzeugs (7) verpresst wird, wobei mittels einer das Formwerkzeug (7) und das Fasergelege (3) bzw. das zumindest eine Versteifungsprofil (5) umschließenden luftdichten Folie (9) ein zur Tragform (2) abgedichteter Raum (10) gebildet wird, der mit zumindest einer Harz-Zuleitung (12) und zumindest einer Vakuumleitung (15) verbunden wird, wobei durch Anlegen eines Unterdrucks an der Vakuumleitung (15) Harz angesaugt wird, welches das Fasergelege (3) bzw. das Versteifungsprofil (5) zur Ausbildung des Faserverbundbauteils (1) durchtränkt, wobei Luft und Harz zwischen den Werkzeugteilen (6) des Formwerkzeugs (7) durch das zumindest eine Versteifungsprofil (5) in einen im Formwerkzeug (7) verlaufenden Absaugkanal (16) gesaugt werden, der über eine Absaugöffnung (17) des Formwerkzeugs (7) in luft- bzw. harzleitender Verbindung mit der zumindest einen Vakuumleitung (15) steht.

- 1 -

**METHOD FOR PRODUCING A FIBRE COMPOSITE COMPONENT, AND A TOOL
ARRANGEMENT FOR SAME**

The invention relates to a method for producing a fibre composite component, wherein a planar fibre lay-up is arranged on a carrier mould, which fibre lay-up, on a side that faces away from the carrier mould, is provided with at least one stiffening section that protrudes from the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up and is pressed between corresponding tool parts of a moulding tool, wherein a chamber sealed relative to the carrier mould is formed by an air-tight film that encloses the moulding tool and the fibre lay-up and the at least one stiffening section, respectively, which chamber is connected to at least one resin supply line and at least one vacuum line, resin being aspirated by applying a negative pressure to the vacuum line, which resin impregnates the fibre lay-up and the stiffening section, respectively, so as to form the fibre composite component.

The invention further relates to a tool arrangement for a method for producing a fibre composite component with a carrier mould for accommodating a planar fibre lay-up and a moulding tool with corresponding tool parts, which, in their closed state, enclose a recess for accommodating a stiffening section for the fibre lay-up.

In the prior art, various infusion methods for producing fibre composite components are known, wherein a dry fibre material is impregnated with a matrix material which is aspirated by applying a vacuum to a sealed space. The fibre material which constitutes a pre-form or a pre-product of the complete composite component may, depending on its type, be formed by a multi-axial lay-up, a tissue or by unidirectional layers. This pre-form is arranged on a tool which defines the

- 2 -

facing component side of the fibre composite component. On the opposite side of the composite component, a vacuum set-up is arranged which, depending on its type, comprises different films, a peel-ply and membranes.

From EP 1 181 149 B1, an injection method for producing a fibre-reinforced plastic component from a dry fibre composite preform is known, which is arranged on a tool. For forming an infusion space, the fibre composite component is covered with a semi-permeable membrane which is gas-permeable, yet prevents the passage of matrix material. Moreover, a peel-ply and a flow promoting device may be arranged. This arrangement is covered by a gas-impermeable foil which is sealed by a seal on the tool so that a second space is formed which is connected to a vacuum line. Thus, two separate spaces are used to ensure an overall deaeration of the fibre lay-up and to prevent the entry of matrix material into the vacuum line.

In EP 21 19 544 A1 and WO 2009/060347 A1, further methods for producing composite components are known, in which the fibre composite material is provided with a foil structure in the region of the moulding tool so as to control the supply and removal, respectively, of the matrix material.

In US 5,601,852, a further infusion method is described in which the composite component is produced on a solid carrier which is sealed by a special vacuum bag that forms individual supply channels.

Basically, the known methods are very well suited to produce high-quality fibre composite components, yet they meet their limits when large-area structures are to be provided with reinforcement sections. In the known methods, intricate and complex vacuum structures and film or membrane arrangements, respectively, are required in this case. In particular, this bears the risks of local leaks, tearing of the films or

- 3 -

premature filling of the vacuum lines with matrix material. These problems are additionally aggravated if narrow tolerances are set for the geometry of the sections (location, position, thickness, height etc.).

Thus, the present invention has as its object to provide a method of the initially defined type which is improved with regard to the problems previously discussed. Accordingly, in particular a method which is easy to be carried out is to be provided, which is well suited for producing fibre composite components with reinforcement sections even in larger numbers and with a complicated course. Moreover, a tool arrangement of simple construction to be used in such a method is to be created.

With the method of the initially defined type, this object is achieved in that air and resin are aspirated between the tool parts of the moulding tool through the at least one stiffening section into a suction channel extending in the moulding tool, which suction channel is connected in an air and resin-conducting manner, respectively, to the at least one vacuum line via a suction opening of the moulding tool.

Accordingly, when applying a negative pressure to the sealed chamber, air and resin are aspirated between the tool parts of the moulding tool through the stiffening section. After impregnation of the stiffening section, the air and resin flow, respectively, that has passed through is conducted into the suction channel in the moulding tool, which channel follows upon the central recess of the moulding tool. The suction channel which suitably is designed as integral cavity of the moulding tool has a cross-section that is small compared to the central recess of the moulding tool, the introduced air and resin flow, respectively, reaching the suction opening of the moulding tool, which suction opening is connected to the vacuum

- 4 -

device. In this way it is ensured in an advantageous manner that air and resin can get into the vacuum line only after the pre-form composed of the fibre lay-up and the stiffening section has been completely penetrated. This, in particular, makes it possible for the pre-form to have at least one section that is free from a semi-permeable membrane, i.e. a membrane that is air-permeable but resin-impermeable, preferably in the region of the at least one stiffening section. Thus, the problems occurring in the prior art, especially the complicated and fault-prone arrangement of the semi-permeable membrane in the region of the stiffening elements as well as an undesired entry of resin into the vacuum line before the complete penetration of the pre-form, are reliably prevented. Thus, high-quality fibre composite components can be produced for various arrangements and configurations of the stiffening sections. In addition, the amount of rejects can be considerably reduced.

In order to ensure complete impregnation of the stiffening section at comparatively short time intervals, it is suitable if resin and air are sucked off via the suction opening at the upper side of the moulding tool that faces away from the carrier mould. Accordingly, the moulding tool has a suction opening on its upper side which, in particular, is formed as a cavity of the moulding tool so that air and resin will get to the outer side of the moulding tool via the suction channel, after having passed through the stiffening section. The suction opening is connected to the vacuum line in a suitable manner so as to maintain the suction pressure in the interior of the moulding tool.

For deaerating the stiffening section, it is advantageous if within the suction channel, at least in portions thereof, air and resin are sucked off substantially perpendicular to the

- 5 -

longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up. In this way, resin and air can be efficiently aspirated from the fibre lay-up through the stiffening section into the suction channel and transported via the suction channel which, at least in portions thereof, extends perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up to the external suction opening of the moulding tool, to which a negative pressure is applied by means of the vacuum line.

In order to prevent the resin from entering the vacuum line, it is suitable if the vacuum line comprises a membrane filter which, in its dry state, is air-permeable and resin-impermeable, which is adapted to change over into a substantially air-tight state when impregnated with resin. After the complete impregnation of the fibre pre-product, the resin gets into the vacuum line via the suction channel, which vacuum line comprises the membrane filter. When completely wetted with resin, the membrane filter closes, whereby air suction is interrupted. Thus, a self-regulating air suction is achieved. Preferably, the vacuum line, or the vacuum device connected thereto, respectively, comprises detection means which are adapted to detect a pressure change in the vacuum line. When the membrane filter changes over into its air-impermeable state after impregnation with the resin, this will cause a pressure increase in the vacuum line, which will be detected by the detection means so as to identify the complete penetration of the fibre pre-product. This arrangement of the membrane filter in the vacuum line will be particularly advantageous if the method is carried out in a closed space so that the progress of the production of the fibre composite component cannot be observed directly. Such semi-permeable membranes and membrane filters, respectively, are known in the prior art in a different context. In a preferred embodiment of

- 6 -

the membrane filter which is also known from sports clothing, a thin silicone skin is provided which will be over-expanded during the production process such that fine pores will be created which are permeable to air, yet impermeable to a liquid, in the present instance resin. In contact with resin, the pores will gradually become closed so that the membrane will change over into its air-tight state. The silicone skin may be connected to a carrier layer in the form of a tissue.

In order to assist deaeration of the fibre pre-product, it is suitable if a further vacuum line, in particular in a rim region of the fibre lay-up, is arranged. The number of vacuum lines used will mainly depend on the dimensions of the fibre composite component as well as on the number and nature of the stiffening sections.

With a view to an easy-to-install and part-saving arrangement for producing the fibre composite component it is advantageous if the further vacuum line arranged in the rim region of the fibre lay-up is united in a common main line with the vacuum line following upon the suction channel in the moulding tool. Accordingly, suction will be effected on at least two sites of the fibre pre-product, the vacuum lines being connected to the common main line which is connected to the vacuum device for producing the negative pressure.

Suitably, in a region free from the moulding tool, in particular in a rim region of the fibre composite component, a membrane or tissue structure is arranged which has a distributing membrane and/or a peel-ply. Basically, such a membrane or tissue structure is known in the prior art. Yet, sucking off air and resin at the moulding tool makes it possible to do without a semi-permeable membrane for separating an infusion space from a deaeration space, or to employ such a semi-permeable membrane exclusively in the rim region of the

- 7 -

fibre composite component, whereas the remaining regions of the fibre composite component can be free from the semi-permeable membrane.

For forming an air-tight, closed infusion space inside of the air-tight film, it is suitable if in the rim region of the fibre lay-up, the distributing membrane is sealed relative to the carrier mould.

For carrying out the method, it is suitably provided that the aspiration of resin is carried out in a furnace under the supply of heat. If the method is carried out in a furnace, it will not be possible to simply determine whether or not the impregnation of the fibre lay-up has been completed. As described before, it is, therefore, of particular advantage if a semi-permeable membrane filter is arranged in the vacuum line, which filter will change over into a closed, air-tight state when in contact with a resin. Thus, when the fibre lay-up and the stiffening section, respectively, have been completely impregnated, air suction will be automatically interrupted as soon as the resin reaches the membrane filter in the vacuum line.

In addition, the basic object of the invention is achieved by a tool arrangement of the initially defined type, in which the moulding tool has a suction channel connected to the recess for receiving the stiffening section, which suction channel is connectable to a vacuum line for sucking-off air via a suction opening formed on the moulding tool. In the prior art, moulding tools to be used in an infusion method are known in various embodiments. The moulding tool comprises at least two cooperating tool parts which enclose a central recess for pressing a correspondingly shaped stiffening section accommodated therein. In addition, the moulding tool comprises at least one suction channel designed as a cavity of at least

- 8 -

one tool part of the moulding tool. The suction channel connects the recess for the stiffening section with the suction opening which can be connected to the vacuum device. The effects and advantages, respectively, thereby achieved substantially correspond to those in the method explained above, so that reference can be made to these passages in order to avoid repetitions.

For improving the suction of air and resin through the moulding tool, it is preferably provided for the suction opening to be designed as a cavity of the moulding tool at the upper side of the moulding tool which faces away from the carrier mould. In the operating position of the moulding tool, the longitudinal axis of the suction channel preferably is arranged substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the carrier mould.

According to a preferred embodiment, the moulding tool has a recess of substantially rectangular cross-section in its closed state for pressing a web-shaped part of the stiffening section. For forming a stringer element, in particular a T-shaped stiffening section may be provided which, e.g. in a wing of an aeroplane, reinforces a large-area wing structure produced from a planar fibre lay-up.

Of course, also other configurations of the moulding tool which, by themselves, are known in the prior art may be provided in order to provide appropriate stiffening sections. Accordingly, in an alternative preferred embodiment it is provided for the moulding tool to have a recess of substantially L-shaped cross-section in its closed state, for pressing a correspondingly shaped part of the stiffening section. In this way, in particular a so-called LZ stiffening section can be produced.

In a preferred embodiment it is provided for at least two

- 9 -

moulding tools to be provided for pressing one stiffening section each, at least one spacer block being arranged therebetween which comprises a resin supply channel connectable to the resin supply line. On the one hand, the spacer is adapted to fix adjacent moulding tools in their intended positions; moreover, the resin supply may be effected through the spacers, wherein the resin is introduced in the region of the fibre lay-up into the sealed chamber via the resin supply channel.

For supplying the resin it is suitable if the resin supply channel of the spacer block comprises a portion extending substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up, which portion is connectable to the resin supply-line, and a portion extending substantially in parallel to the longitudinal plane of the fibre-lay-up for introducing resin. Thus, the introduction of the resin occurs tangentially or in parallel to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up, whereby a suitable impregnation of the fibre lay-up can be achieved.

In the following, the invention will be further explained by way of exemplary embodiments illustrated in the drawings without, however, being restricted to the same. In detail, in the drawings

Fig. 1 shows a schematic sectional view through a structure for producing a fibre composite component in an infusion method according to one embodiment of the invention, wherein an air and resin flow, respectively, is sucked through a T-shaped stiffening section in a moulding tool which comprises a suction channel connected to at least one vacuum line;

Fig. 2 shows a sectional view corresponding to Fig. 1 of a structure for producing a fibre composite component, wherein according to a further embodiment of the invention an LZ-

- 10 -

stiffening section is provided;

Fig. 3 shows a schematic sectional view through a structure according to the invention for producing a fibre composite component, wherein an air-permeable and resin-impermeable membrane is arranged in a rim region of the fibre composite component;

Fig. 4 schematically shows a section through the tool arrangement in the region of the suction channel, wherein a connecting part has been put onto the upper side of the moulding tool, which upper side comprises the suction opening of the suction channel, and the vacuum line will be connected to said connection part;

Figs. 5a and 5b each show a schematic view of the vacuum line comprising a membrane filter which, in its dry state (cf. Fig. 5a), is air-permeable and resin-impermeable and which, when impregnated by resin, changes over into a substantially air-tight state (cf. Fig. 5b);

Fig. 6 shows a diagrammatic view of the tool arrangement sectioned in the region of a suction channel of a moulding tool with a fibre composite component accommodated therein, wherein adjacent moulding tools are spaced by spacer blocks which comprise a resin supply channel connectable to the resin supply line;

Fig. 7 shows detail A framed by a circle in Fig. 6 on a scale enlarged relative to the former;

Fig. 8 shows a diagrammatic view of the tool arrangement according to Fig. 6 with a section in the region of the resin supply channel of a spacer block;

Fig. 9 shows detail B framed by a circle in Fig. 8 on a scale enlarged relative to the former;

Fig. 10 shows a top view onto the tool arrangement according to Figs. 6 to 9;

- 11 -

Fig. 11 shows a front elevation of the tool arrangement according to Figs. 6 to 10; and

Fig. 12 shows a schematic diagram of the temperature course (top) and the pressure course (bottom), respectively, during the production of the fibre composite component.

In each one of Figs. 1 and 2, a structure for producing a fibre composite component 1 in the infusion method is illustrated, wherein a planar fibre lay-up 3, in particular of carbon fibres, is arranged on a carrier mould 2 merely schematically illustrated, which fibre lay-up forms, e.g., a covering field. On a side of the fibre composite component 1 facing away from the carrier mould 2, at least one stiffening section 5 is arranged which protrudes from the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up 3. At the onset, the fibre lay-up 3 and the stiffening section 5 are present as dry fibre pre-product or as pre-form which is impregnated with resin so as to form the fibre composite component 1. According to the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 1, the stiffening section 5 has a web- or stringer-shaped part 5' and a part 5'' resting on the fibre lay-up 3 which together form a T-shaped fibre composite component 5.

The web or stringer-shaped part 5' of the stiffening section 5 is compressed between corresponding tool parts 6 of a moulding tool 7. For this purpose, the moulding tool 7 has a recess 8 corresponding to the stiffening section 5 in which the stiffening section 5 is accommodated (for a better overview, in the schematic Figs. 1 to 3, the moulding tool 7 is shown spaced from the stiffening section 5; during compression, however, the moulding tool 7 will, of course, contact the stiffening section, cf. Figs. 7 to 11). In the exemplary embodiment illustrated, wedge-shaped blocks are provided as tool parts 5 which, however, may also have a different shape. For producing

- 12 -

the fibre composite component 1 in the infusion method, a chamber 10 sealed relative to the carrier mould 2 is formed by means of at least one air-tight film 9 (also termed vacuum bag) enclosing the fibre lay-up 3 and the stiffening section 5. For this purpose, (schematically illustrated) seals 11 are provided on opposite sides of the tool arrangement. Chamber 10 is connected to at least one resin supply line 12 (schematically illustrated by an arrow) which may comprise a (shut-off) valve 13. The resin supply line 12 is connected to a resin reservoir (not illustrated). Moreover, the structure comprises a vacuum device 14 which includes at least one vacuum line 15 leading out of the chamber 10, which will be connected to a corresponding vacuum machine (not illustrated) for producing a negative pressure. By applying a negative pressure, resin is aspirated through the resin supply line 12 into the chamber 10. The aspirated resin is sucked through the fibre lay-up 3 and through the stiffening section 5, respectively, so as to impregnate the fibre lay-up 3 and the stiffening section 5, respectively, with resin for forming the fibre composite component 1.

In known methods of this type it has proven to be difficult to separate impregnating the pre-form with matrix material from sucking off the air. For this purpose, in most cases a semi-permeable, i.e. air-permeable yet matrix material-impermeable, film extending at least on one side about the tool arrangement has been used so as to separate an infusion space connected to the resin supply from a deaerating space connected to the vacuum line. Yet, particularly in case of large-area structures which are provided with complicated stiffening elements, this has proven to be complex and fault-prone.

On the other hand, in the embodiment illustrated, air and

- 13 -

resin are sucked between the tool parts 6 of the moulding tool 7 through the stiffening section 5 into a suction channel 16 formed in the moulding tool 7 (cf. Fig. 3 and Fig. 7), which suction channel follows upon the recess 8 between the tool parts 6 of the moulding tool 7 at the side of the stiffening section 5 facing away from the carrier mould 2. The suction channel 16 is in air- and resin-conducting connection with the vacuum line 15 via a suction opening 17 formed on the upper side of the moulding tool 7. Moreover, in Fig. 2 a further vacuum line 15' can be seen which is arranged to assist the vacuum line 15 in a rim region of the fibre lay-up 3. The vacuum line 15' can be united in a common main line (not illustrated) with the vacuum line 15 following upon the suction channel 16 in the moulding tool 7, the main line being connected to a common vacuum machine (not illustrated).

As is further apparent from Figs. 1 and 2, a membrane or tissue structure 18, respectively, is provided in a region free from the moulding tool 7, which structure includes at least one flow aid or distributing membrane 18', respectively, which may, e.g., be fixed by an adhesive tape. Moreover, below the distributing membrane 18', a peel-ply may be provided which is directly applied to the component surface. The distributing membrane 18' serves to distribute the aspirated resin on the component surface. The peel ply facilitates peeling off the matrix-material-impregnated distributing membrane 18' after the fibre composite component 1 has been completed. In the embodiment illustrated it is, however, not necessary to put a semi-permeable membrane over the entire structure so as to separate an infusion space from a venting space.

As is furthermore schematically visible from Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, one membrane filter 19 and 19' each, respectively, is arranged in the vacuum lines 15, 15', each of which filters is

- 14 -

adapted to change over into a substantially air-tight condition when it has been impregnated with resin. The arrangement of the membrane filters 19, 19', the function of which will be described in more detail in connection with Figs. 5a, 5b allows for an advantageous self-regulation of the infusion method by stopping the air suction via the vacuum lines 15, 15' as soon as the resin discharged from the suction channel 16 reaches the respective membrane filter 19, 19' via the vacuum line 15, 15'.

From Fig. 2, an alternative embodiment of the stiffening section 5 is visible which comprises an L-shaped part 5' following upon a part 5'' offset from the planar fibre lay-up 3 in a step-like manner so that an LZ-section is obtained. The recess 8 between the tool parts 6 is accordingly L-shaped.

From Fig. 3, particularly the rim region of the structure is visible. Accordingly, in the rim region of the fibre composite component 1, a semi-permeable, i.e. air-permeable and resin-impermeable, membrane 20 is arranged which is sealed relative to the moulding tool 7 and the carrier mould 2, respectively, by means of seals 21. By this, a premature entry of the resin into the vacuum line 15' is prevented. The remaining portions of the fibre composite component 1, especially in the region of the stiffening sections 5 and in regions between adjacent stiffening sections 5, may, however, remain free from such a semi-permeable membrane; in these regions, a premature entry of resin into the vacuum line 15 is prevented by the arrangement of the suction channel 16 in the moulding tool 7 previously explained.

Fig. 4 shows a sectional view of the structure in the region of the moulding tool 7, wherein the suction channel 16 following upon the recess 8 above the stiffening section 5 can be seen, which is connected to a connection part 22 (e.g. a silicone section) via the suction opening 17. The connection

- 15 -

part 22 preferably extends over the entire length of the stiffening section 5. Preferably, each stiffening section 5 has its own connecting part 22 for connection to the vacuum device 14. As schematically visible in Fig. 4, the connecting part 22 is connected to the vacuum line 15 which comprises the membrane filter 19. The connecting part 22 may comprise separating walls (not illustrated) spaced apart in longitudinal direction, which subdivide the inner space of the connecting part 22 into individual chambers which, preferably, are each connected to a suction channel 16 of the moulding tool 7. After having passed through the stiffening section 5, air and resin flow into the connecting part 22 via the suction channel 16, and from there they flow into the vacuum line 15. When the resin gets to the membrane filter 19 via the vacuum line 15, the membrane filter is converted into its air-tight state so that air suction is interrupted. The pressure drop at the vacuum line 15 can be detected by detection means (not illustrated) so as to determine the end of the infusion process. This is particularly advantageous if a direct observation of the production process is not possible, which will particularly be the case if the method is carried out in a furnace under supply of heat.

From Figs. 5a and 5b the function of the membrane filter 19 is schematically visible; membrane filter 19' is designed in like manner. Accordingly, the vacuum line 15 has a portion 16a connected to the chamber 10, especially to the connecting part 22 arranged therein, which portion 15a is connected to a portion 15b via a connecting part 23 that is connected to the vacuum machine. The membrane filter 19 is arranged in the connecting part 23. In its open state illustrated in Fig. 5a, the membrane filter 19 is permeable for a resin flow illustrated by an arrow 24 and for an air flow illustrated by an arrow 25. For this purpose, the membrane filter 29 may

- 16 -

comprise fine pores which are generated in the production of the membrane filter 19, 19' e.g. by overexpanding a thin silicone film. When wetting with resin, the membrane filter 19, 19' will remain air-permeable until the membrane filter 19, 19' has been completely soaked, whereby its air permeability gets lost. Thus, the membrane filter 19, 19' at first causes a flow-restricting effect, when the pores gradually become closed by contact with the resin, before the membrane filter 19, 19' - in its air-impermeable state - assumes the function of a matrix blocker analogous to a self-regulating valve. Thus, in the air-tight state illustrated in Fig. 5b, both a resin passage (arrow 24) and an air passage (arrow 25) into portion 15b of the vacuum line 15 are prevented.

In Figs. 6 to 11, various views of the tool arrangement to be used in the previously described infusion method are shown.

As is apparent from Fig. 6, a corresponding number of moulding tools 7 are provided for pressing a plurality of stiffening sections 5 (Fig. 6, e.g., shows three stiffening sections 5), which are arranged on the carrier mould 2. Spacer blocks 26 are arranged between the moulding tools 7, which spacer blocks fix the moulding tools 7 in their intended positions. Moreover, the moulding tools 7 comprise adjusting means, e.g. screws or clamps, so as to press the stiffening section 5 accommodated therein to the desired nominal measure.

As can be seen from the detail view according to Fig. 7, the suction channel 16 is designed as an integral cavity of the moulding tool 7. In the exemplary embodiment illustrated, the suction channel 16 extends substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up 3. Via an entry opening 27, the suction channel 16 follows upon the region of the recess 8 that remains free above the stiffening section 5 towards the facing inner side of the moulding tool 7; thus, a

- 17 -

longitudinally extending channel is formed above the section web of the stiffening section 5. The suction channel 16 may, e.g., have a circular, oval or rectangular cross-sectional geometry.

In Figs. 8 and 9, the tool arrangement each is shown with a section in the region of the spacer block 26. Accordingly, the spacer block 26 comprises a central resin supply channel 28 which will be connected to the resin supply line 12. The resin supply channel 28 has a portion 28a extending substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up 3, which portion 28a will be connected to the resin supply line 12, and a portion 28b extending substantially in parallel to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up 3, which portion 28b runs into the chamber 10 in the region of the fibre lay-up 3. Accordingly, the resin may advantageously be introduced substantially tangentially to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up 3.

As can be seen from the top view according to Fig. 10, the sucking off of air is effected via several suction openings 17 spaced in the longitudinal direction of the moulding tool 7, which suction openings each end in the connecting part 22 (not shown in Fig. 10), to which at least one vacuum line 15 will be connected. As mentioned, the resin supply is effected at several spacer blocks 26 which are distributed over the length of the moulding tools 7 at certain intervals.

The previously described method using the tool arrangement adapted for it may be used with various matrix materials and resins, respectively, which differ particularly in their viscosities and in their temperature parameters. For this, on the one hand matrix materials curing at room temperature or, alternatively, hot curing materials are suitable which in each case are available in different types. In the case of room

- 18 -

temperature resins, infusion and subsequent curing will take place at room temperature. For hot curing materials, the typical infusion temperatures will range between e.g. 80°C to 120°C, and the curing temperatures will be in the range of approximately 180°C. A suitable vacuum pressure for all temperature ranges will be at approximately 20 mbar, wherein a pressure drop during shutdown of the vacuum machine at a level of approximately 20 mbar per 10 min is allowed as tolerance for the quality of the vacuum. At the onset of the process, the entire structure may be subjected to a vacuum test. When applying the vacuum, the throttle function of the membrane filter 19, 19' is observed, which causes the balance between the vacuum pressure in front of and behind the membrane filter 19, 19' to adjust only after a certain time. Subsequently, the vacuum test can be started which should comply with the tolerances indicated above.

In case of a hot-curing resin, the tool arrangement together with the pre-form of the fibre composite component 1 arranged therein will be heated to an infusion temperature of 100°C, e.g.

For this purpose, the entire structure will be placed into a furnace. The resin provided for the infusion will be separately brought to infusion temperature. Advantageously, the temperature of the resin will be somewhat below the temperature of the tool arrangement so as to obtain an improved flow behaviour. When the necessary set parameters (temperature, vacuum pressure) have been reached, the infusion process will start.

In Fig. 12, a typical temperature (top) and pressure course (bottom) during the infusion process when using a hot-curing resin are illustrated. Therein, T1 designates the room temperature, T2 the infusion temperature, T3 an optional

- 19 -

maintenance step and T_4 the curing temperature. In the corresponding pressure diagram, p_1 designates the ambient pressure and p_v the infusion pressure. The vacuum will be turned on at least until the expiration of the time of the curing temperature T_4 , when the matrix becomes less viscous and chemical curing starts.

Claims:

1. A method for producing a fibre composite component (1), wherein a planar fibre lay-up (3) is arranged on a carrier mould (2), which fibre lay-up, on a side that faces away from the carrier mould (2), is provided with at least one stiffening section (5) that protrudes from the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up (3) and is pressed between corresponding tool parts (6) of a moulding tool (7), wherein a chamber (10) sealed with regard to the carrier mould (2) is formed by an air-tight film (9) that encloses the moulding tool (7) and the fibre lay-up (3) and the at least one stiffening section (5), respectively, which chamber (10) is connected to at least one resin supply line (12) and to at least one vacuum line (15), resin being aspirated by applying a negative pressure to the vacuum line (15), which resin impregnates the fibre lay-up (3) and the stiffening section (5) so as to form the fibre composite component (1), air and resin being aspirated between the tool parts (6) of the moulding tool (7) through the at least one stiffening section (5) into a suction channel (16) extending in the moulding tool (7), which suction channel is connected to the at least one vacuum line (15) via a suction opening (17) of the moulding tool (7) in an air- and resin-conducting manner, respectively, characterised in that the vacuum line (15) comprises a membrane filter (19) which, in its dry state, is air-permeable and resin-impermeable, which is adapted to change over into a substantially air-tight state when impregnated with resin.

2. The method according to claim 1, characterised in that in the region of the at least one stiffening section (5), the moulding tool (7) has a portion free from a membrane or film structure.

3. The method according to claim 2, characterized in that the membrane is a semi-permeable membrane.

4. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterised in that resin and air are sucked off via the suction opening (17) at the upper side of the moulding tool (7) that faces away from the carrier mould (2).

5. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, characterised in that within the suction channel (16), at least in portions thereof, air and resin are sucked off substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up (3).

6. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 5, characterised in that at least one further vacuum line (15') is arranged.

7. The method according to claim 6, characterized in that the at least one further vacuum line (15') is arranged in a rim region of the fibre lay-up (3).

8. The method according to claim 6 or 7, characterised in that the at least one further vacuum line (15') arranged in the rim region of the fibre lay-up (3) is united in a common main

line with the vacuum line (15) following upon the suction channel (16) in the moulding tool (7).

9. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 8, characterised in that in a region free from the moulding tool (7), a membrane or a tissue structure (18), respectively, is arranged which has a distributing membrane (18') and/or a peel-ply.

10. The method according to claim 9, characterized in that the region free from the moulding tool (7) is in a rim region of the fibre composite component (1).

11. The method according to claim 9 or 10, characterised in that in the rim region of the fibre lay-up (3), the distributing membrane (18') is sealed relative to the carrier mould (2).

12. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 11, characterised in that the aspiration of resin is carried out in a furnace under supply of heat.

13. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 12, characterised in that the moulding tool (7) has a recess (8) of substantially rectangular cross-section in its closed state for pressing a web-shaped part (5') of the stiffening section (5).

14. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 13, characterised in that the moulding tool (7) has a recess (8) of substantially L-shaped cross-section in its closed state for

pressing a correspondingly shaped part (5') of the stiffening section (5).

15. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 14, characterised in that at least two moulding tools (7) are provided for pressing one stiffening section (5) each, between which at least one spacer block (26) is arranged which comprises a resin supply channel (28) connectable to the resin supply line (12).

16. The method according to claim 15, characterised in that the resin supply channel (28) of the spacer block (26) comprises a portion extending substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal plane of the fibre lay-up (3) and connectable to the resin supply-line (12), and a portion (28b) extending substantially in parallel to the longitudinal plane of the fibre-lay-up (3) for introducing resin.

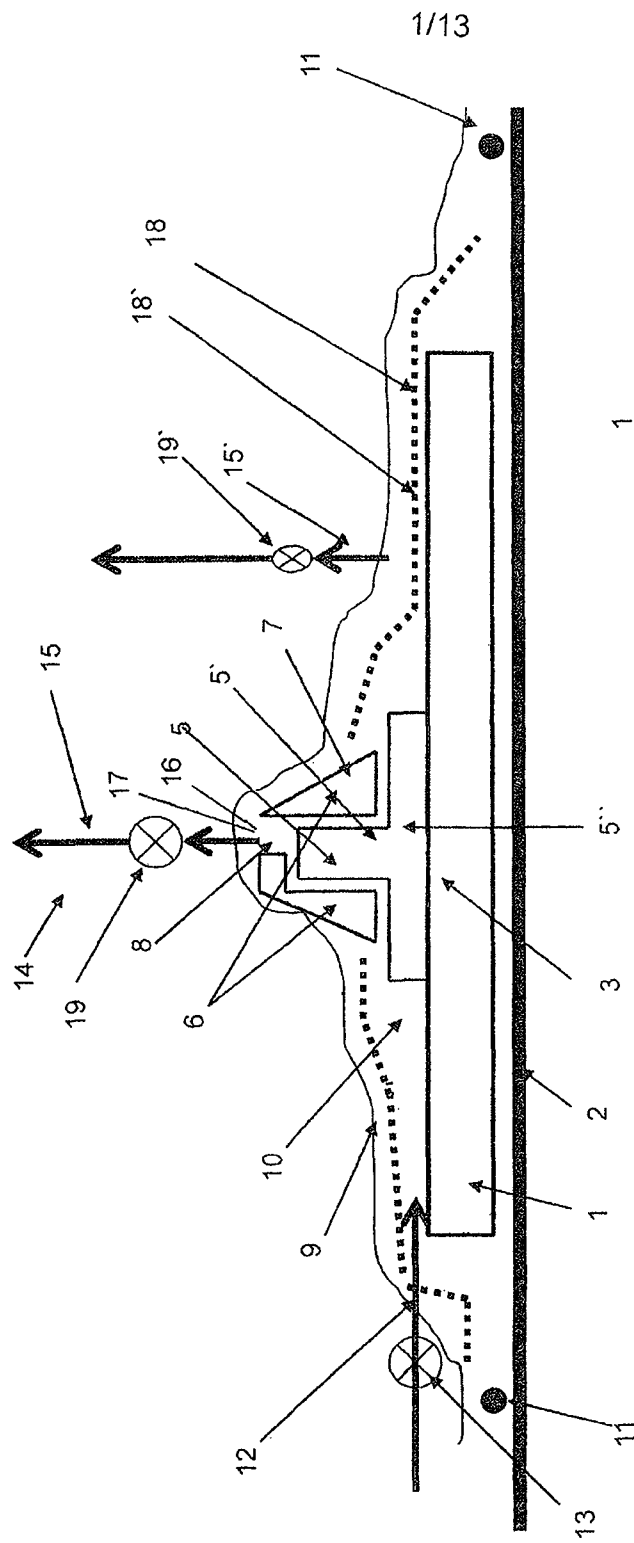


Fig. 1

2/13

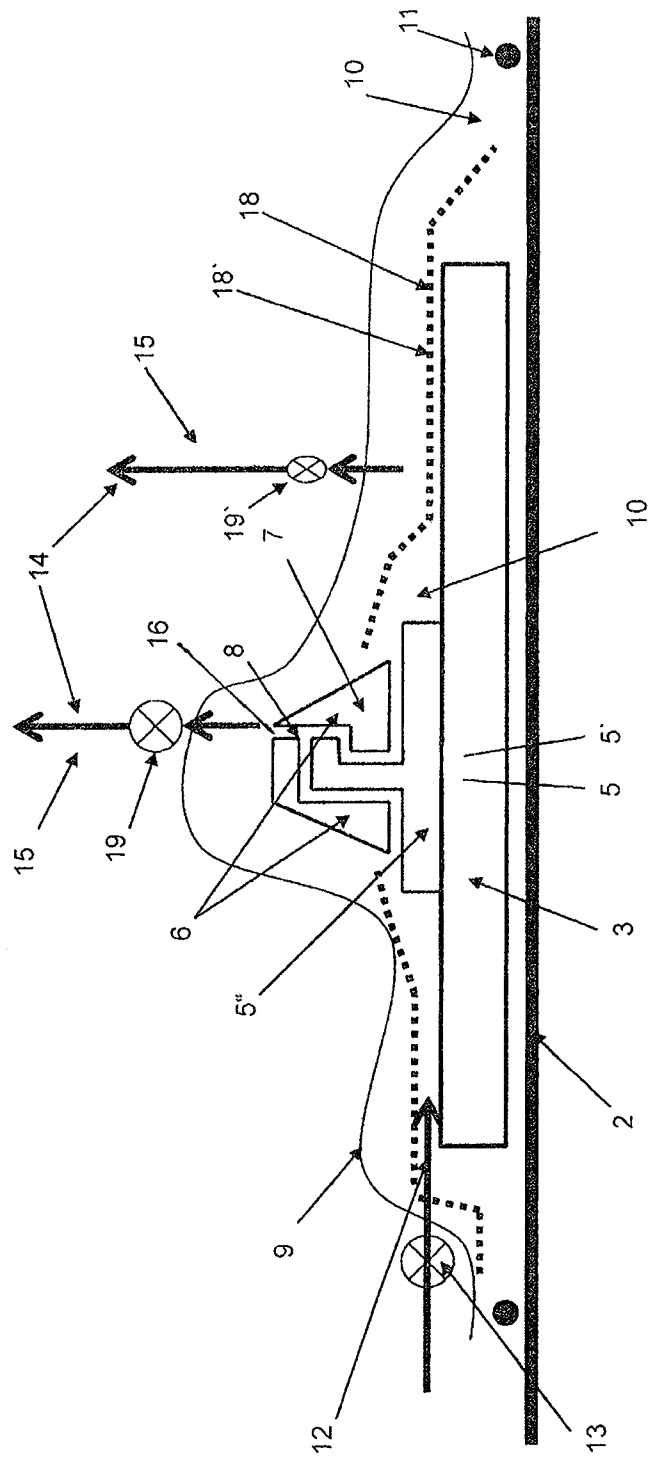


Fig. 2

3/13

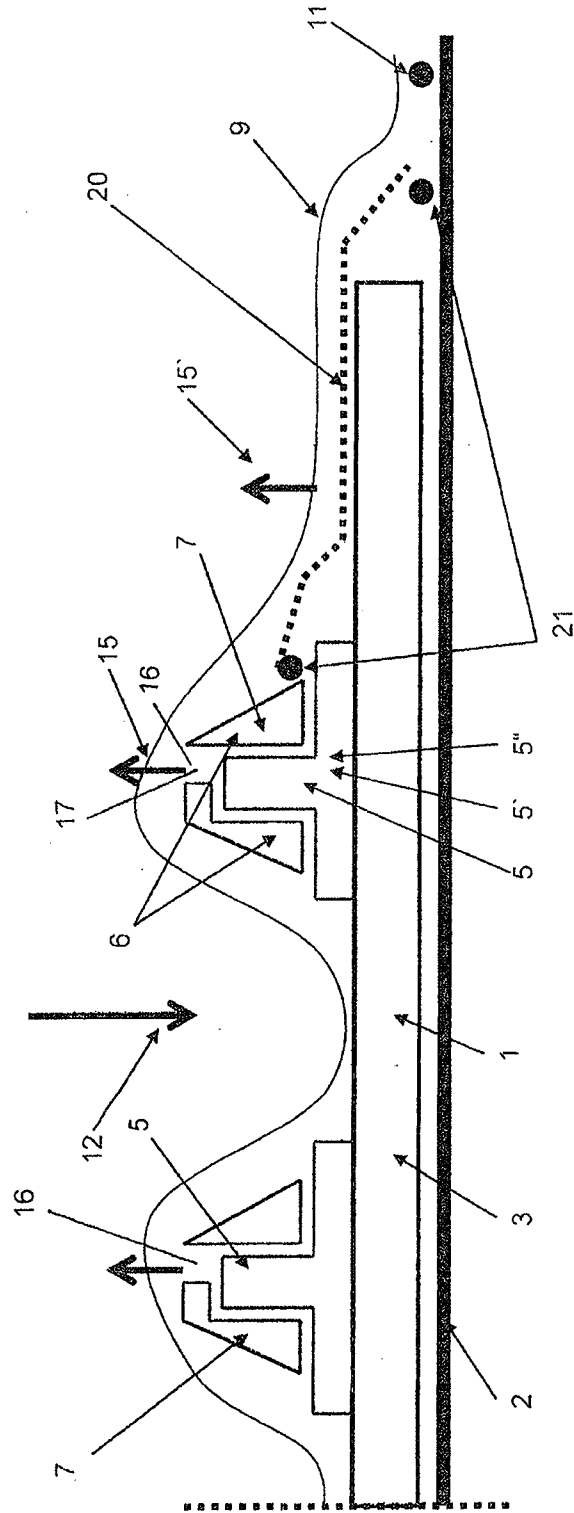


Fig. 3

4/13

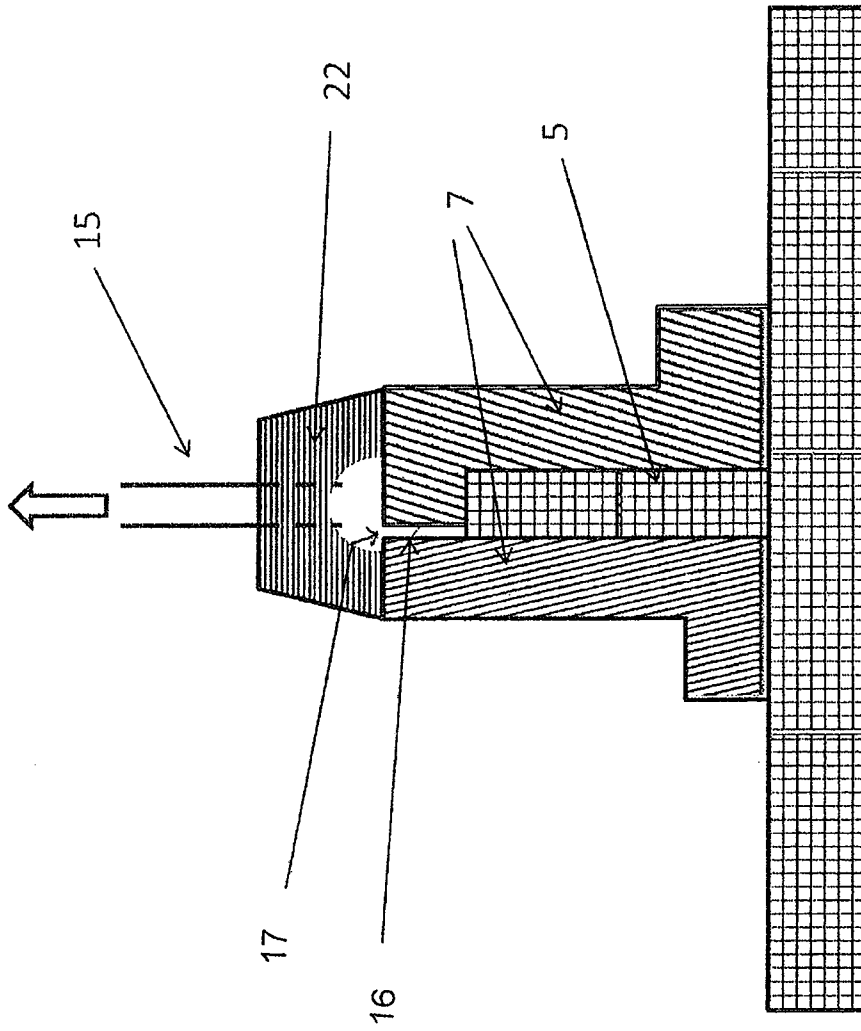


Fig. 4

5/13

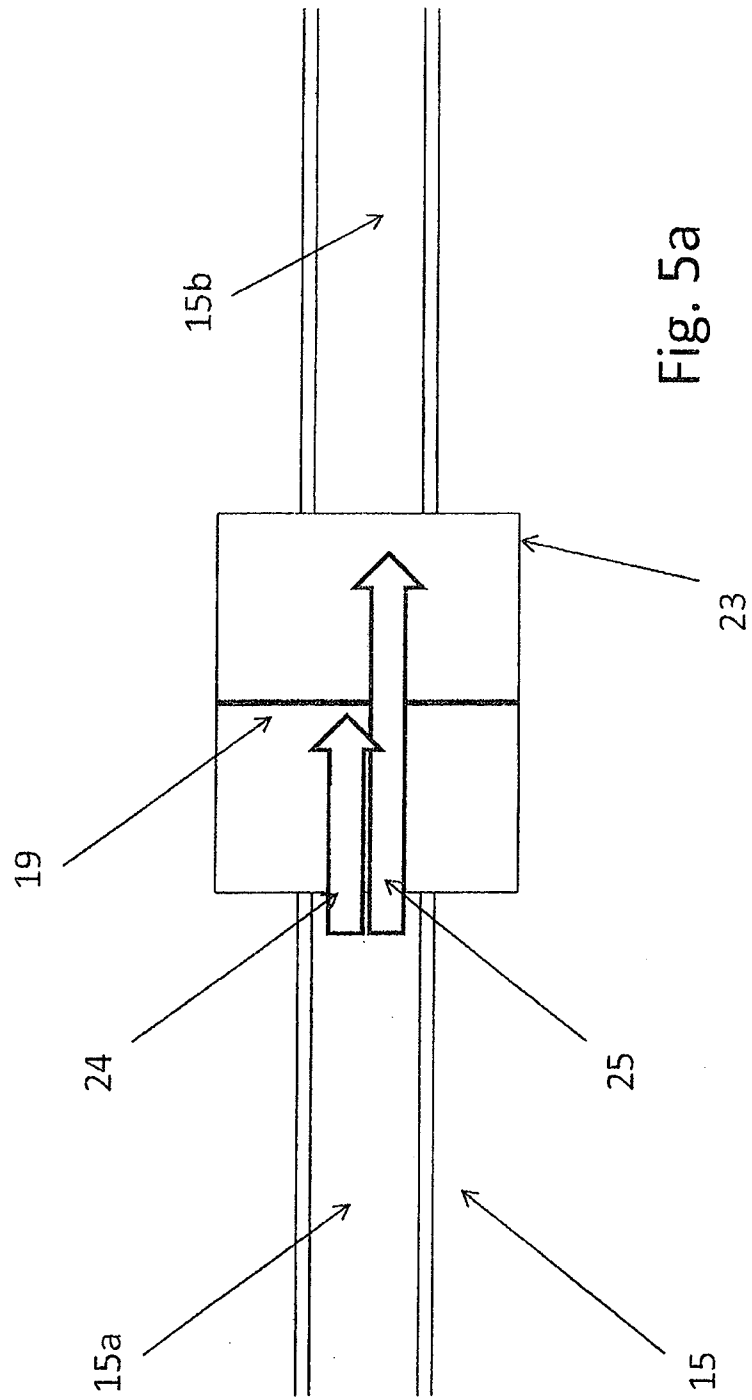


Fig. 5a

6/13

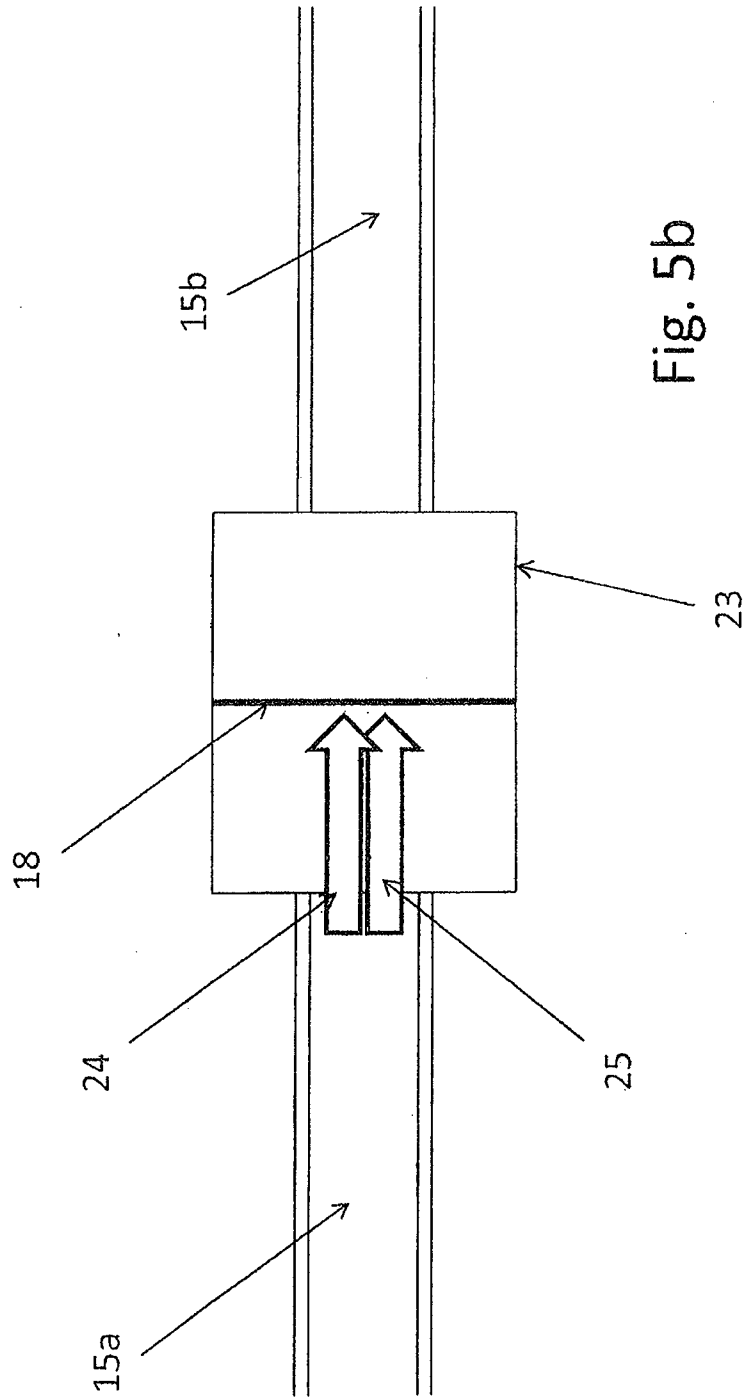


Fig. 5b

7/13

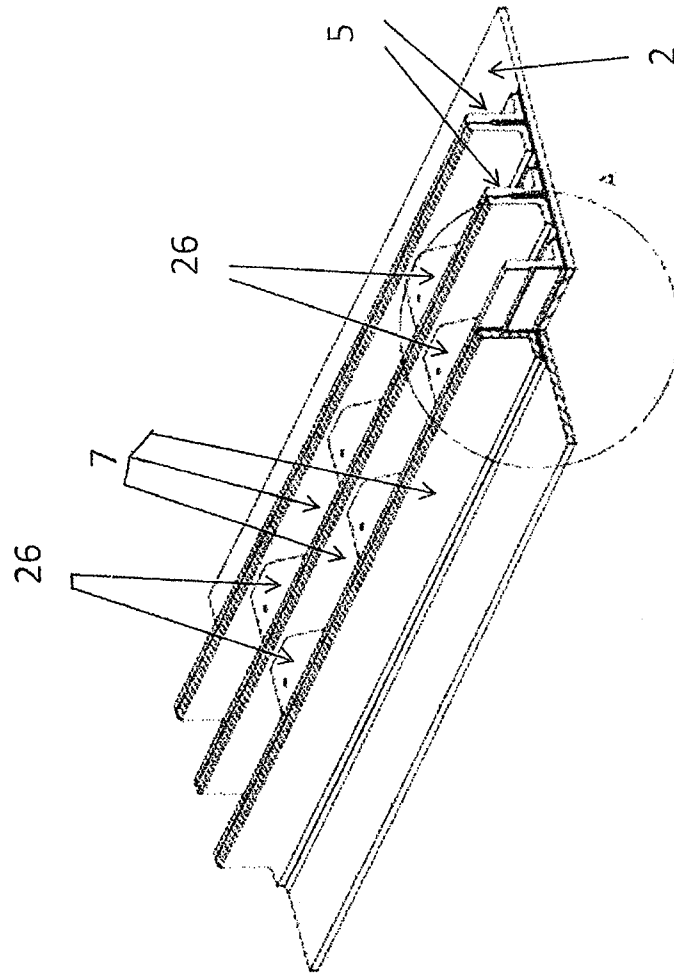


Fig. 6

8/13

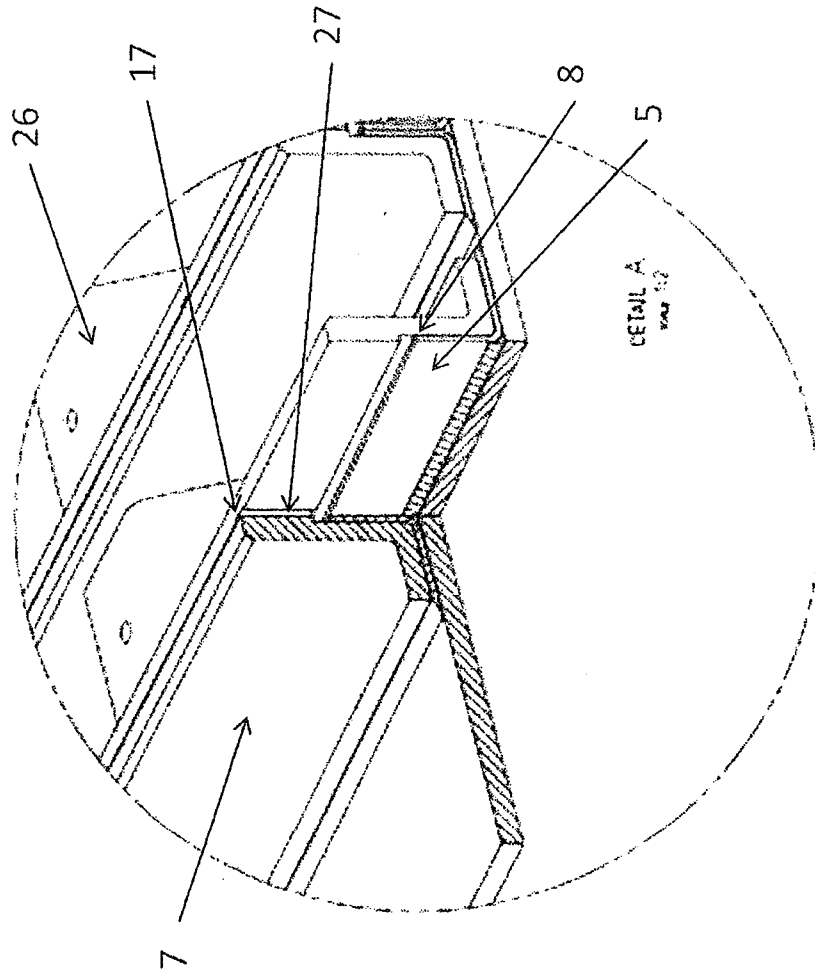
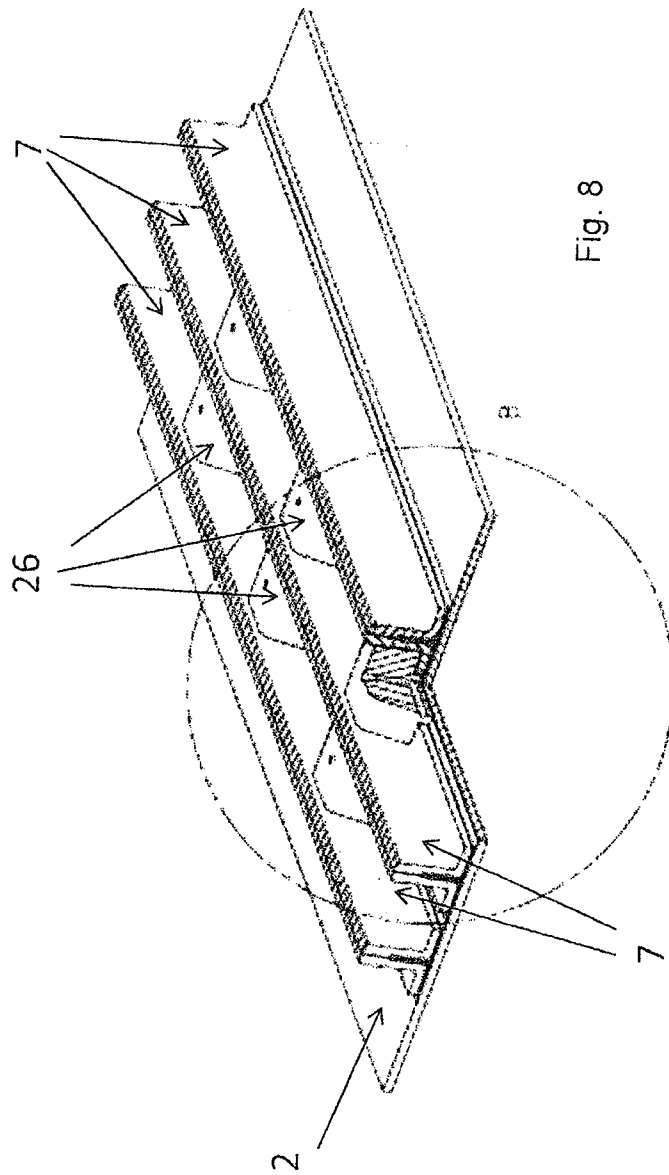
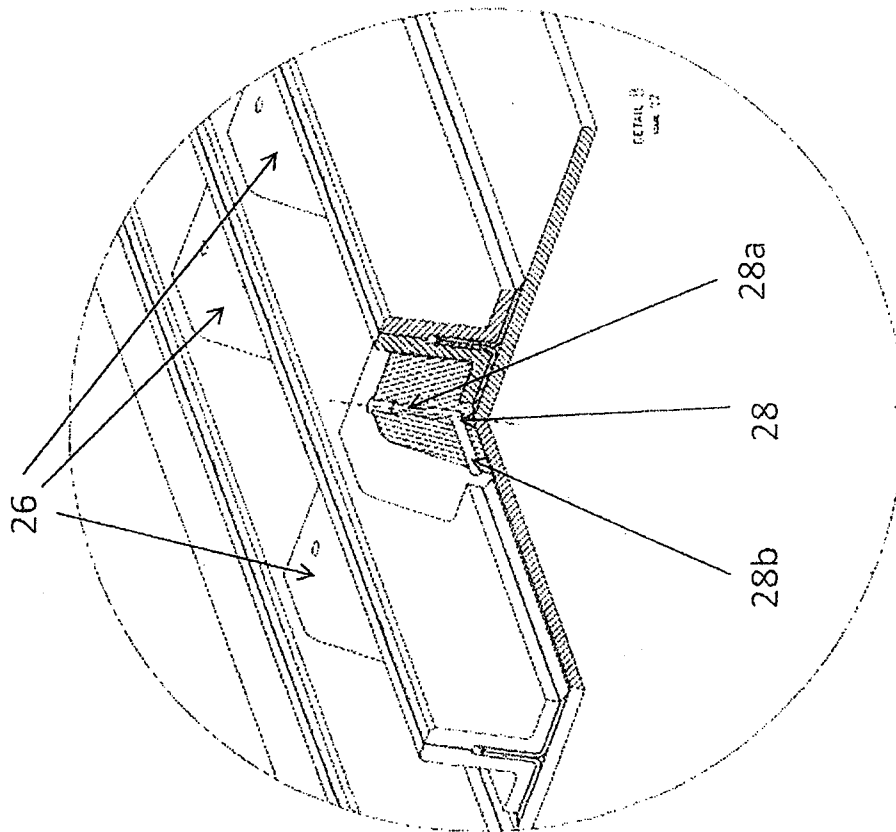


Fig. 7

9/13



10/13



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11/13

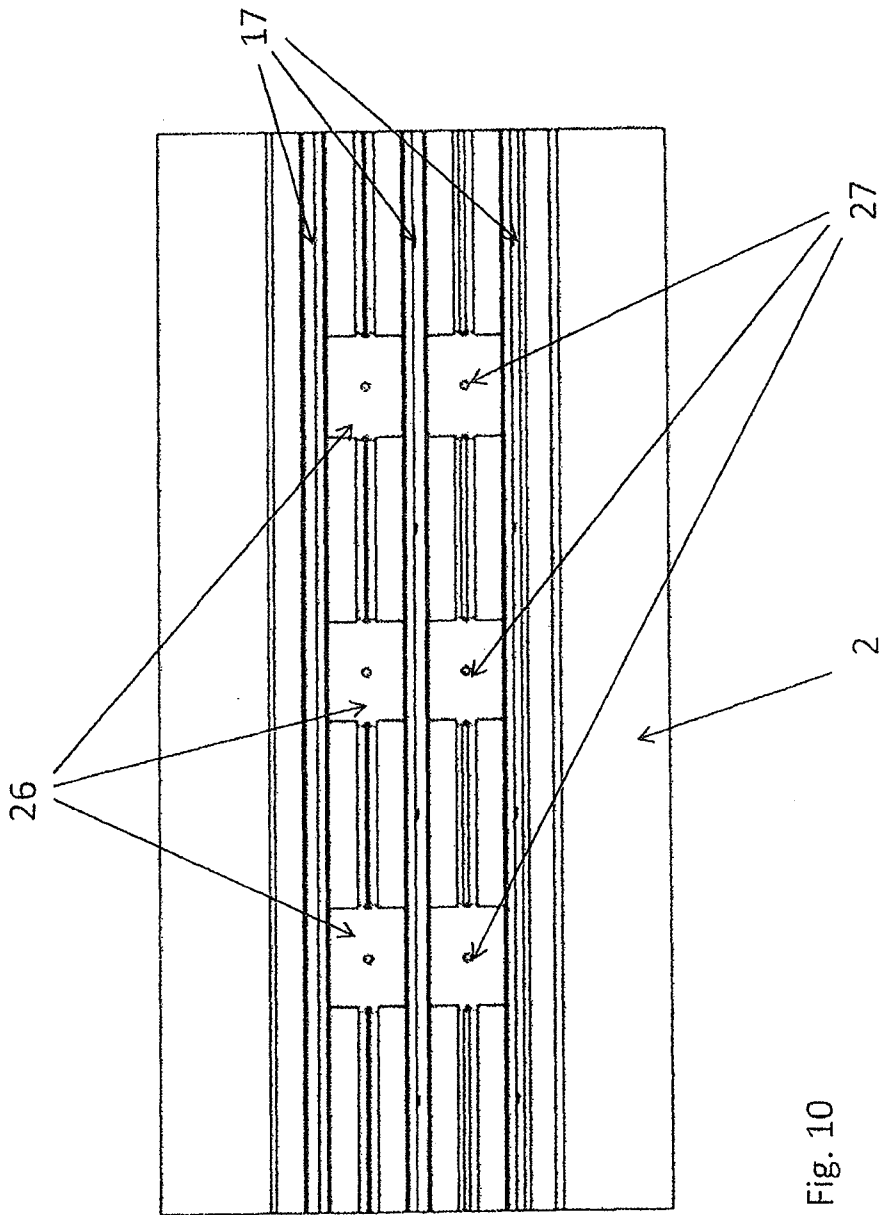


Fig. 10

12/13

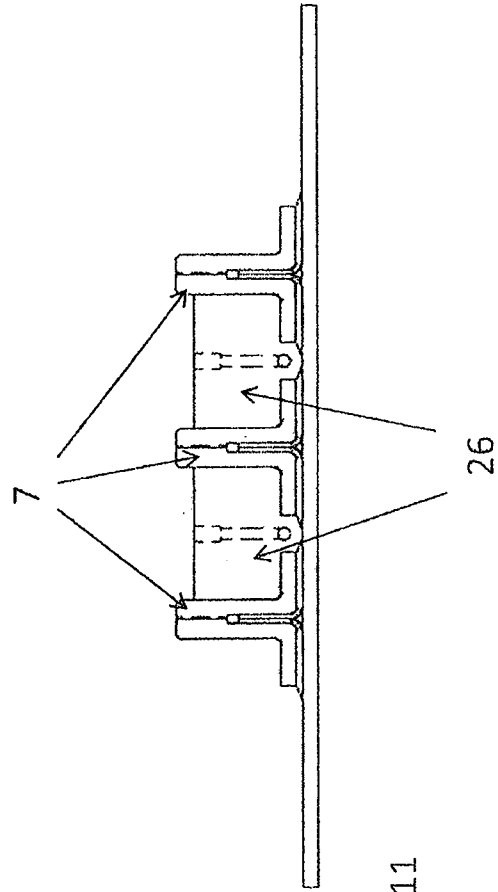


Fig. 11

13/13

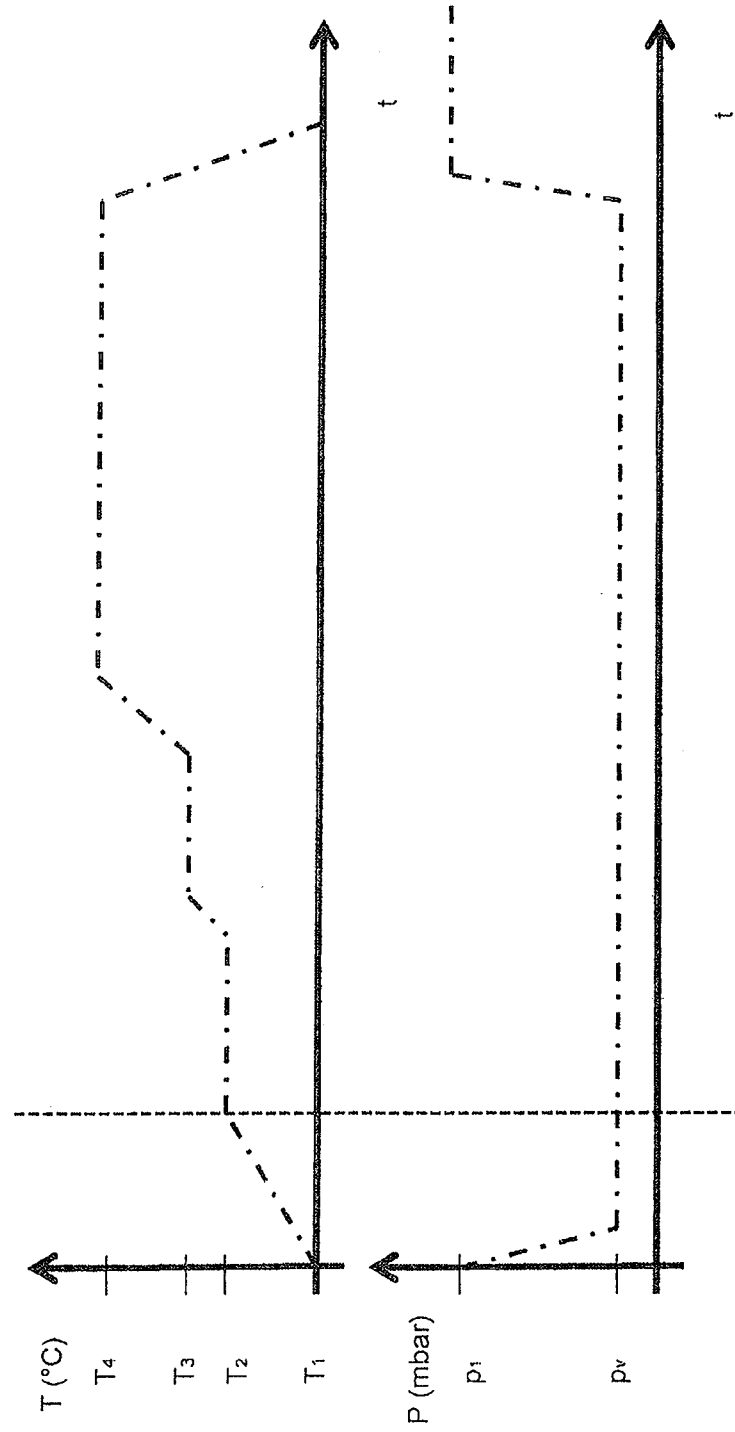


Fig.12

