Examiners' Report – Paper C 2019

Purpose and extent of the examiners' report

The purpose of the present examiners' report is to enable candidates to prepare for future examinations (cf. Article 6(6) of the Regulation on the European qualifying examination for professional representatives).

1. Introduction

This year's paper involved discussion of novelty, inventive step, added subject-matter, as well as some considerations to the validity of priority having effects on novelty and inventive step. A product-by-process feature was part of this year's paper.

The client's letter drew attention to the following relevant aspects:

1) the opposition should be filed in the name of the company,

2) priority is claimed from a Dutch patent application which is identical to the patent application of Annex 1 as originally filed, except for claims 6 and 7 and [0017] and [0018] of the description,

3) potential amendments to claim 1 made during examination.

Annex 1, the patent to be opposed, relates to ironing devices and comprises two independent apparatus claims.

Independent claim 1 is directed to an ironing device with a soleplate coated with a Kera type layer and comprises three alternatives. Dependent claims 2 and 3 are limited to a steam iron as a specific example of an ironing device and to the alternative with a KeraMa layer. Dependent claim 3 further defines grooves and the process for making them.

Independent claim 4 is directed to a steam iron with internal water tank which has a non-homogeneous distribution of steam outlets. Dependent claims 5 to 7 define further details concerning the arrangement of the steam dispensing ducts leading to the steam outlets, the distribution of the steam outlets and the opening to refill the water tank.

2. General comments

Marks were awarded for establishing the effective date of each claim and for determining which documents are valid prior art when arguing against novelty and inventive step of specific claims.
All the information necessary to oppose the patent is to be found in the Annexes (including Annex 1 and the client's letter). Candidates shall not use any special knowledge they may have of the technical field of the invention. (R. 22(3) IPREE).
The Annexes provided relevant information in addition to claim features, such as definitions, technical effects, objective technical problems, motivations and hints. That information allowed candidates to develop convincing arguments.

The specific reference in the relevant document (e.g. paragraph, line, claim, figure, as appropriate) has to be cited. If prior art uses different terminology to the feature in a claim, it should be explained why it has the same meaning, on the basis of the information provided in the Annexes.
For example, in this year's paper the information in [0012] of Annex 1 that a high density of steam outlets corresponds to at least 5 outlets per 10 cm^2 allowed candidates to conclude that "3 or 4 outlets per 5 cm^2" as disclosed in Annex 2 corresponded to a "high density" of steam outlets.

For each inventive step attack, the problem-solution approach requires identification of the closest prior art. A reasoning for the choice of the closest prior art should include the identification of the purpose of the subject-matter to be attacked and of the selected document over and above the disclosure of the other documents.
General unsubstantiated statements such as "Annex X is the most promising springboard to the invention because it has the most features in common" or "Annex X relates to the same general purpose and therefore is the closest prior art" are not typically considered as a sufficient reasoning for selecting the closest prior art.
For example in this year's paper in the context of claim 4 Annexes 2 and 6 disclose steam irons. An example of reasoned motivation concerning the choice of Annex 6 as closest prior art could be that Annex 6 is the only available document disclosing a steam iron with an internal water tank, which has the same purpose as claim 4 of a domestic use.

An inventive step argument should clearly identify the distinguishing feature(s) of the claim when compared to the closest prior art. Any associated technical effect(s) to that (those) feature(s), as set out in the patent to be opposed, has to be identified and the appropriate basis must be cited. This applies both to independent and dependent claims. The objective technical problem(s) to be solved has (have) to be established based on the technical effect(s).

A comprehensive answer includes specific reasons explaining why the skilled person would combine documents, for example by pointing to a specific part of the other document that is related to the same purpose or the same objective technical problem. In this year's paper the argumentation about inventive step of claim 7 involves consultation of Annex 6. A substantiated argument would be to cite that Annex 6 addresses the objective technical problem of claim 7 of making refill of an internal water tank easier (Annex 6, [0004] or [0005]).

The reasoning for lack of inventive step should also include a substantiated argumentation as to "how and why" one would arrive at the subject-matter of a claim when combining the teaching of prior art documents. General statements (e.g. "The skilled person would combine the teaching of the documents without any technical hindrance") are generally not considered as a sufficient reasoning for combining features of specific documents. In this year's paper a convincing argumentation concerning the attack on claim 3 using the combination of Annex 2 and Annex 4, is that Annex 2 mentions in [00014] that Kera type layers may be applied to structured metal surfaces. Thus the KeraMa layer of Annex 4 is compatible with the structured surface of the iron of Annex 2.

Alternatively to the attacks set out in the "possible solution", marks were awarded for other plausible, well-founded attacks. For example an attack against claim 7 for lack of inventive step starting from Annex 6 attracted marks depending on the argumentation provided, in particular motivating why and how certain modifications would be made.

For the opposition to be admissible it is required that the patent to be opposed as well as the opponent are identified. Payment of the opposition fee has to be indicated. It should be borne in mind that the opponent is generally the company and not the person signing the client's letter. This was the case in this year's paper according to the client's letter.

3. Notice of opposition

Effective dates of the claims and prior art

The information provided in the client's letter and the annexes was to be used to establish the effective dates of the claims and the relevance of each piece of prior art with regard to those.

Claim 1 comprises three alternatives. Two alternatives of claim 1 as well as claims 2-5 were in the priority document and in the application as filed.
By comparing the wording of claim 1 as originally filed and granted claim 1 it could be seen that the alternative of claim 1 with "and" had been added during examination. It extends beyond the content of the application as filed.

Claims 6 and 7 are entitled to the filing date. A convincing argumentation made reference to [0017] and [0018] of the description, disclosing the subject-matter of claims 6 and 7 and filed only at the filing date.

Annex 3 being a US patent application published between priority and filing dates of Annex 1 could not be prior art under Article 54(3) EPC, however constituted prior art under Article 54(2) EPC for the claims only entitled to the filing date, i.e. claims 6 and 7.

Claim 1

It comprises three alternatives because of the construction "and/or": one with KeraMa, one with KeraMa and KeraSi and a last one with KeraSi.
A novelty attack based on the first test series of Annex 4 was expected for the alternative "KeraMa".

An attack under Article 100(c) EPC was expected for the alternative “KeraMa and KeraSi” as [0006] of the application as filed of Annex 1 provided no basis for this combination.
An attack for lack of inventive step starting from the first test series of Annex 4 in combination with the second test series of the same Annex was expected for the alternative “KeraSi”.
The second test series of Annex 4 discloses a metallic soleplate coated with KeraSi as Kera type layer. However the Medur alloy of the soleplate is presented as an essential element providing outstanding compromise between properties and cost. The skilled person is thus discouraged from modifying this feature. Starting from this embodiment would additionally require removing the intermediate layer of Yur74 because it is not compatible with aluminium.

Claim 2

The subject-matter of claim 2 is limited to KeraMa as Keratype layer and to a steam iron.
Annex 2 and Annex 6 relate to steam irons, whereas Annex 4 relates to dry irons and Annex 5 relates to a steam machine, e.g. a press.

The prototype dry irons of Annex 4 comprise a heating element covering the whole top surface of the soleplate ([0004]). The heating element thus needs to be changed to allow passage for the steam. In addition Annex 6 [0001] mentions that steam irons are of a completely different design than dry irons. The skilled person is thus discouraged from carrying out all these modifications.
Annex 6 discloses a steam iron with a soleplate of Prex2000 which cannot be coated.
Annex 2 has more features in common with claim 2 than Annex 6 and requires the least structural changes since it already comprises a soleplate with three materials.

The combination of Annex 2 and Annex 4 leads in an obvious manner to the subject-matter of claim 2. However as there are two unrelated differences between the subject-matter of claim 2 and the device of Annex 2, an attack using partial problems was expected.

Annex 2 discloses a low density metal as a generic material, but not aluminium specifically.

Claim 3

Annex 2 is still considered as closest prior art for the same reasons as for claim 2. In addition the second preferred embodiment also discloses the grooves of claim 3.

If claim 3 was attacked with the expected combination of Annexes 2 and 4 and claim 2 was attacked using a different combination or not attacked at all, marks were awarded under claim 2 for the part of the attack which is common to claims 2 and 3, e.g. identification of a soleplate coated with Yur56 and KeraTix in [0014] of Annex 2.

Claim 3 is a product claim comprising process features. Claim 3 has to be analysed in terms of product features (see GL F-IV, 4.12). The phrasing “the grooves are obtainable by (...)” is strictly equivalent to “obtained” or “directly obtained” and cannot be construed as defining an optional feature. A convincing argument used information from [0007] of Annex 3 that the manufacturing process of Annex 2 and that of claim 3 resulted in the same microstructure and properties of the metal. Annex 3 is indirect evidence for this factual information even if Annex 3 was published after the effective date of claim 3.

Claim 4

Annex 6 and Annex 2 are the only available documents for this claim relating to steam irons.

Annex 2 discloses an iron with a thin main body and an external water tank, the combination allowing long use and little effort from user. Modifying the structure of the iron of Annex 2 to insert an internal water tank goes against the development path followed by Annex 2, which is to remove weight from the iron body. Furthermore the modifications imply to reshape the main body to allow insertion of an internal water tank and to integrate a device for producing steam within the main body. The skilled person is thus discouraged from going in that direction.

Claim 5

The expected inventive step attack is a development of the attack on claim 4 and uses Annexes 6, 2 and 5.

Annex 5 relates to an ironing machine, e.g. a press and does not contain any information about an internal water tank. Thus starting from Annex 5 would require a number of structural modifications.

Claim 6

A novelty attack based on Annex 3 was expected. The attack required making measurements along axis XX' of the figure, which is drawn to scale. Complete answers drew attention not only to the figure for identifying the region devoid of steam outlets, but also to the description which explicitly mentioned the absence of steam outlets.

Claim 7

An inventive step attacked starting from Annex 3 was expected.

Possible solution – Paper C 2019

Notice of opposition (optionally in combination with Form 2300)

General (7 marks)

Opposition is filed in the name of Domonia Ltd against EP3020234 B1 (Annex 1).
The opposition fee has been paid.
The patent is opposed on the grounds of Article 100(a) EPC for lack of novelty and lack of inventive step as well as Article 100(c) EPC.

Effective date of the claims of Annex 1

Claim 1 comprises three alternatives, namely KeraMa, KeraSi as well as the combination of KeraMa and KeraSi.

Claim 1 (KeraMa), claim 1 (KeraSi) and claims 2-5 were both in the priority document and in the application as filed. They are thus entitled to the priority date of 14/11/2014.
Claim 1 (KeraMa and KeraSi) extends beyond the content of the application as filed (see below).

Claims 6 and 7 as well as [0017] and [0018] of the description relating to these embodiments were not in the priority document and could only be found in the application as filed. Claims 6 and 7 are not entitled to the priority date. Thus the effective date of claims 6 and 7 is the filing date of 14/11/2015.

Prior art
Annex 2, Annex 4, Annex 5 and Annex 6 were published before the priority date of Annex 1 and are thus prior art under Article 54(2) EPC for all claims.
Annex 3 was published between priority and filing dates of Annex 1. Annex 3 is a non-EP application and thus does not form prior art under Article 54(3) EPC for claims entitled to the priority date. Annex 3 is however prior art under Article 54(2) EPC for claims not entitled to the priority date, namely claims 6 and 7.

Claim 1 (17 marks)

First alternative

The first alternative of claim 1 defines a KeraMa layer as the Kera type coating.

Annex 4 discloses in a first test series a prototype dry ironing device comprising an aluminium baseplate, which is a soleplate according to [0001] of Annex 1, and is coated with KeraMa.
According to [0003] of Annex 4 the coating is “on the bottom side of the baseplate”, which “comes into contact with the garment” (see [0002] of Annex 4), hence the coating is on the ironing side of the soleplate in the sense of Annex 1, [0001].
The subject-matter of claim 1, first alternative, is not new in view of Annex 4 (Article 54(2) EPC).

Second alternative

The second alternative of claim 1 defines a KeraMa layer and a KeraSi layer as the Kera type layer.

This alternative was not part of claim 1 as originally filed, hence was added during examination.
[0006] of Annex 1 as filed discloses a coating on the ironing side of the soleplate, which may be a Kera type coating. Specific examples of Kera type coatings, e.g. KeraSi or KeraMa are listed. However there is no information in [0006] that the Kera type coating may comprise both KeraMa and KeraSi. An intermediate coating may be applied between the soleplate and the Kera type coating, and the combination of KeraMa as Kera type coating and Yur56 as intermediate coating is disclosed in [0007] of Annex 1. Thus [0006] – [0007], which are the only passages in the description of Annex 1 relating to the nature of the coatings, do not provide a basis for the combination of KeraMa and KeraSi.
The second alternative of claim 1 therefore contains subject-matter extending beyond the content of the application as filed (Article 123(2) EPC).

Third alternative

The third alternative of claim 1 defines a KeraSi layer as the Kera type layer.

The ironing devices of the first test series of Annex 4 are the closest prior art since they relate to the same type of devices, namely ironing devices with coated metallic soleplates (see e.g. the title of Annex 4) and deal with the same problem of Annex 1 of protecting metallic soleplates (see Annex 1, [0006] and Annex 4, [0003]).
These devices comprise an aluminium soleplate coated on its ironing side with a KeraMa or KeraTix coating (see above for the first alternative of claim 1).
The subject-matter of claim 1, third alternative, differs from these known devices of Annex 4 in that the coating is a KeraSi layer.
The technical effect of KeraSi as an example of Kera type coating is to protect the ironing side of the aluminium soleplate from deterioration, see Annex 1 [0006].
The coatings on the ironing side of the soleplate of Annex 4 already achieve the effect of protecting the metal, as disclosed in Annex 4 [0003]. Hence no additional technical effect is achieved over the ironing devices of the first test series of Annex 4. The objective technical problem must be reformulated as how to provide an alternative protective coating on the ironing side of the aluminium soleplate.

The skilled person would consider the ironing devices of the second test series of Annex 4 since they comprise protective coatings of metallic soleplates. In this second test series KeraSi is disclosed as an example of protective coating, see [0007] or Table 2 of Annex 4. The skilled person would thus replace the Kera coating of the first test series by a KeraSi coating without problem. This replacement does not require any further modification of the ironing device of the first test series, since the intermediate coatings Yur52, Yur54, Yur56 or Yur58 disclosed in the first test series are compatible with Kera type coatings, see Annex 4 [0006].
The subject-matter claim 1, third alternative, does not involve an inventive step over Annex 4 (Article 56 EPC).

Claim 2 (19 marks)

Annex 2 is the closest prior art because it relates to a steam iron and requires the least structural changes since it already comprises a soleplate with three materials.

Annex 2 also deals with the same purpose as claim 2 of having lightweight irons (see Annex 1 [0005] and Annex 2 [0002]).
Annex 2 discloses a steam iron (claim, title or [0001]) with a soleplate made of a low density metal ([0003]). The soleplate is coated in this order starting from the soleplate with a Yur56 layer and a KeraTix layer ([0014] “apply first a layer of Yur56 and then a layer of KeraTix”). The coating is on the ironing side of the soleplate since [0014] refers to the aesthetically appealing glossy finish of the KeraTix coating.
The subject-matter of claim 2 differs from this known device in that
a) the soleplate is an aluminium soleplate,
b) coated on its ironing side with KeraMa.

The technical effect of the first difference is according to [0005] of Annex 1 to allow the production of a lightweight iron. This first effect is already achieved with the generic low density metal of Annex 2, as explained in [0005] of Annex 1. The objective technical problem of the first difference must be reformulated as how to implement a specific lightweight iron.
The technical effect of the second difference is to improve gliding, as disclosed in [0006] of Annex 1. Better gliding eases ironing, as confirmed e.g. in Annex 4, [0002].
The objective technical problem of the second difference is to ease ironing.
There is no synergistic technical effect achieved by the two distinguishing features taken in combination, but rather a plurality of partial problems which are independently solved. Consequently, the inventive activity related to the two different partial problems can be separately assessed (GL, G-VII, 5.2 or 6).

In order to solve the objective technical problem of difference b) the skilled person would be motivated to look at Annex 4 because it deals with easing ironing (see [0002]). Table 1 of Annex 4 shows the gliding properties of the irons of the first test series. Gliding properties are better with a KeraMa layer than with a KeraTix layer. The skilled person would thus replace the KeraTix layer of the iron of Annex 2 by a KeraMa layer.

Concerning the first partial problem, the skilled person would consult Annex 4 because it discloses low density metal soleplates. For the irons of the first test series the low density metal used is aluminium ([0004]).

The solutions provided in the first test series of Annex 4 to both partial problems are compatible since they are disclosed in the same embodiment of Annex 4.
Furthermore this embodiment comprises a Yur56 layer as intermediate layer ([0005] and [0006]).
The skilled person would choose aluminium as a suitable low density material for making a lightweight iron and replace the KeraTix coating of Annex 2 by KeraMa without changing the intermediate layer of Yur56.
The subject-matter of claim 2 hence does not involve an inventive step over Annex 2 in combination with Annex 4 (Article 56 EPC).

Claim 3 (12 marks)

Annex 2 is the closest prior art for the same reasons as for claim 2. In addition Annex 2 also discloses grooves for the second preferred embodiment and hence has most features in common.
The second preferred embodiment of Annex 2 relates to a steam iron with open channels 26, which fulfil the definition of Annex 1 [0009] of grooves. They start from the steam outlets 25, as shown in figure 2, [0011] or [0013] of Annex 2. [0014] of Annex 2 refers to the “above embodiments”, which implies that the coated metallic soleplate disclosed in [0014] can be used for the second preferred embodiment.
Hence Annex 2 discloses a steam iron with grooves starting from the steam outlets and a low density metallic soleplate coated on its ironing side with first a Yur56 layer and then a KeraTix layer.

Annex 2 [0012] discloses that the soleplate with the grooves is made by counterpressure die casting at a pressure of 4 bars, followed by forced air cooling.
Product claim 3 further comprises the feature that the grooves are obtainable by low-pressure die casting and forced-air cooling. Hence the process defined in claim 3 is not the same as the process known from [0012] of Annex 2.
This feature of claim 3 is a product-by-process feature. According to GL F-IV, 4.12 or T150/82 a product claim is not rendered novel merely by the fact that it is produced by a different process. Annex 1 does not disclose any specific product property

linked to the claimed process, the only advantages being in terms of ease of implementation ([0010]).
Annex 3 which was filed on 08/08/2013, is not prior art for claim 3 but refers in [0007] to methods available for some years, hence before the priority date of 14/11/2014 of Annex 1. The method defined in claim 3 and the method used in Annex 2 are mentioned in [0007] of Annex 3.
This passage indicates that “the microstructure of the metal and thereby its properties are exclusively determined by the forced air-cooling”.
Annex 3 is indirect evidence for this factual information even if Annex 3 was published after the effective date of claim 3.

The methods of claim 3 and of Annex 2 having in common forced air-cooling hence lead to soleplates with grooves having the same microstructure.
A groove formed according to the method of claim 3 cannot be distinguished from a groove made by the method of Annex 2. Consequently the product-by-process feature of claim 3 is not a distinguishing feature.
The differences between the subject-matter of claim 3 and Annex 2 are the same as for claim 2, thus the same reasoning as for claim 2 applies.
There is no hindrance in applying KeraMa on top of the grooved soleplate because Annex 2 [0014] discloses compatibility between Kera type coatings and structured metallic soleplates.
The subject-matter of claim 3 hence does not involve an inventive step over Annex 2 in combination with Annex 4 (Article 56 EPC).

Claim 4 (16 marks)

Annex 6 is the closest prior art since the iron of Annex 6 is for the same purpose of domestic use as the iron of claim 4 (see Annex 6 [0002] and Annex 1 [0011]). It is the only available document disclosing a steam iron with an internal water tank (see Figure), thus it requires the least structural changes.
Annex 6 discloses (claim 1 or [0006]) a steam iron (61) with an internal water reservoir. This reservoir is for containing water (Annex 6, [0001]), thus is a container or a tank in the sense of Annex 1, [0002]. Annex 6 also discloses steam outlets in the soleplate (62).

The subject-matter of claim 4 differs from the known iron of Annex 6 in that the soleplate comprises a region at the tip of the soleplate with a high density of steam outlets and a region at the back of the soleplate devoid of steam outlets.
The technical effect is to avoid wasting steam (Annex 1, [0012]) or to provide a good ironing quality with a low steam flow rate (Annex 1, [0014]).
The objective technical problem is thus to avoid wasting steam, or to allow good ironing quality while reducing water consumption.
The skilled person would consult Annex 2 which deals with steam irons having a good ironing quality while saving water ([0005], [0009]).
A first preferred embodiment of Annex 2 relates to a steam iron with a soleplate having a density of 3 or 4 outlets per 5 cm^2 at the tip ([0007]), which density corresponds to 6 or 8 outlets per 10 cm^2. This value falls under the definition accepted in the field of ironing devices of “high density”, as shown in [0012] of Annex 1 (“at least 5 outlets per 10 cm^2“).
In the same embodiment the soleplate has a back area without steam outlets ([0008]).
The first preferred embodiment of Annex 2 allows to obtain a good ironing quality while saving water ([0009]) and thus solves the objective technical problem.
Annex 3 [0011] refers to a Handbook published in 2001, which is evidence of common general knowledge available before the priority date of Annex 1.
The skilled person would therefore be aware that there is no hindrance in using the teachings of Annex 2 concerning the steam outlet distribution in an iron according to Annex 6.
The skilled person would use the steam outlet distribution known from the first preferred embodiment of Annex 2 to solve the problem posed. The subject-matter of claim 4 hence does not involve an inventive step in view of Annex 6 in combination with Annex 2 (Article 56 EPC).

Claim 5 (11 marks)

Annex 6 is closest prior art for the same reasons as for claim 4. This document discloses a steam iron with an internal water tank and steam outlets in the soleplate (see claim 4 above).
The subject-matter of claim 5 differs from the steam iron of Annex 6 in that

a) the soleplate comprises a region at the tip of the soleplate with a high density of steam outlets and a region at the back of the soleplate devoid of steam outlets, and
b) the steam outlets are part of steam dispensing ducts having their longitudinal axis inclined at an angle between 25° and 35° with respect to the ironing surface of the soleplate.
Difference a) is the same as for claim 4, so are the technical effect and objective technical problem.
Difference b) has the technical effect of inducing the steam to partly flow along the surface of the fabric instead of forcing it through the fabric (Annex 1 [0015], [0016]). The objective problem of difference b) is thus to avoid damaging delicate fabrics.

There is no synergistic technical effect achieved by the two distinguishing features taken in combination, but rather a plurality of partial problems which are independently solved. Consequently, the inventive activity related to the two different partial problems can be separately assessed (GL, G-VII, 5.2 or 6).

The solution to the objective technical problem of difference a) is the same as for claim 4, namely from the first preferred embodiment of Annex 2.
Concerning the objective technical problem of difference b) the skilled person would consult Annex 5 because it addresses this objective technical problem ([0003] of Annex 5).

Annex 5 defines in claim 1 or [0004] steam passages extending through the soleplate. These passages are also called ducts in Annex 5, [0002] and they have the function of leading steam to the ironing surface and the fabric. These passages can thus be considered as steam dispensing ducts in the sense of claim 5 of Annex 1.
Annex 5 solves the second technical problem by tilting the passages so that an angle of 15° to 45°, preferably 20° to 30 is formed between their longitudinal axis and the ironing surface ([0004], [0005], claim 1). The end value 30°of the preferred range of Annex 5 falls within the range of 25° to 35° of claim 5; this feature is hence known from Annex 5.

Annex 5 teaches that the tilted passages may be used in all types of ironing devices ([0001]), so not only the ironing press of Annex 5. There is no hindrance to use tilted passages with an angle of 30°C in the steam iron of Annex 6.
When combining the two solutions to the two objective technical problems the skilled person would arrive at the subject-matter of claim 5. The subject-matter of claim 5 does not involve an inventive step in view of Annex 6 in combination with Annex 2 and Annex 5 (Article 56 EPC).

Claim 6 (8 marks)

Annex 3 discloses (claim 1) a steam iron with an internal water container, i.e. a tank in the sense of Annex 1 [0002]. The steam iron comprises a baseplate with a high density of steam nozzles at the tip of the baseplate (claim 1). Baseplate and soleplate are synonyms according to Annex 1 [0001], so are steam nozzles and steam outlets according to Annex 1 [0009].

As [0008] of Annex 3 indicates that the figure is drawn to scale, measurements can be derived from the figure in the XX' direction using the ruler represented on the figure. The region beyond the ribs at the back of the soleplate has a length of circa 6 cm, which is at least 4 cm. Annex 3 [0010] indicates that for the embodiment shown in the figure the region beyond the ribs has no steam outlets. Thus the soleplate of the iron illustrated in Annex 3 has a region at the back of the soleplate devoid of steam outlets, the region extending at least 4 cm along the longitudinal axis of the soleplate.
As Annex 3 discloses all the features of claim 6, claim 6 lacks novelty in view of Annex 3 (Article 54(2) EPC).

Claim 7 (10 marks)

Annex 3 is the closest prior art because it deals with the problem of ironing efficiency ([0002]), like claim 7 (Annex 1, [0011]). Annex 3 also relates to steam irons with internal water tanks and has more features in common than the other document disclosing irons with internal water tanks, Annex 6.

Annex 3 discloses the features of claim 6 (see claim 6 above), hence the subject-matter of claim 7 differs from the known steam iron in that there is an opening in the back portion of the iron through which the water tank can be filled.
The technical effect is to provide more space for a bigger opening to refill the tank (Annex 1, [0018]).
The objective technical problem is to make refill of the internal water tank more convenient.
Annex 6 relates to steam irons with internal water tanks (figure) and addresses the problem posed of making refill easier (Annex 6, [0004]). Annex 6 teaches to locate the opening for filling the water tank in the back portion of the iron, so that it can be made bigger (claim 1, figure or [0005] or [0007]).
The skilled person would thus without hindrance locate the refill opening in the back portion of the iron of Annex 3 to solve the problem posed.
The subject-matter of claim 7 hence does not involve an inventive step in view of Annex 3 in combination with Annex 6 (Article 56 EPC).

Examination Committee II: Paper C - Marking Details - Candidate No

Category		Max. possible	Marks Marker 1	Marker 2
General	General	7		
Claims	Claim 1	17		
Claims	Claim 2	19		
Claims	Claim 3	12		
Claims	Claim 4	16		
Claims	Claim 5	11		
Claims	Claim 6	8		
Claims	Claim 7	10		
Total				