

CLAIMS

1. An absorbent article (1) having a wearer-facing side (9) and a garment-facing side (10), the absorbent article extending a longitudinal direction (L) and a transverse direction (T) and having a front end portion (2), a rear end portion (3) and a crotch portion (4) located intermediate the end portions (2,3), wherein the absorbent article (1) comprises a topsheet (11) arranged on the wearer-facing side (9), a backsheet (12) arranged on the garment-facing side (10), an absorbent core (13) enclosed between the topsheet (11) and the backsheet (12), and a pair of standing gathers (14,15), which are arranged on the wearer-facing-side (9) and extend substantially in the longitudinal direction (L), the topsheet (11) comprising a sheet material comprising a nonwoven material comprising polypropylene-containing fibers and each of the standing gathers (14,15) comprising a sheet material comprising a nonwoven material comprising polypropylene-containing fibers **characterized in that**

the topsheet ~~comprises a sheet material having~~ has a stiffness (D) from 2.3 to 20 mm/N and each standing gather (14,15) ~~comprises a sheet material having~~ has a stiffness (D) from 2.0 to 20 mm/N, wherein stiffness is measured according to the softness test method as described in the specification,

the topsheet (11) sheet material has a softness (TS7) of 4.5 dB V² or less and the standing gather sheet material (14,15) has a softness (TS7) of 5.0 dB V² rms or less, wherein softness is measured on a surface forming part of an outer-facing surface of the absorbent article, of each sheet material and according to the softness test method as described in the specification, and

the topsheet (11) sheet material has a smoothness (TS750) of 4 dB V² rms or less and the standing gather (14,15) sheet material has a smoothness (TS750) of 7.0 dB V² rms or less, wherein softness is measured on the surface forming part of an outer-facing surface of the absorbent article, of each sheet material and according to the softness test method as described in the specification and wherein the polypropylene-containing fibers of the topsheet sheet material and the polypropylene-containing fibers of each of the standing gathers sheet material contain a slip agent and wherein the nonwoven material of the topsheet sheet material and the nonwoven material of each of the standing gather sheet material comprise a side, wherein the polypropylene-containing fibers of each of the nonwoven materials are bound together by an alternating bonding pattern of individualized bonded areas which areas are in the form of rods which are

5 arranged in the cross direction of the web, the alternating pattern of the
individualized bonded areas defining a non-bonded area, the surface of the
bonded surface area being from 5 to 30 % of the total surface area of the side and
the surface of the non-bonded area being in the range of 70 to 95 % of the total
surface of the side of each of the nonwoven materials.

- 10 2. The absorbent article according to claim 1, wherein the sheet materials of the
topsheet (11) and of each standing gather (14,15) at least form parts of the
topsheet (11) and the standing gathers (14,15) that overlap with the crotch portion
(4) of the absorbent article (1).
- 15 3. The absorbent article according to claim 2, wherein the parts of the sheet material
of the topsheet (11) and of each standing gather (14,15) are arranged next to or in
overlap with each other, at least when the absorbent article (1) is worn by a
wearer.
- 20 4. The absorbent article according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the
backsheet (12) comprises a sheet material that has a stiffness (D) from 2.0 to 20
mm/N as measured according to the softness test method as described in the
specification, and wherein the backsheet (12) sheet material has a softness (TS7)
of 16 or less as measured on a surface of the backsheet (12) sheet material and
according to the softness test method as described in the specification.
- 25 5. The absorbent article according to claim 4, wherein the sum of the stiffness of the
backsheet (12) sheet material and the stiffness of the standing gather (14,15)
sheet material of is 4.5 mm/N or more.
- 30 6. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 4 or 5, wherein the difference
between the stiffness of the sheet material of the backsheet (12) and the stiffness
of the standing gather sheet material (14,15) is 0.8 mm/N or less.
- 35 7. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 4 to 6, wherein the sheet
materials of the backsheet (12) and of each standing gather (14,15) at least form
parts of the backsheet (12) and the standing gathers (14,15) that overlap with the
crotch portion (4) of the absorbent article (1)

8. The absorbent article according to claim 7, wherein the parts of the sheet material of the backsheet (12) and of each standing gather (14,15) are arranged next to or in overlap with each other.

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9. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 5-8, wherein the backsheet (12) sheet material comprises a nonwoven material of fibres.

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~~10. The absorbent article according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein the standing gather (14,15) sheet material comprises a nonwoven material of fibres and/or wherein the topsheet (11) sheet material comprises a nonwoven material of fibres.~~

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~~11.10.~~ The absorbent article according to claim ~~9 to 10~~1, wherein ~~nonwoven material comprises polyolefin-containing fibres, preferably polypropylene-containing fibres,~~ the propylene preferably being present in an amount of 50 % by weight or more.

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~~12.11.~~ The absorbent article according to ~~any one of claims 9 to 11 or any one of claims 9 - 10~~, wherein the fibres contains a slip agent, such as an erucamide, a wax (polyolefin wax) and a lubricant, ~~preferably~~ in an amount of from 0.1 to 5 % by weight.

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~~13. The absorbent article according any one of claims 9 to 12, wherein the nonwoven material comprises a layer of a nonwoven web with a side, wherein the polyolefin fibres are bound together by an alternating bonding pattern having a total bonded surface area of from 5 to 30 % of the total surface area of the side.~~

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~~14.12.~~ The absorbent article according to any one of claims ~~1, or 9 to 13~~11, wherein the nonwoven material comprises a layer of spunbond material and/or a layer of meltblown material.

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~~15.13.~~ The absorbent article according to claim ~~14~~12, wherein the nonwoven comprises two outer layers of a spunbond material and an intermediate layer between the outer layers that is of a meltblown material.

| ~~16.~~14. The absorbent article according to claim ~~15~~13, wherein the polyolefin fibres comprises polyethylene, preferably in an amount of 5 to 40 % by weight.

5 | ~~17.~~15. The absorbent article according to any one of claims 9 or ~~16~~14, wherein the polyolefin fibres are bicomponent fibres, preferably with a core of polypropylene and an outer shell of polyethylene.



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Communication pursuant to Article 94(3) EPC

The examination of the above-identified application has revealed that it does not meet the requirements of the European Patent Convention for the reasons enclosed herewith. If the deficiencies indicated are not rectified the application may be refused pursuant to Article 97(2) EPC.

You are invited to file your observations and insofar as the deficiencies are such as to be rectifiable, to correct the indicated deficiencies within a period

of 2 months

from the notification of this communication, this period being computed in accordance with Rules 126(2) and 131(2) and (4) EPC. One set of amendments to the description, claims and drawings is to be filed within the said period on separate sheets (R. 50(1) EPC).

If filing amendments, you must identify them and indicate the basis for them in the application as filed. Failure to meet either requirement may lead to a communication from the Examining Division requesting that you correct this deficiency (R. 137(4) EPC).

Failure to comply with this invitation in due time will result in the application being deemed to be withdrawn (Art. 94(4) EPC).



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For the Examining Division

Enclosure(s): 1 page/s reasons (Form 2906)

The examination is being carried out on the **following application documents**

Description, Pages

1-25 as published

Claims, Numbers

1-15 filed in electronic form on 22-07-2019

Drawings, Sheets

1/2, 2/2 as published

Reference is made to the following document:

D1 WO 2014/074409 A1 (PROCTER & GAMBLE [US]) 15 May 2014
(2014-05-15)

- 1 The applicant's arguments given in their letter received on 22.07.2019 have been carefully considered and the Division has come to the following conclusion.
- 2 The set of claims 1-15, as filed on 22.07.2019, appears to meet the requirements of the EPC.
- 3 The applicant is therefore requested to bring the description into conformity with these claims. Since a number of features have been introduced into claim 1, it should be clear from the description that these features are no more optional features. See, in particular, the following passages: p. 2, l. 31-32; p. 3, l. 19; p. 4, l. 26; p. 9, l. 9-17; p. 15, l. 31; p. 16, l. 27; p. 17, l. 1-9.
- 4 To meet the requirements of Rule 42(1)(b) EPC, document D1 should be identified in the description and the relevant background art disclosed therein should be briefly discussed.