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**Datasheet for the decision
of 27 March 2008**

Case Number: T 0065/06 - 3.4.03

Application Number: 01948136.5

Publication Number: 1300049

IPC: H05B 1/02

Language of the proceedings: EN

Title of invention:

Power supply for electrical domestic appliances and domestic
appliances for coaction with such a power supply

Applicant:

Ferro Techniek Holding B.V.

Opponent:

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Headword:

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Relevant legal provisions:

EPC Art. 52(1), 56

Relevant legal provisions (EPC 1973):

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Keyword:

"Inventive step (no)"

Decisions cited:

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Catchword:

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Case Number: T 0065/06 - 3.4.03

D E C I S I O N
of the Technical Board of Appeal 3.4.03
of 27 March 2008

Appellant: Ferro Techniek Holding B.V.
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Decision under appeal: Decision of the Examining Division of the
European Patent Office posted 8 August 2005
refusing European application No. 01948136.5
pursuant to Article 97(1) EPC.

Composition of the Board:

Chairman: R. G. O'Connell
Members: R. Q. Bekkering
U. Tronser

Summary of Facts and Submissions

I. This is an appeal against the refusal of application 01 948 136 for lack of inventive step over *inter alia*

D2: WO 95 29 572 A

and common general knowledge in the art.

II. The appellant requested that the decision under appeal be set aside and a patent granted in the following version:

Claims 1 to 12 sent with letter of 4 June 2004;
Description pages 1 to 8 as originally filed;
Drawings sheets 1 and 2 as originally filed.

III. Claim 1 reads:

"1. Power supply (1) for coupling to electrical domestic appliances (8,12,17,19,21), comprising:
- at least one connection (4) to the mains electricity supply,
- at least one connector (2,7) for electrical coupling of the power supply (1) to a domestic appliance (8,12,17,19,21), and
- measuring and control means for controlling a feed signal generated by the power supply (1),
characterised in that
the connector (2,7) for electrical coupling of the power supply (1) to a domestic appliance (8,12,17,19,21) is a releasable connector, and
the measuring and control means control the characteristics of the feed signal by means of at least

one control signal resulting from a coupled domestic appliance (8,12,17,19,21), which control signal comprises the power supplied to the coupled domestic appliance (8,12,17,19,21)."

IV. The appellant applicant argued as follows:

The subject-matter of claim 1 was new and involved an inventive step over the cited prior art in particular D2.

The following features of the claim were not disclosed in D2:

- the connector for electrical coupling of the power supply to the domestic appliance;
- measuring means;
- the fact that the connector was a releasable connector; and
- the feedback system, as expressed by feed signal by means of at least one control signal resulting from a coupled domestic appliance, which control signal comprised the power supplied to the coupled domestic appliance.

The apparatus of D2 had two independent control systems, one involving sensors confined to the domestic appliance heating element and one in the power distribution unit.

The invention on the other hand aimed to provide a power supply unit for a domestic appliance wherein the power supply unit contained the control unit for controlling the power supply to the domestic appliance.

To be able to fulfil its control function properly the power supply had to be provided with a control signal.

Even drawing on the common general knowledge in the art relating to releasable connectors would not lead the person skilled in the art to the invention, as the latter was more than the mere application of a releasable connection. The power supply should be releasably connected to the appliance. Hence there was a need for a connection between the power supply unit and the appliance for transferring electrical energy from the power supply to the appliance and for the transfer of the feedback signal from the appliance to the power supply unit. This situation was not present in D2, so that a person skilled in the art could not use the teaching of this document to come to the solution of claim 1.

Reasons for the Decision

1. The appeal is admissible.
2. *Inventive step*
 - 2.1 The board approves and largely adopts the reasoning of the examining division in the decision under appeal while taking account of the appellant's arguments on appeal.
 - 2.2 *Closest prior art - document D2*

The closest prior art is provided by document D2.

This discloses an electrical domestic appliance in the form of a stove top including a plurality of electrical heating elements (hot plates) (12) having a known maximum total wattage and an electrical power distribution apparatus (20) receiving electrical power from the mains and distributing power to plural ones of the plurality of electrical heating elements in accordance with an established priority when the electrical power available for distribution is less than the known maximum total wattage. A plurality of control assemblies (14) are provided for enabling a user to select the amount of electrical power to be supplied to one or more of the electrical heating elements (D2, figures 1, 2 and corresponding description).

Moreover, the power distribution apparatus is responsive to the operative conditions of the plurality of electrical heating elements (page 2, penultimate paragraph).

The operative conditions of the heating elements may indeed be provided by sensors (22) associated with each heating element, as argued by the appellant.

On the other hand, as indicated on page 3, penultimate paragraph of D2, *"the term "operative condition" is defined herein in a broad sense to include, for example, the temperature of the electrical heating element, the power dissipated by the electrical heating element, the power drawn by the electrical heating element, the current and/or voltage supplied thereto and the electrical resistance presented by the electrical heating element"*.

According to D2, thus, the power distribution apparatus is responsive to *inter alia* the power drawn by the electrical heating elements. It follows that the power supply of D2 includes "*measuring and control means for controlling a feed signal generated by the power supply*" wherein "*the measuring and control means control the characteristics of the feed signal by means of at least one control signal resulting from a coupled domestic appliance, which control signal comprises the power supplied to the coupled domestic appliance*" as specified in claim 1.

- 2.3 Hence the sole difference between the subject-matter of claim 1 and the power supply of D2 is that "*the connector for electrical coupling of the power supply to a domestic appliance is a releasable connector*".

A releasable connector allows the power supply and the domestic appliance to be quickly and easily coupled together or separated from each other. The objective problem to be solved starting from D2 could thus be formulated as how to adopt the intelligent power supply for use with *per se* notorious portable electrical domestic appliances (see decision under appeal at 3.2.2, penultimate paragraph).

In the judgement of the board the examining division did not err in finding that this problem and its solution would be obvious to the person skilled in the art of electrical domestic appliances.

Accordingly, the subject-matter of claim 1 lacks an inventive step (Articles 52(1) and 56 EPC).

Order

For these reasons it is decided that:

The appeal is dismissed.

Registrar

Chair

S. Sánchez Chiquero

R. G. O'Connell