



# Measurement of the W boson helicity fractions in the decays of top quark pairs to lepton + jets final states produced in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV



The CMS Collaboration\*

CERN, Switzerland

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## ABSTRACT

The W boson helicity fractions from top quark decays in  $t\bar{t}$  events are measured using data from proton–proton collisions at a centre-of-mass energy of 8 TeV. The data were collected in 2012 with the CMS detector at the LHC, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of  $19.8 \text{ fb}^{-1}$ . Events are reconstructed with either one muon or one electron, along with four jets in the final state, with two of the jets being identified as originating from b quarks. The measured helicity fractions from both channels are combined, yielding  $F_0 = 0.681 \pm 0.012 \text{ (stat)} \pm 0.023 \text{ (syst)}$ ,  $F_L = 0.323 \pm 0.008 \text{ (stat)} \pm 0.014 \text{ (syst)}$ , and  $F_R = -0.004 \pm 0.005 \text{ (stat)} \pm 0.014 \text{ (syst)}$  for the longitudinal, left-, and right-handed components of the helicity, respectively. These measurements of the W boson helicity fractions are the most accurate to date and they agree with the predictions from the standard model.

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## 1. Introduction

The data from proton–proton (pp) collisions produced at the CERN LHC provide an excellent environment to investigate properties of the top quark, in the context of its production and decay, with unprecedented precision. Such measurements enable rigorous tests of the standard model (SM), and deviations from the SM predictions would indicate signs of possible new physics [1–4].

In particular, the W boson helicity fractions in top quark decays are very sensitive to the Wtb vertex structure. The W boson helicity fractions are defined as the partial decay rate for a given helicity state divided by the total decay rate:  $F_{L,R,0} \equiv \Gamma_{L,R,0}/\Gamma$ , where  $F_L$ ,  $F_R$ , and  $F_0$  are the left-handed, right-handed, and longitudinal helicity fractions, respectively. The helicity fractions are expected to be  $F_0 = 0.687 \pm 0.005$ ,  $F_L = 0.311 \pm 0.005$ , and  $F_R = 0.0017 \pm 0.0001$  at next-to-next-to-leading order (NNLO) in the SM, including electroweak effects, for a top quark mass  $m_t = 172.8 \pm 1.3 \text{ GeV}$  [5]. Anomalous Wtb couplings, i.e. those that do not arise in the SM, would alter these values.

Experimentally, the W boson helicity can be measured through the study of angular distributions of the top quark decay products. The helicity angle  $\theta^*$  is defined as the angle between the direction

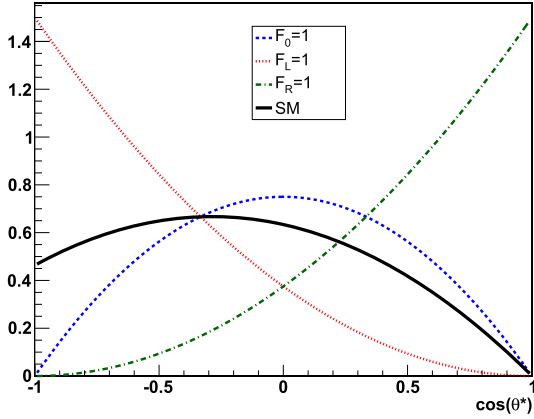
of either the down-type quark or the charged lepton arising from the W boson decay and the reversed direction of the top quark, both in the rest frame of the W boson. The distribution for the cosine of the helicity angle depends on the helicity fractions in the following way,

$$\frac{1}{\Gamma} \frac{d\Gamma}{d\cos\theta^*} = \frac{3}{8} (1 - \cos\theta^*)^2 F_L + \frac{3}{4} (\sin\theta^*)^2 F_0 + \frac{3}{8} (1 + \cos\theta^*)^2 F_R. \quad (1)$$

This dependence is shown in Fig. 1 for each contribution separately, normalised to unity, and for the SM expectation. Charged leptons (or down-type quarks) from left-handed W bosons are preferentially emitted in the opposite direction of the W boson, and thus tend to have lower momentum and be closer to the b jet from the top quark decay, as compared to charged leptons (or down-type quarks) from longitudinal or right-handed W bosons.

The measurement of the W boson helicity is sensitive to the presence of non-SM couplings between the W boson, the top quark, and the bottom quark. A general parametrisation of the Wtb vertex can be expressed as [1,6]

\* E-mail address: cms-publication-committee-chair@cern.ch.



**Fig. 1.** Predicted  $\cos\theta^*$  distributions for the different helicity fractions. The distributions for the fractions  $F_0$ ,  $F_L$ , and  $F_R$  are shown as dashed, dotted, and dash-dotted lines, respectively, and the sum of the three contributions according to the SM predictions is displayed as a solid line.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_{Wtb} = & -\frac{g}{\sqrt{2}} \bar{b} \gamma^\mu (V_L P_L + V_R P_R) t W_\mu^- \\ & -\frac{g}{\sqrt{2}} \bar{b} \frac{i\sigma^{\mu\nu} q_\nu}{M_W} (g_L P_L + g_R P_R) t W_\mu^- + \text{h.c.}, \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where  $V_L$ ,  $V_R$ ,  $g_L$ ,  $g_R$  are vector and tensor couplings (complex constants),  $q = p_t - p_b$ , and  $p_t$  ( $p_b$ ) is the four-momentum of the top quark (b quark),  $P_L$  ( $P_R$ ) is the left (right) projection operator, and h.c. denotes the Hermitian conjugate. Hermiticity conditions on the possible dimension-six Lagrangian terms also impose  $\text{Im}(V_L) = 0$  [7]. In the SM and at tree level,  $V_L = V_{tb}$ , where  $V_{tb} \approx 1$  is the Cabibbo–Kobayashi–Maskawa matrix element connecting the top and the bottom quarks and  $V_R = g_L = g_R = 0$ . The relationships between the W boson helicity fractions and the anomalous couplings including dependences on the b quark mass are given in Ref. [8].

The helicity fractions of W bosons in top quark decays were first measured at the Tevatron Collider [9–11]. They have been also measured at the LHC, using samples containing  $t\bar{t}$  events obtained in pp collisions at 7 TeV, and having either one [12,13] or two [12] charged leptons in the final state. The CMS Collaboration also reported measurements using event topologies that contain one single reconstructed top quark [14], in pp collisions at 8 TeV. Limits on anomalous couplings have also been reported, derived from W boson helicity measurements [12–14], and from single top quark differential cross section production measurements [15].

This Letter describes a measurement of the W boson helicity fractions in  $t\bar{t}$  events involving one lepton and multiple jets,  $t\bar{t} \rightarrow (W^+b)(W^-b) \rightarrow (\ell^+ \nu_\ell b)(q\bar{q}b)$ , and its charge conjugate, where  $\ell$  is an electron or a muon, including those from leptonic decays of a tau lepton. Final states corresponding to such processes are referred to as lepton + jets. The measurement relies on the analysis strategy described in Ref. [13]. The measurement is performed using pp collisions at centre-of-mass energy of 8 TeV, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of  $19.8 \text{ fb}^{-1}$ , collected during 2012 by the CMS detector.

## 2. The CMS detector

The CMS detector is a multipurpose apparatus of cylindrical design with respect to the proton beams. The main features of the detector relevant for this analysis are briefly described here. Charged particle trajectories are measured by a silicon pixel and strip tracker, covering the pseudorapidity range  $|\eta| < 2.5$ . The inner tracker is immersed in a 3.8 T magnetic field provided by

a superconducting solenoid of 6 m in diameter that also encompasses several calorimeters. A lead tungstate crystal electromagnetic calorimeter (ECAL), and a brass and scintillator hadronic calorimeter surround the tracking volume and cover the region  $|\eta| < 3$ . Quartz fibre and steel hadron forward calorimeters extend the coverage to  $|\eta| \leq 5$ . Muons are identified in gas ionisation detectors embedded in the steel return yoke of the magnet. The data for this analysis are recorded using a two-level trigger system. A more detailed description of the CMS detector, together with a definition of the coordinate system used and the relevant kinematic variables, can be found in Ref. [16].

## 3. Data and simulated samples

Signal events corresponding to top quark pairs that decay to lepton + jets final states are expected to contain one isolated lepton (electron or muon) together with at least four jets, two of which originate from b quark fragmentation. Such events are referred to separately as e + jets or  $\mu$  + jets, respectively, or when combined as  $\ell$  + jets. Background events containing a single isolated lepton and four reconstructed jets arise mainly from processes that produce events containing a single top quark, processes that produce multijet events in association with a W boson that decays leptonically (W + jets), or Drell–Yan processes accompanied by multiple jets (DY + jets) when one of the leptons is misidentified as a jet or goes undetected. Multijet processes can also mimic lepton + jets final states, if a jet is reconstructed as an electromagnetic shower or, more unlikely, if a nonprompt muon from a hadron decay in flight fulfils all identification criteria of a prompt muon.

Simulated Monte Carlo (MC) samples, interfaced with GEANT4 [17], are used to account for detector resolution and acceptance effects, as well as to estimate the contribution from background processes that have characteristics similar to lepton + jets final states in  $t\bar{t}$  decays. A signal  $t\bar{t}$  sample, which also provides a reference for the SM (see Eq. (5)), is simulated using MADGRAPH v5.1.3.30 [18] with matrix elements having up to three extra partons in the final state. The parton distribution function (PDF) set CTEQ6L1 [19] is used when simulating this reference  $t\bar{t}$  sample. The MADGRAPH generator is interfaced with PYTHIA v6.426 [20], tune Z2\* [21], to simulate hadronisation and parton fragmentation, and also with TAUOLA v27.121.5 [22] to simulate  $\tau$  lepton decays. This SM reference  $t\bar{t}$  sample is simulated assuming  $m_t = 172.5 \text{ GeV}$ , which results in the following leading-order (LO) W boson helicity fractions for that sample:

$$F_0^{\text{SM}} = 0.6902, \quad F_L^{\text{SM}} = 0.3089, \quad F_R^{\text{SM}} = 0.0009. \quad (3)$$

Single top quark events in the s, t, and tW channels are generated using POWHEG v1.0 [23] and PYTHIA interfaced with TAUOLA, with the PDF set CTEQ6M [19]. Background W + jets and DY + jets processes are simulated using MADGRAPH with the PDF set CTEQ6L1, followed by PYTHIA for fragmentation and hadronisation. Finally, background multijet processes are simulated using the PYTHIA event generator.

Corrections are applied to the simulated samples so that resolutions, energy scales, and efficiencies as functions of  $p_T$  and  $\eta$  of jets [24] and leptons [25] measured in data are well described. The effect of multiple pp collisions occurring in the same bunch crossing (pileup) is also taken into account in the simulation.

The data samples selected for this measurement were recorded using inclusive single-lepton triggers, which require at least one isolated electron (muon) with  $p_T > 27$  (24) GeV, used to define the e + jets ( $\mu$  + jets) data sample.

The decay products of candidate top quarks are reconstructed using the CMS particle-flow (PF) algorithm, described in detail

elsewhere [26,27]. Individual charged particles identified as coming from pileup interactions are removed from the event. Effects of neutral particles from pileup interactions are mitigated by applying corrections based on event properties. Leptons are required to originate from the primary vertex of the event [28]. A lepton is determined to be isolated using a variable computed as the total transverse momentum of all particles (except the lepton itself) contained within a cone of radius 0.4, centred on the lepton direction, relative to the transverse momentum of the lepton. Electrons are identified by using a multivariate analysis (MVA) [29] based on information from the inner tracker and the ECAL. Events are selected for the  $e + \text{jets}$  data sample if the identified electron has an MVA discriminant value greater than 0.9, is determined to be isolated, has  $p_T > 30 \text{ GeV}$ , and  $|\eta| < 2.5$ . Muons are identified by matching information from the inner tracker and the muon spectrometer [30]. Events are selected for the  $\mu + \text{jets}$  data sample if they contain an isolated muon,  $p_T > 26 \text{ GeV}$ , and  $|\eta| < 2.1$ . Events with at least one additional isolated electron or muon are vetoed to reject backgrounds from dileptonic decay modes of  $t\bar{t}$  and  $DY + \text{jets}$  processes. Jets are reconstructed [24] using the anti- $k_T$  clustering algorithm [31], with a distance parameter of 0.5. The selected or vetoed leptons described above are not allowed to be clustered into jets, to avoid ambiguities.

The event selection requires at least four reconstructed jets having  $|\eta| < 2.4$ , of which the four most energetic jets are required to have  $p_T$  higher than 55, 45, 35, and 20 GeV. Events with additional jets are not vetoed. The transverse momentum imbalance of the event  $\vec{p}_T^{\text{miss}}$  is determined by summing the negative transverse momentum over all reconstructed particles, excluding those charged particles not associated with the primary vertex.

The transverse mass of the W boson is defined as  $M_T = \sqrt{2p_T^\ell p_T^{\text{miss}}(1 - \cos(\Delta\phi))}$ , where  $p_T^\ell$  is the transverse momentum of the lepton,  $p_T^{\text{miss}}$  is the magnitude of  $\vec{p}_T^{\text{miss}}$ , and  $\Delta\phi$  is the angle in the  $(x, y)$  plane between the direction of the lepton and  $\vec{p}_T^{\text{miss}}$ . To reduce the multijet background and suppress dilepton events from  $t\bar{t}$  processes, events are required to have  $30 < M_T < 200 \text{ GeV}$ . All backgrounds are further suppressed by requiring that at least two jets be identified as originating from b quarks. All jets with  $p_T > 20 \text{ GeV}$  are considered as b quark candidates, including those that are not among the four most energetic.

The combined secondary vertex algorithm [32,33] tags b quark jets with an efficiency of about 70% and mistags jets originating from gluons, u, d, or s quarks with a probability of about 1%, for the typical  $p_T$  ranges (30–100 GeV) probed in  $t\bar{t}$  events. Charm jets have a probability of  $\approx 20\%$  of being tagged as b quark jets. The residual multijet backgrounds, already strongly suppressed by the b tagging requirement described above, are estimated by normalising simulated event samples to yields in control data samples. The control samples are defined by selection criteria which are similar to those for the signal, but which have no b tagging requirement, and have  $M_T < 30 \text{ GeV}$  for the  $\mu + \text{jets}$  channel or have an electron MVA discriminant value smaller than 0.5 for the  $e + \text{jets}$  channel. The estimated amount of multijet events is  $\approx 2\%$  of the  $e + \text{jets}$  sample, and less than 1% of the  $\mu + \text{jets}$  sample. The contributions of all other residual backgrounds are determined using simulation.

#### 4. Reconstruction of the $t\bar{t}$ system and reweighting method

The reconstruction of the  $t\bar{t}$  system, described in detail in Ref. [13], relies on testing the selected lepton, the measured  $\vec{p}_T^{\text{miss}}$ , and all selected jets for their compatibility with the top quark decay products from the leptonic ( $t \rightarrow bW \rightarrow b\ell\nu$ ) and hadronic ( $t \rightarrow bW \rightarrow bq\bar{q}'$ ) branches. The unmeasured component of the neutrino momentum  $p_z^\nu$  is determined by requiring the  $t\bar{t}$  sys-

tem to be consistent with the invariant masses of two top quarks and two W bosons. With these constraints, b jets are correctly assigned to the leptonic (hadronic) branch in about 74% (71%) of signal events. After the assignment, a kinematic fit is performed, where the momenta of the measured jets and lepton are allowed to vary within their resolutions to better comply with the mass constraints, leading to an improved determination of  $p_z^\nu$  and a more accurate reconstruction of the  $t\bar{t}$  system. In about 5–7% of the selected events, the fit fails to find a solution that is compatible with the constraints and such events are discarded. The number of data events passing all selection criteria, including the fit convergence, is 71 458 in the  $e + \text{jets}$  sample and 70 986 in the  $\mu + \text{jets}$  sample. A study using simulations normalised to the most precise theoretical cross sections available to date [34–37] indicates that the final sample composition is largely dominated by  $t\bar{t}$  events, with about 82% of events from the  $\ell + \text{jets}$  decay mode,  $\approx 10\%$  from other decay modes (including  $\tau$  leptons), and  $\approx 3.5\%$  of the events from single top quark processes. The remaining events come from backgrounds not containing top quarks in the final state.

The method [13] employed to measure the W boson helicity fractions ( $F_L, F_0, F_R$ )  $\equiv \vec{F}$  consists of maximising a binned Poisson likelihood function constructed using the number of observed events in data  $N_{\text{data}}(i)$  and expected events from MC simulation  $N_{\text{MC}}(i; \vec{F})$ , in each bin  $i$  of the reconstructed  $\cos\theta_{\text{rec}}^*$  distribution,

$$\mathcal{L}(\vec{F}) = \prod_i \frac{N_{\text{MC}}(i; \vec{F})^{N_{\text{data}}(i)}}{[N_{\text{data}}(i)]!} \exp[-N_{\text{MC}}(i; \vec{F})]. \quad (4)$$

While the charged lepton is easily identified in the leptonic branch of  $t\bar{t}$  decays, the down-type quark jet arising from the W boson decay in the hadronic branch of  $t\bar{t}$  decays can not be experimentally distinguished from the up-type quark jet. Due to this ambiguity, only the absolute value  $|\cos\theta_{\text{rec}}^*|$  can be reconstructed for the hadronic branch. Hence, only the leptonic branch measurement of  $\cos\theta_{\text{rec}}^*$  is used in this analysis. The expected numbers of events from background processes,  $N_{W+\text{jets}}(i)$ ,  $N_{DY+\text{jets}}(i)$ , and  $N_{\text{multijet}}(i)$  represent W boson production in association with multiple jets, Drell–Yan production in association with multiple jets, and production of multiple jets, which do not depend on the W boson helicity fractions. For the processes containing top quarks, the number of expected events in a given bin  $i$  is modified by reweighting each event in that bin by a factor  $w$ , defined for each decaying branch as

$$w_{\text{lep/had/single-t}}(\cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*; \vec{F}) \equiv \left[ \begin{aligned} & \frac{3}{8} F_L (1 - \cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*)^2 \\ & + \frac{3}{4} F_0 \sin^2 \theta_{\text{gen}}^* \\ & + \frac{3}{8} F_R (1 + \cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*)^2 \end{aligned} \right] / \left[ \begin{aligned} & \frac{3}{8} F_L^{\text{SM}} (1 - \cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*)^2 \\ & + \frac{3}{4} F_0^{\text{SM}} \sin^2 \theta_{\text{gen}}^* \\ & + \frac{3}{8} F_R^{\text{SM}} (1 + \cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*)^2 \end{aligned} \right], \quad (5)$$

where  $\theta_{\text{gen}}^*$  is the helicity angle (specified at matrix element level) of a particular decay branch, and  $F_L^{\text{SM}}, F_0^{\text{SM}}, F_R^{\text{SM}}$  are given in Eq. (3). Therefore, the number of expected events, as a function of the helicity fractions to be measured, is

**Table 1**

Systematic uncertainties on the measurements of the W boson helicity fractions from lepton + jets events. The cases in which the statistical precision of the limited sample size was assigned as systematic uncertainties are denoted by the symbol (\*).

	e + jets		$\mu$ + jets		$\ell$ + jets	
	$\pm\Delta F_0$	$\pm\Delta F_L$	$\pm\Delta F_0$	$\pm\Delta F_L$	$\pm\Delta F_0$	$\pm\Delta F_L$
JES	0.004	0.003	0.005	0.003	0.005	0.003
JER	0.001	0.002	0.004	0.003	0.003	0.003
b tagging eff.	0.001	$<10^{-3}$	0.001	$<10^{-3}$	0.001	$<10^{-3}$
Lepton eff.	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Single top normal.	0.002	$<10^{-3}$	0.003	0.001	0.003	0.001
W + jets bkg.	0.008	0.001	0.007	0.001	0.007	0.001
DY + jets bkg.	0.002	$<10^{-3}$	0.001	$<10^{-3}$	0.001	$<10^{-3}$
Multijet bkg.	0.023	0.007	0.007	0.003	0.008	0.001
Pileup	0.001	0.001	$<10^{-3}$	$<10^{-3}$	0.001	$<10^{-3}$
Top quark mass	0.012	0.008	0.010 (*)	0.008 (*)	0.010	0.007
$t\bar{t}$ scales	0.011	0.008 (*)	0.014	0.007 (*)	0.012	0.007
$t\bar{t}$ match. scale	0.011 (*)	0.007 (*)	0.010	0.007	0.009	0.007
$t\bar{t}$ MC and hadronisation	0.015	0.009	0.005	0.003	0.006	0.004
$t\bar{t}$ $p_T$ reweight	0.011	0.010	$<10^{-3}$	0.001	$<10^{-3}$	0.002
Limited MC size	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001
PDF	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.001	0.002	0.001
Total	0.037	0.020	0.024	0.014	0.023	0.014

$$\begin{aligned}
N_{\text{MC}}(i; \vec{F}) = & N_{t\bar{t}}(i; \vec{F}) \\
& + N_{\text{single-t}}(i; \vec{F}) \\
& + N_{W+\text{jets}}(i) \\
& + N_{\text{DY}+\text{jets}}(i) \\
& + N_{\text{multijet}}(i),
\end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}
N_{t\bar{t}}(i; \vec{F}) = & \mathcal{F}_{t\bar{t}} \left[ \sum_{t\bar{t} \text{ events in bin } i} w_{\text{lep}}(\cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*; \vec{F}) \right. \\
& \left. \times w_{\text{had}}(\cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*; \vec{F}) \right], \quad (7) \\
N_{\text{single-t}}(i; \vec{F}) = & \sum_{\text{single-t events in bin } i} w_{\text{single-t}}(\cos\theta_{\text{gen}}^*; \vec{F})
\end{aligned}$$

represent the expected number of events fulfilling event selection criteria for processes involving top quark pair, and single top quark production, respectively. The normalisation factor  $\mathcal{F}_{t\bar{t}}$  for the  $t\bar{t}$  sample is a single free parameter in the fit across all bins. The expected cross section for the simulated reference  $t\bar{t}$  sample is  $252.9^{+13.3}_{-14.5}$  pb, calculated at NNLO and next-to-next-to-leading-log (NNLL) accuracy [34,35], and describes the data well. The fitted values of  $\mathcal{F}_{t\bar{t}}$  in both e + jets and  $\mu$  + jets channels are compatible with 1.00 within 3%. The overall normalisation factor for simulated single top quark events is not modified in the fit and the uncertainty in the assumed cross section is considered as a source of systematic uncertainty. Finally, the unitarity constraint ( $F_L + F_0 + F_R = 1$ ) is imposed, so that one of the helicity fractions, namely  $F_R$ , is bound by the measurement of the other two.

The method was validated using pseudo-experiments, where the fitting procedure was performed on pseudo-data, mimicking altered helicity fractions. Linearity tests show that the fitting procedure correctly retrieves the helicity fractions of altered input values for  $F_0 \in [0.50, 0.85]$  and  $F_L \in [0.20, 0.50]$ . Likewise the corresponding statistical uncertainties were verified using sets of statistically uncorrelated pseudo-data.

## 5. Systematic uncertainties

Systematic effects which could potentially bias the measurement of the W boson helicity fractions have been investigated and

their corresponding uncertainties determined, as presented in Table 1.

Residual corrections are applied in simulation to the jet energy scale (JES), to account for differences between data and simulation. The momenta of the jets in simulation are also smeared so that the jet energy resolution (JER) in simulation agrees with that in data. These corrections and smearings are propagated into  $\vec{p}_T^{\text{miss}}$  to correct its momentum scale. The uncertainties [24] associated with the JES and JER corrections are also propagated to  $\vec{p}_T^{\text{miss}}$ , and the full analysis, including the  $t\bar{t}$  reconstruction and the resulting measurements of the W boson helicity fractions, is repeated. Scale factors are used to correct the b tagging efficiency in simulation, where those corrections are shifted by their estimated uncertainties, and the full analysis repeated. Scale factors are also used to correct leptons for their identification, isolation and trigger efficiencies, which are varied within their uncertainties so as to maximise potential shape variations of the predicted  $\cos\theta^*$  distributions.

To account for any possible bias of the W boson helicity measurements due to uncertainties in the normalisation of simulated backgrounds, the assumed cross section for each sample is varied individually [13]. An uncertainty of 30% is used for the normalisation of DY + jets, single top quark, and W boson production in association with light-quark or gluon jet production. Since the modelling of the simulated heavy-flavour content of the W + jets sample is known to be inaccurate, an uncertainty of  $^{+100\%}_{-50\%}$  is assumed for simulated events involving a W boson produced in association with b quark jets. The impact of the DY + jets normalisation uncertainty in the analysis is small, since it corresponds to only a few percent of the sample composition. The normalisation of the multijet background is estimated from control samples and results in an uncertainty of  $^{+50\%}_{-50\%}$  in the e + jets channel and  $^{+40\%}_{-50\%}$  in the  $\mu$  + jets channel. Shape uncertainties on the multijet background templates were investigated by comparing the distributions in several different control regions, both in MC and in data, and were found to be negligible, compared to the much larger normalisation uncertainties.

Several uncertainties from possible systematic effects related to theoretical modelling of the signal are estimated by replacing the default  $t\bar{t}$  samples with alternative  $t\bar{t}$  samples and repeating the entire analysis. Specifically, for the MADGRAPH interfaced with PYTHIA event generation, the default  $m_t$  value of 172.5 GeV is shifted up and down by 1 GeV; the renormalisation and fac-



**Table 2**

Measurements of the W boson helicity fractions from lepton + jets final states in  $t\bar{t}$  decays. The helicity fractions  $F_0$  and  $F_L$  are measured simultaneously and are strongly anti-correlated, as indicated by a correlation coefficient  $\rho_{0,L}$ , because  $F_R$  is derived from the unitarity condition.

Channel	$F_0 \pm (\text{stat}) \pm (\text{syst})$	$F_L \pm (\text{stat}) \pm (\text{syst})$	$F_R \pm (\text{stat}) \pm (\text{syst})$	$\rho_{0,L}$
e + jets	$0.705 \pm 0.013 \pm 0.037$	$0.304 \pm 0.009 \pm 0.020$	$-0.009 \pm 0.005 \pm 0.021$	-0.950
$\mu$ + jets	$0.685 \pm 0.013 \pm 0.024$	$0.328 \pm 0.009 \pm 0.014$	$-0.013 \pm 0.005 \pm 0.017$	-0.957
$\ell$ + jets	$0.681 \pm 0.012 \pm 0.023$	$0.323 \pm 0.008 \pm 0.014$	$-0.004 \pm 0.005 \pm 0.014$	-0.959

torisation scales are varied down (up) by a factor of 0.5 (2); the kinematic scale used to match jets to partons (matching threshold) is varied down (up) by factor of 0.5 (2); finally, the parton shower and hadronisation modelling is studied in a  $t\bar{t}$  sample simulated with MC@NLO v3.41 [38] using the PDF set CTEQ6M and interfaced with HERWIG v6.520 [39].

Uncertainties in the helicity fractions arising from the limited size of the simulated  $t\bar{t}$  samples are taken into account, both in the main analysis and in the determination of the modelling uncertainties. In the former case, these effects are added as a separate source of uncertainty. In the latter case, the systematic uncertainties in the W boson helicity are assigned to be the larger of either (i) the statistical precision of the limited sample size or (ii) the systematic shift of the central value with respect to the reference  $t\bar{t}$  sample.

The shape of the  $p_T$  spectrum for top quarks, as measured by the differential cross section for top quark pairs [25,40], has been found to be softer than the predictions from MADGRAPH simulation. The effect of this mismodelling is estimated by reweighting the events in the simulated  $t\bar{t}$  sample, so that the top quark  $p_T$  at parton level in the MC describes the unfolded data distribution. Further, the systematic effects due to the PDFs used to simulate the signal and background samples are estimated according to the prescriptions described in [41,42], using NNPDF21 [43] and MSTW2008lo68cl [44] PDF sets as alternatives to those used at generation. Finally, uncertainties related to the modelling of the pileup in simulated events are also taken into account.

The total systematic uncertainty is given by the sum in quadrature of all uncertainties described above.

## 6. Results

The measurements of the W boson helicity fractions, using  $\cos\theta^*$  from the leptonic branch of  $t\bar{t}$  events that decay into e + jets or  $\mu$  + jets, including the full combination of these two measurements, are shown in Table 2. Within an individual channel, the helicity parameters  $F_0$  and  $F_L$  are fit simultaneously, but they are strongly anti-correlated due to the unitarity constraint  $F_L + F_0 + F_R = 1$ , as indicated by the statistical correlation coefficient  $\rho_{0,L}$  given in the table. The separate helicity measurements from the e + jets and  $\mu$  + jets channels are combined into a single  $\ell$  + jets measurement using the BLUE method [45,46], taking into account all uncertainties and their possible correlations. Uncertainties related to lepton efficiency, multijet background estimations, and statistical uncertainties are considered uncorrelated between the e + jets and  $\mu$  + jets analyses, while all other uncertainties are assumed to be fully correlated. The combined  $\ell$  + jets measurement of the helicity fractions is dominated by the  $\mu$  + jets channel, with weights more than double those of the e + jets channel. The  $\chi^2$  of the combination is 2.13 for 2 degrees of freedom, corresponding to a probability of 34.5%. The measurement uncertainties are dominated by systematic effects that are correlated between both the e + jets and  $\mu$  + jets channels. The combined  $F_0$  and  $F_L$  values are anti-correlated with a statistical correlation coefficient  $\rho_{0,L} = -0.959$ . The total correlation coefficient, considering both statistical and systematic uncertainties, is found to be  $-0.870$ .

The measured helicity fractions presented in Table 2 are consistent with the SM predictions given at NNLO accuracy [5]. Fig. 2 shows, separately for the e + jets and  $\mu$  + jets channels, the distributions for the cosine of the helicity angles from the leptonic branch, which are used in the helicity measurements, and the distributions of the corresponding absolute values from the hadronic branch, for comparison purposes. The simulated samples involving top quarks used in the figure were produced using the measured values for the W boson helicity fractions, as determined from the combined  $\ell$  + jets fit. Left-handed W bosons tend to populate the region at  $\cos\theta^* \approx -1$ , where the charged lepton overlaps with the b quark. However, the angular separation requirement between leptons and jets removes most of the events near  $\cos\theta^* = -1$ . Very few events are expected in the region preferred by right-handed bosons, near  $\cos\theta^* = +1$ . However, due to resolution effects, the reconstructed distribution does not fall as rapidly as expected in that region, where the charged lepton and b quark have opposite directions. For these reasons, the shape of the reconstructed  $\cos\theta^*$  distribution differs from that expected in the SM (Fig. 1). These features are well reproduced by the simulation, and taken into account in the measurement.

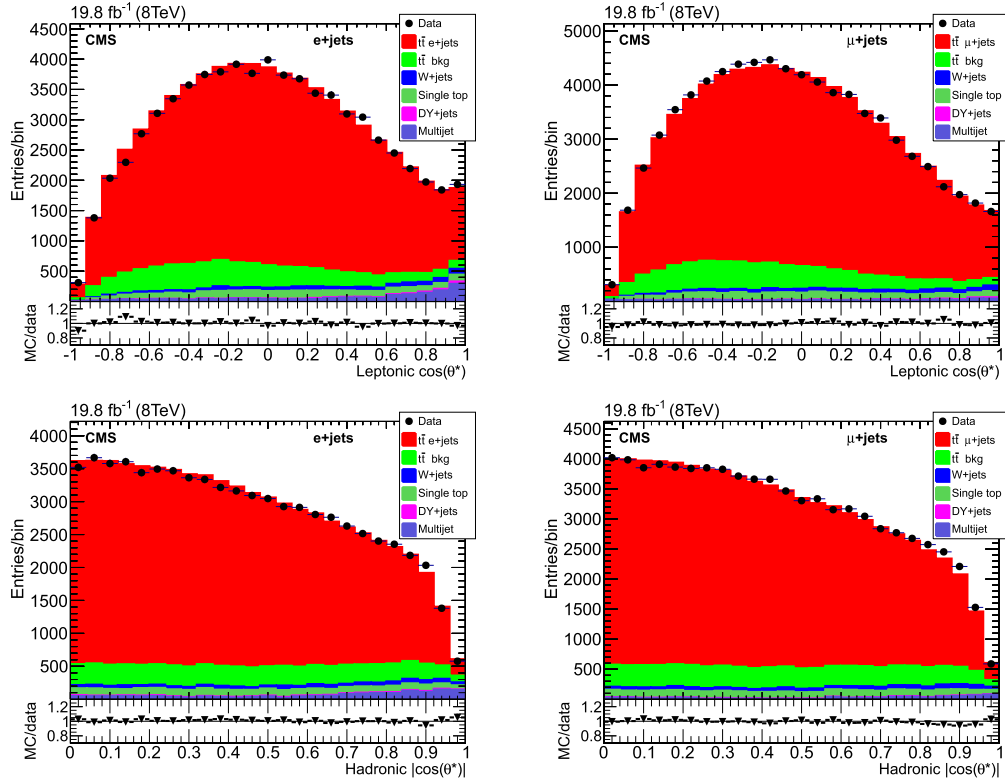
Using these results, limits on anomalous couplings are obtained by fixing the two vector couplings in Eq. (2) to their SM values,  $V_L = 1$  and  $V_R = 0$ , and choosing the tensor couplings,  $\text{Re}(g_L)$  and  $\text{Re}(g_R)$ , as free parameters. The combined  $\ell$  + jets measurement of the W boson helicity fractions  $F_0$  and  $F_L$  is reinterpreted in terms of the tensor couplings,  $\text{Re}(g_L)$  and  $\text{Re}(g_R)$ , using the relationships between the W boson helicity fractions given in Ref. [8].

The W boson helicity measurements are displayed in the  $(F_0, F_L)$  plane in Fig. 3 (left), together with their one-dimensional statistical (inner-tick mark) and total (outer-tick mark) error bars. The full two-dimensional confidence level (CL) contours corresponding to 68% (dashed line) and 95% (solid line) probabilities are also displayed for the combined measurement. The SM prediction is shown as a star and lies within the 68% CL contour. The corresponding regions in the  $(\text{Re}(g_L), \text{Re}(g_R))$  plane, allowed at 68% (dark contour) and 95% CL (light contour), are shown in Fig. 3 (right), together with the SM value. They are derived from Fig. 3 (left), using the relationships between the W boson helicity fractions and the anomalous couplings given in Ref. [8]. A region near  $\text{Re}(g_L) = 0$  and  $\text{Re}(g_R) \gg 0$ , allowed by the fit but excluded by the CMS single top quark production measurement [47], is not shown.

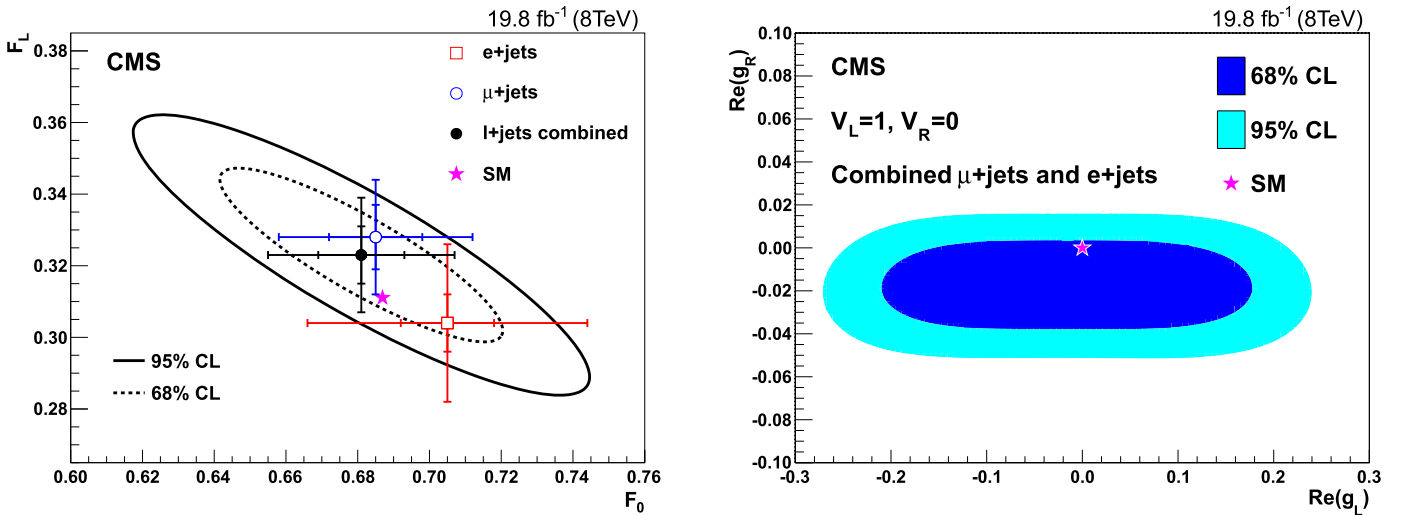
If the right-handed component  $F_R$  is bound to zero, consistently with the SM within the precision of the current measurement, the combined  $\ell$  + jets measurement amounts to  $F_0 = 0.661 \pm 0.006(\text{stat}) \pm 0.021(\text{syst})$ . In this case,  $F_L$  is obtained via the unitarity constraint and yields  $F_L = 0.339 \pm 0.006(\text{stat}) \pm 0.021(\text{syst})$ .

## 7. Summary

A measurement of the W boson helicity fractions in top quark pair events decaying in the e + jets and  $\mu$  + jets channels has been presented, using proton–proton collision data at  $\sqrt{s} = 8$  TeV, and corresponding to an integrated luminosity of  $19.8 \text{ fb}^{-1}$ . The helicity fractions  $F_0$  and  $F_L$  are measured with a precision of



**Fig. 2.** Distributions for the cosine of the helicity angle in the leptonic (upper row) and hadronic (lower row) branches, for the  $e + \text{jets}$  (left) and  $\mu + \text{jets}$  (right) decay channels. The combined  $\ell + \text{jets}$  post-fit measurements of the helicity fractions were used in the simulation of  $t\bar{t}$  and single top quark events. The data are displayed as solid points, simulated samples of  $t\bar{t}$  (signal) processes and the contribution from background processes as histograms. At the bottom of each plot, the ratio between MC simulation and data is displayed. The error bars correspond to the statistical uncertainties.



**Fig. 3.** Left: the measured  $W$  boson helicity fractions in the  $(F_0, F_L)$  plane. The dashed and solid ellipses enclose the allowed two-dimensional 68% and 95% CL regions, for the combined  $\ell + \text{jets}$  measurement, taking into account the correlations on the total (including systematic) uncertainties. The error bars give the one-dimensional 68% CL interval for the separate  $F_0$  and  $F_L$  measurements, with the inner-tick (outer-tick) mark representing the statistical (total) uncertainty. Right: the corresponding allowed regions for the real components of the anomalous couplings  $g_L$  and  $g_R$  at 68% and 95% CL, for  $V_L = 1$  and  $V_R = 0$ . A region near  $\text{Re}(g_L) = 0$  and  $\text{Re}(g_R) \gg 0$ , allowed by the fit but excluded by the CMS single top quark production measurement, is omitted. The SM predictions are shown as stars.

better than 5%, yielding the most accurate experimental determination of the  $W$  boson helicity fractions in  $t\bar{t}$  processes to date. The measured  $W$  boson helicity fractions are  $F_0 = 0.681 \pm 0.012(\text{stat}) \pm 0.023(\text{syst})$ ,  $F_L = 0.323 \pm 0.008(\text{stat}) \pm 0.014(\text{syst})$ , and  $F_R = -0.004 \pm 0.005(\text{stat}) \pm 0.014(\text{syst})$ , with a correlation coefficient of  $-0.87$  between  $F_0$  and  $F_L$ , and they are consistent with the expectations from the standard model.

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## CMS Collaboration

V. Khachatryan, A.M. Sirunyan, A. Tumasyan

*Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia*

W. Adam, E. Asilar, T. Bergauer, J. Brandstetter, E. Brondolin, M. Dragicevic, J. Erö, M. Flechl, M. Friedl, R. Frühwirth<sup>1</sup>, V.M. Ghete, C. Hartl, N. Hörmann, J. Hrubec, M. Jeitler<sup>1</sup>, A. König, I. Krätschmer, D. Liko, T. Matsushita, I. Mikulec, D. Rabady, N. Rad, B. Rahbaran, H. Rohringer, J. Schieck<sup>1</sup>, J. Strauss, W. Treberer-Treberspurg, W. Waltenberger, C.-E. Wulz<sup>1</sup>

*Institut für Hochenergiephysik der OeAW, Wien, Austria*

V. Mossolov, N. Shumeiko, J. Suarez Gonzalez

*National Centre for Particle and High Energy Physics, Minsk, Belarus*

S. Alderweireldt, E.A. De Wolf, X. Janssen, J. Lauwers, M. Van De Klundert, H. Van Haevermaet, P. Van Mechelen, N. Van Remortel, A. Van Spilbeeck

*Universiteit Antwerpen, Antwerpen, Belgium*

S. Abu Zeid, F. Blekman, J. D'Hondt, N. Daci, I. De Bruyn, K. Deroover, N. Heracleous, S. Lowette, S. Moortgat, L. Moreels, A. Olbrechts, Q. Python, S. Tavernier, W. Van Doninck, P. Van Mulders, I. Van Parijs

*Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, Belgium*

H. Brun, C. Caillol, B. Clerbaux, G. De Lentdecker, H. Delannoy, G. Fasanella, L. Favart, R. Goldouzian, A. Grebenyuk, G. Karapostoli, T. Lenzi, A. Léonard, J. Luetic, T. Maerschalk, A. Marinov, A. Randle-conde, T. Seva, C. Vander Velde, P. Vanlaer, R. Yonamine, F. Zenoni, F. Zhang<sup>2</sup>

*Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, Belgium*

A. Cimmino, T. Cornelis, D. Dobur, A. Fagot, G. Garcia, M. Gul, D. Poyraz, S. Salva, R. Schöfbeck, M. Tytgat, W. Van Driessche, E. Yazgan, N. Zaganidis

*Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium*



C. Beluffi<sup>3</sup>, O. Bondu, S. Brochet, G. Bruno, A. Caudron, L. Ceard, S. De Visscher, C. Delaere, M. Delcourt, L. Forthomme, B. Francois, A. Giammanco, A. Jafari, P. Jez, M. Komm, V. Lemaître, A. Magitteri, A. Mertens, M. Musich, C. Nuttens, K. Piotrkowski, L. Quertenmont, M. Selvaggi, M. Vidal Marono, S. Wertz

*Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium*

N. Belyi

*Université de Mons, Mons, Belgium*

W.L. Aldá Júnior, F.L. Alves, G.A. Alves, L. Brito, C. Hensel, A. Moraes, M.E. Pol, P. Rebello Teles

*Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Físicas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

E. Belchior Batista Das Chagas, W. Carvalho, J. Chinellato<sup>4</sup>, A. Custódio, E.M. Da Costa, G.G. Da Silveira, D. De Jesus Damiao, C. De Oliveira Martins, S. Fonseca De Souza, L.M. Huertas Guativa, H. Malbouisson, D. Matos Figueiredo, C. Mora Herrera, L. Mundim, H. Nogima, W.L. Prado Da Silva, A. Santoro, A. Sznajder, E.J. Tonelli Manganote<sup>4</sup>, A. Vilela Pereira

*Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

S. Ahuja<sup>a</sup>, C.A. Bernardes<sup>b</sup>, S. Dogra<sup>a</sup>, T.R. Fernandez Perez Tomei<sup>a</sup>, E.M. Gregores<sup>b</sup>, P.G. Mercadante<sup>b</sup>, C.S. Moon<sup>a,5</sup>, S.F. Novaes<sup>a</sup>, Sandra S. Padula<sup>a</sup>, D. Romero Abad<sup>b</sup>, J.C. Ruiz Vargas

<sup>a</sup> *Universidade Estadual Paulista, São Paulo, Brazil*

<sup>b</sup> *Universidade Federal do ABC, São Paulo, Brazil*

A. Aleksandrov, R. Hadjiiska, P. Iaydjiev, M. Rodozov, S. Stoykova, G. Sultanov, M. Vutova

*Institute for Nuclear Research and Nuclear Energy, Sofia, Bulgaria*

A. Dimitrov, I. Glushkov, L. Litov, B. Pavlov, P. Petkov

*University of Sofia, Sofia, Bulgaria*

W. Fang<sup>6</sup>

*Beihang University, Beijing, China*

M. Ahmad, J.G. Bian, G.M. Chen, H.S. Chen, M. Chen, Y. Chen<sup>7</sup>, T. Cheng, C.H. Jiang, D. Leggat, Z. Liu, F. Romeo, S.M. Shaheen, A. Spiezia, J. Tao, C. Wang, Z. Wang, H. Zhang, J. Zhao

*Institute of High Energy Physics, Beijing, China*

Y. Ban, Q. Li, S. Liu, Y. Mao, S.J. Qian, D. Wang, Z. Xu

*State Key Laboratory of Nuclear Physics and Technology, Peking University, Beijing, China*

C. Avila, A. Cabrera, L.F. Chaparro Sierra, C. Florez, J.P. Gomez, C.F. González Hernández, J.D. Ruiz Alvarez, J.C. Sanabria

*Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia*

N. Godinovic, D. Lelas, I. Puljak, P.M. Ribeiro Cipriano

*University of Split, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, Split, Croatia*

Z. Antunovic, M. Kovac

*University of Split, Faculty of Science, Split, Croatia*

V. Brigljevic, D. Ferencek, K. Kadija, S. Micanovic, L. Sudic

*Institute Rudjer Boskovic, Zagreb, Croatia*

A. Attikis, G. Mavromanolakis, J. Mousa, C. Nicolaou, F. Ptochos, P.A. Razis, H. Rykaczewski

*University of Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus*

M. Finger<sup>8</sup>, M. Finger Jr.<sup>8</sup>

*Charles University, Prague, Czechia*

E. Carrera Jarrin

*Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Quito, Ecuador*

Y. Assran<sup>9,10</sup>, T. Elkafrawy<sup>11</sup>, A. Ellithi Kamel<sup>12</sup>, A. Mahrous<sup>13</sup>

*Academy of Scientific Research and Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Egyptian Network of High Energy Physics, Cairo, Egypt*

B. Calpas, M. Kadastik, M. Murumaa, L. Perrini, M. Raidal, A. Tiko, C. Veelken

*National Institute of Chemical Physics and Biophysics, Tallinn, Estonia*

P. Eerola, J. Pekkanen, M. Voutilainen

*Department of Physics, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland*

J. Härkönen, V. Karimäki, R. Kinnunen, T. Lampén, K. Lassila-Perini, S. Lehti, T. Lindén, P. Luukka, T. Peltola, J. Tuominiemi, E. Tuovinen, L. Wendland

*Helsinki Institute of Physics, Helsinki, Finland*

J. Talvitie, T. Tuuva

*Lappeenranta University of Technology, Lappeenranta, Finland*

M. Besancon, F. Couderc, M. Dejardin, D. Denegri, B. Fabbro, J.L. Faure, C. Favaro, F. Ferri, S. Ganjour, S. Ghosh, A. Givernaud, P. Gras, G. Hamel de Monchenault, P. Jarry, I. Kucher, E. Locci, M. Machet, J. Malcles, J. Rander, A. Rosowsky, M. Titov, A. Zghiche

*DSM/IRFU, CEA/Saclay, Gif-sur-Yvette, France*

A. Abdulsalam, I. Antropov, S. Baffioni, F. Beaudette, P. Busson, L. Cadamuro, E. Chapon, C. Charlot, O. Davignon, R. Granier de Cassagnac, M. Jo, S. Lisniak, P. Miné, I.N. Naranjo, M. Nguyen, C. Ochando, G. Ortona, P. Paganini, P. Pigard, S. Regnard, R. Salerno, Y. Sirois, T. Strebler, Y. Yilmaz, A. Zabi

*Laboratoire Leprince-Ringuet, Ecole Polytechnique, IN2P3–CNRS, Palaiseau, France*

J.-L. Agram<sup>14</sup>, J. Andrea, A. Aubin, D. Bloch, J.-M. Brom, M. Buttignol, E.C. Chabert, N. Chanon, C. Collard, E. Conte<sup>14</sup>, X. Coubez, J.-C. Fontaine<sup>14</sup>, D. Gelé, U. Goerlach, A.-C. Le Bihan, J.A. Merlin<sup>15</sup>, K. Skovpen, P. Van Hove

*Institut Pluridisciplinaire Hubert Curien, Université de Strasbourg, Université de Haute Alsace Mulhouse, CNRS/IN2P3, Strasbourg, France*

S. Gadrat

*Centre de Calcul de l'Institut National de Physique Nucléaire et de Physique des Particules, CNRS/IN2P3, Villeurbanne, France*

S. Beauceron, C. Bernet, G. Boudoul, E. Bouvier, C.A. Carrillo Montoya, R. Chierici, D. Contardo, B. Courbon, P. Depasse, H. El Mamouni, J. Fan, J. Fay, S. Gascon, M. Gouzevitch, G. Grenier, B. Ille, F. Lagarde, I.B. Laktineh, M. Lethuillier, L. Mirabito, A.L. Pequegnot, S. Perries, A. Popov<sup>16</sup>, D. Sabes, V. Sordini, M. Vander Donckt, P. Verdier, S. Viret

*Université de Lyon, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, CNRS–IN2P3, Institut de Physique Nucléaire de Lyon, Villeurbanne, France*

T. Toriashvili<sup>17</sup>

*Georgian Technical University, Tbilisi, Georgia*

## D. Lomidze

Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia

C. Autermann, S. Beranek, L. Feld, A. Heister, M.K. Kiesel, K. Klein, M. Lipinski, A. Ostapchuk, M. Preuten, F. Raupach, S. Schael, C. Schomakers, J.F. Schulte, J. Schulz, T. Verlage, H. Weber, V. Zhukov<sup>16</sup>

RWTH Aachen University, I. Physikalisches Institut, Aachen, Germany

M. Brodski, E. Dietz-Laursonn, D. Duchardt, M. Endres, M. Erdmann, S. Erdweg, T. Esch, R. Fischer, A. Güth, T. Hebbeker, C. Heidemann, K. Hoepfner, S. Knutzen, M. Merschmeyer, A. Meyer, P. Millet, S. Mukherjee, M. Olschewski, K. Padeken, P. Papacz, T. Pook, M. Radziej, H. Reithler, M. Rieger, F. Scheuch, L. Sonnenschein, D. Teyssier, S. Thüer

RWTH Aachen University, III. Physikalisches Institut A, Aachen, Germany

V. Cherepanov, Y. Erdogan, G. Flügge, F. Hoehle, B. Kargoll, T. Kress, A. Künsken, J. Lingemann, A. Nehr Korn, A. Nowack, I.M. Nugent, C. Pistone, O. Pooth, A. Stahl<sup>15</sup>

RWTH Aachen University, III. Physikalisches Institut B, Aachen, Germany

M. Aldaya Martin, C. Asawatrangkuldee, I. Asin, K. Beernaert, O. Behnke, U. Behrens, A.A. Bin Anuar, K. Borras<sup>18</sup>, A. Campbell, P. Connor, C. Contreras-Campana, F. Costanza, C. Diez Pados, G. Dolinska, G. Eckerlin, D. Eckstein, E. Gallo<sup>19</sup>, J. Garay Garcia, A. Geiser, A. Gizhko, J.M. Grados Luyando, P. Gunnellini, A. Harb, J. Hauk, M. Hempel<sup>20</sup>, H. Jung, A. Kalogeropoulos, O. Karacheban<sup>20</sup>, M. Kasemann, J. Keaveney, J. Kieseler, C. Kleinwort, I. Korol, W. Lange, A. Lelek, J. Leonard, K. Lipka, A. Lobanov, W. Lohmann<sup>20</sup>, R. Mankel, I.-A. Melzer-Pellmann, A.B. Meyer, G. Mittag, J. Mnich, A. Mussgiller, E. Ntomari, D. Pitzl, R. Placakyte, A. Raspereza, B. Roland, M.Ö. Sahin, P. Saxena, T. Schoerner-Sadenius, C. Seitz, S. Spannagel, N. Stefaniuk, K.D. Trippkewitz, G.P. Van Onsem, R. Walsh, C. Wissing

Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron, Hamburg, Germany

V. Blobel, M. Centis Vignali, A.R. Draeger, T. Dreyer, E. Garutti, K. Goebel, D. Gonzalez, J. Haller, M. Hoffmann, A. Junkes, R. Klanner, R. Kogler, N. Kovalchuk, T. Lapsien, T. Lenz, I. Marchesini, D. Marconi, M. Meyer, M. Niedziela, D. Nowatschin, J. Ott, F. Pantaleo<sup>15</sup>, T. Peiffer, A. Perieanu, J. Poehlsen, C. Sander, C. Scharf, P. Schleper, A. Schmidt, S. Schumann, J. Schwandt, H. Stadie, G. Steinbrück, F.M. Stober, M. Stöver, H. Tholen, D. Troendle, E. Usai, L. Vanelderden, A. Vanhoefer, B. Vormwald

University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany

C. Barth, C. Baus, J. Berger, E. Butz, T. Chwalek, F. Colombo, W. De Boer, A. Dierlamm, S. Fink, R. Friese, M. Giffels, A. Gilbert, D. Haitz, F. Hartmann<sup>15</sup>, S.M. Heindl, U. Husemann, I. Katkov<sup>16</sup>, P. Lobelle Pardo, B. Maier, H. Mildner, M.U. Mozer, T. Müller, Th. Müller, M. Plagge, G. Quast, K. Rabbertz, S. Röcker, F. Roscher, M. Schröder, G. Sieber, H.J. Simonis, R. Ulrich, J. Wagner-Kuhr, S. Wayand, M. Weber, T. Weiler, S. Williamson, C. Wöhrmann, R. Wolf

Institut für Experimentelle Kernphysik, Karlsruhe, Germany

G. Anagnostou, G. Daskalakis, T. Gerasis, V.A. Giakoumopoulou, A. Kyriakis, D. Loukas, I. Topsis-Giotis

Institute of Nuclear and Particle Physics (INPP), NCSR Demokritos, Aghia Paraskevi, Greece

A. Agapitos, S. Kesisoglou, A. Panagiotou, N. Saoulidou, E. Tziaferi

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece

I. Evangelou, G. Flouris, C. Foudas, P. Kokkas, N. Loukas, N. Manthos, I. Papadopoulos, E. Paradas

University of Ioánnina, Ioánnina, Greece

**N. Filipovic**

*MTA-ELTE Lendület CMS Particle and Nuclear Physics Group, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary*

**G. Bencze, C. Hajdu, P. Hidas, D. Horvath<sup>21</sup>, F. Sikler, V. Veszpremi, G. Vesztergombi<sup>22</sup>, A.J. Zsigmond**

*Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary*

**N. Beni, S. Czellar, J. Karancsi<sup>23</sup>, A. Makovec, J. Molnar, Z. Szillasi**

*Institute of Nuclear Research ATOMKI, Debrecen, Hungary*

**M. Bartók<sup>22</sup>, P. Raics, Z.L. Trocsanyi, B. Ujvari**

*University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary*

**S. Bahinipati, S. Choudhury<sup>24</sup>, P. Mal, K. Mandal, A. Nayak<sup>25</sup>, D.K. Sahoo, N. Sahoo, S.K. Swain**

*National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, India*

**S. Bansal, S.B. Beri, V. Bhatnagar, R. Chawla, R. Gupta, U. Bhawandeep, A.K. Kalsi, A. Kaur, M. Kaur, R. Kumar, A. Mehta, M. Mittal, J.B. Singh, G. Walia**

*Panjab University, Chandigarh, India*

**Ashok Kumar, A. Bhardwaj, B.C. Choudhary, R.B. Garg, S. Keshri, A. Kumar, S. Malhotra, M. Naimuddin, N. Nishu, K. Ranjan, R. Sharma, V. Sharma**

*University of Delhi, Delhi, India*

**R. Bhattacharya, S. Bhattacharya, K. Chatterjee, S. Dey, S. Dutt, S. Dutta, S. Ghosh, N. Majumdar, A. Modak, K. Mondal, S. Mukhopadhyay, S. Nandan, A. Purohit, A. Roy, D. Roy, S. Roy Chowdhury, S. Sarkar, M. Sharan, S. Thakur**

*Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata, India*

**P.K. Behera**

*Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Madras, India*

**R. Chudasama, D. Dutta, V. Jha, V. Kumar, A.K. Mohanty<sup>15</sup>, P.K. Netrakanti, L.M. Pant, P. Shukla, A. Topkar**

*Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai, India*

**T. Aziz, S. Dugad, G. Kole, B. Mahakud, S. Mitra, G.B. Mohanty, N. Sur, B. Sutar**

*Tata Institute of Fundamental Research-A, Mumbai, India*

**S. Banerjee, S. Bhowmik<sup>26</sup>, R.K. Dewanjee, S. Ganguly, M. Guchait, Sa. Jain, S. Kumar, M. Maity<sup>26</sup>, G. Majumder, K. Mazumdar, B. Parida, T. Sarkar<sup>26</sup>, N. Wickramage<sup>27</sup>**

*Tata Institute of Fundamental Research-B, Mumbai, India*

**S. Chauhan, S. Dube, A. Kapoor, K. Kothekar, A. Rane, S. Sharma**

*Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune, India*

**H. Bakhshiansohi, H. Behnamian, S. Chenarani<sup>28</sup>, E. Eskandari Tadavani, S.M. Etesami<sup>28</sup>, A. Fahim<sup>29</sup>, M. Khakzad, M. Mohammadi Najafabadi, M. Naseri, S. Paktinat Mehdiabadi, F. Rezaei Hosseinabadi, B. Safarzadeh<sup>30</sup>, M. Zeinali**

*Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM), Tehran, Iran*

**M. Felcini, M. Grunewald**

*University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland*



M. Abbrescia<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Calabria<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Caputo<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Colaleo<sup>a</sup>, D. Creanza<sup>a,c</sup>, L. Cristella<sup>a,b</sup>, N. De Filippis<sup>a,c</sup>, M. De Palma<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Fiore<sup>a</sup>, G. Iaselli<sup>a,c</sup>, G. Maggi<sup>a,c</sup>, M. Maggi<sup>a</sup>, G. Miniello<sup>a,b</sup>, S. My<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Nuzzo<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Pompili<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Pugliese<sup>a,c</sup>, R. Radogna<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Ranieri<sup>a</sup>, G. Selvaggi<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Silvestris<sup>a,15</sup>, R. Venditti<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Verwilligen<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Bari, Bari, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Bari, Bari, Italy

<sup>c</sup> Politecnico di Bari, Bari, Italy

G. Abbiendi<sup>a</sup>, C. Battilana, D. Bonacorsi<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Braibant-Giacomelli<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Brigliadori<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Campanini<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Capiluppi<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Castro<sup>a,b</sup>, F.R. Cavallo<sup>a</sup>, S.S. Chhibra<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Codispoti<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Cuffiani<sup>a,b</sup>, G.M. Dallavalle<sup>a</sup>, F. Fabbri<sup>a</sup>, A. Fanfani<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Fasanella<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Giacomelli<sup>a</sup>, C. Grandi<sup>a</sup>, L. Guiducci<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Marcellini<sup>a</sup>, G. Masetti<sup>a</sup>, A. Montanari<sup>a</sup>, F.L. Navarra<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Perrotta<sup>a</sup>, A.M. Rossi<sup>a,b</sup>, T. Rovelli<sup>a,b</sup>, G.P. Siroli<sup>a,b</sup>, N. Tosi<sup>a,b,15</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Bologna, Bologna, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italy

S. Albergo<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Chiorboli<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Costa<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Di Mattia<sup>a</sup>, F. Giordano<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Potenza<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Tricomi<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Tuve<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Catania, Catania, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Catania, Catania, Italy

G. Barbagli<sup>a</sup>, V. Ciulli<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Civinini<sup>a</sup>, R. D'Alessandro<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Focardi<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Gori<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Lenzi<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Meschini<sup>a</sup>, S. Paoletti<sup>a</sup>, G. Sguazzoni<sup>a</sup>, L. Viliani<sup>a,b,15</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Firenze, Firenze, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Firenze, Firenze, Italy

L. Benussi, S. Bianco, F. Fabbri, D. Piccolo, F. Primavera<sup>15</sup>

INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Frascati, Italy

V. Calvelli<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Ferro<sup>a</sup>, M. Lo Vetere<sup>a,b</sup>, M.R. Monge<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Robutti<sup>a</sup>, S. Tosi<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Genova, Genova, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Genova, Genova, Italy

L. Brianza, M.E. Dinardo<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Fiorendi<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Gennai<sup>a</sup>, A. Ghezzi<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Govoni<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Malvezzi<sup>a</sup>, R.A. Manzoni<sup>a,b,15</sup>, B. Marzocchi<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Menasce<sup>a</sup>, L. Moroni<sup>a</sup>, M. Paganoni<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Pedrini<sup>a</sup>, S. Pigazzini, S. Ragazzi<sup>a,b</sup>, T. Tabarelli de Fatis<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Milano-Bicocca, Milano, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Milano-Bicocca, Milano, Italy

S. Buontempo<sup>a</sup>, N. Cavallo<sup>a,c</sup>, G. De Nardo, S. Di Guida<sup>a,d,15</sup>, M. Esposito<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Fabozzi<sup>a,c</sup>, A.O.M. Iorio<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Lanza<sup>a</sup>, L. Lista<sup>a</sup>, S. Meola<sup>a,d,15</sup>, M. Merola<sup>a</sup>, P. Paolucci<sup>a,15</sup>, C. Sciacca<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Thyssen

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Napoli, Napoli, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Napoli 'Federico II', Napoli, Italy

<sup>c</sup> Università della Basilicata, Potenza, Italy

<sup>d</sup> Università G. Marconi, Roma, Italy

P. Azzi<sup>a,15</sup>, N. Bacchetta<sup>a</sup>, L. Benato<sup>a,b</sup>, D. Bisello<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Boletti<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Carlin<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Carvalho Antunes De Oliveira<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Checchia<sup>a</sup>, M. Dall'Osso<sup>a,b</sup>, P. De Castro Manzano<sup>a</sup>, T. Dorigo<sup>a</sup>, U. Dosselli<sup>a</sup>, F. Gasparini<sup>a,b</sup>, U. Gasparini<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Gozzelino<sup>a</sup>, S. Lacaprara<sup>a</sup>, M. Margoni<sup>a,b</sup>, A.T. Meneguzzo<sup>a,b</sup>, J. Pazzini<sup>a,b,15</sup>, N. Pozzobon<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Ronchese<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Simonetto<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Torassa<sup>a</sup>, M. Zanetti, P. Zotto<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Zucchetta<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Zumerle<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Padova, Padova, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Padova, Padova, Italy

<sup>c</sup> Università di Trento, Trento, Italy

A. Braghieri<sup>a</sup>, A. Magnani<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Montagna<sup>a,b</sup>, S.P. Ratti<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Re<sup>a</sup>, C. Riccardi<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Salvini<sup>a</sup>, I. Vai<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Vitulo<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Pavia, Pavia, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Pavia, Pavia, Italy

L. Alunni Solestizi<sup>a,b</sup>, G.M. Bilei<sup>a</sup>, D. Ciangottini<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Fanò<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Lariccia<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Leonardi<sup>a,b</sup>, G. Mantovani<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Menichelli<sup>a</sup>, A. Saha<sup>a</sup>, A. Santocchia<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Perugia, Perugia, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Perugia, Perugia, Italy

K. Androsov<sup>a,31</sup>, P. Azzurri<sup>a,15</sup>, G. Bagliesi<sup>a</sup>, J. Bernardini<sup>a</sup>, T. Boccali<sup>a</sup>, R. Castaldi<sup>a</sup>, M.A. Ciocci<sup>a,31</sup>, R. Dell’Orso<sup>a</sup>, S. Donato<sup>a,c</sup>, G. Fedi, A. Giassi<sup>a</sup>, M.T. Grippo<sup>a,31</sup>, F. Ligabue<sup>a,c</sup>, T. Lomtadze<sup>a</sup>, L. Martini<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Messineo<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Palla<sup>a</sup>, A. Rizzi<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Savoy-Navarro<sup>a,32</sup>, P. Spagnolo<sup>a</sup>, R. Tenchini<sup>a</sup>, G. Tonelli<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Venturi<sup>a</sup>, P.G. Verdini<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Pisa, Pisa, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Pisa, Pisa, Italy

<sup>c</sup> Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Pisa, Italy

L. Barone<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Cavallari<sup>a</sup>, M. Cipriani<sup>a,b</sup>, G. D’imperio<sup>a,b,15</sup>, D. Del Re<sup>a,b,15</sup>, M. Diemoz<sup>a</sup>, S. Gelli<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Jorda<sup>a</sup>, E. Longo<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Margaroli<sup>a,b</sup>, P. Meridiani<sup>a</sup>, G. Organtini<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Paramatti<sup>a</sup>, F. Preiato<sup>a,b</sup>, S. Rahatlou<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Rovelli<sup>a</sup>, F. Santanastasio<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Roma, Roma, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Roma, Roma, Italy

N. Amapane<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Arcidiacono<sup>a,c,15</sup>, S. Argiro<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Arneodo<sup>a,c</sup>, N. Bartosik<sup>a</sup>, R. Bellan<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Biino<sup>a</sup>, N. Cartiglia<sup>a</sup>, F. Cenna<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Costa<sup>a,b</sup>, R. Covarelli<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Degano<sup>a,b</sup>, N. Demaria<sup>a</sup>, L. Finco<sup>a,b</sup>, B. Kiani<sup>a,b</sup>, C. Mariotti<sup>a</sup>, S. Maselli<sup>a</sup>, E. Migliore<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Monaco<sup>a,b</sup>, E. Monteil<sup>a,b</sup>, M.M. Obertino<sup>a,b</sup>, L. Pacher<sup>a,b</sup>, N. Pastrone<sup>a</sup>, M. Pelliccioni<sup>a</sup>, G.L. Pinna Angioni<sup>a,b</sup>, F. Ravera<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Romero<sup>a,b</sup>, M. Ruspa<sup>a,c</sup>, R. Sacchi<sup>a,b</sup>, K. Shchelina<sup>a,b</sup>, V. Sola<sup>a</sup>, A. Solano<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Staiano<sup>a</sup>, P. Traczyk<sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Torino, Torino, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Torino, Torino, Italy

<sup>c</sup> Università del Piemonte Orientale, Novara, Italy

S. Belforte<sup>a</sup>, M. Casarsa<sup>a</sup>, F. Cossutti<sup>a</sup>, G. Della Ricca<sup>a,b</sup>, C. La Licata<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Schizzi<sup>a,b</sup>, A. Zanetti<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> INFN Sezione di Trieste, Trieste, Italy

<sup>b</sup> Università di Trieste, Trieste, Italy

D.H. Kim, G.N. Kim, M.S. Kim, S. Lee, S.W. Lee, Y.D. Oh, S. Sekmen, D.C. Son, Y.C. Yang

*Kyungpook National University, Daegu, Republic of Korea*

H. Kim, A. Lee

*Chonbuk National University, Jeonju, Republic of Korea*

J.A. Brochero Cifuentes, T.J. Kim

*Hanyang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea*

S. Cho, S. Choi, Y. Go, D. Gyun, S. Ha, B. Hong, Y. Jo, Y. Kim, B. Lee, K. Lee, K.S. Lee, S. Lee, J. Lim, S.K. Park, Y. Roh

*Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea*

J. Almond, J. Kim, S.B. Oh, S.h. Seo, U.K. Yang, H.D. Yoo, G.B. Yu

*Seoul National University, Seoul, Republic of Korea*

M. Choi, H. Kim, H. Kim, J.H. Kim, J.S.H. Lee, I.C. Park, G. Ryu, M.S. Ryu

*University of Seoul, Seoul, Republic of Korea*

Y. Choi, J. Goh, C. Hwang, D. Kim, J. Lee, I. Yu

*Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon, Republic of Korea*

V. Dudenas, A. Juodagalvis, J. Vaitkus

*Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania*

I. Ahmed, Z.A. Ibrahim, J.R. Komaragiri, M.A.B. Md Ali<sup>33</sup>, F. Mohamad Idris<sup>34</sup>, W.A.T. Wan Abdullah, M.N. Yusli, Z. Zolkapli

*National Centre for Particle Physics, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

H. Castilla-Valdez, E. De La Cruz-Burelo, I. Heredia-De La Cruz<sup>35</sup>, A. Hernandez-Almada, R. Lopez-Fernandez, J. Mejia Guisao, A. Sanchez-Hernandez

*Centro de Investigacion y de Estudios Avanzados del IPN, Mexico City, Mexico*

S. Carrillo Moreno, C. Oropeza Barrera, F. Vazquez Valencia

*Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City, Mexico*

S. Carpinteyro, I. Pedraza, H.A. Salazar Ibarquen, C. Uribe Estrada

*Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, Puebla, Mexico*

A. Morelos Pineda

*Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosí, Mexico*

D. Krofcheck

*University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand*

P.H. Butler

*University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand*

A. Ahmad, M. Ahmad, Q. Hassan, H.R. Hoorani, W.A. Khan, M.A. Shah, M. Shoaib, M. Waqas

*National Centre for Physics, Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan*

H. Bialkowska, M. Bluj, B. Boimska, T. Frueboes, M. Górski, M. Kazana, K. Nawrocki, K. Romanowska-Rybinska, M. Szleper, P. Zalewski

*National Centre for Nuclear Research, Swierk, Poland*

K. Bunkowski, A. Byszuk<sup>36</sup>, K. Doroba, A. Kalinowski, M. Konecki, J. Krolikowski, M. Misiura, M. Olszewski, M. Walczak

*Institute of Experimental Physics, Faculty of Physics, University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland*

P. Bargassa, C. Beirão Da Cruz E Silva, A. Di Francesco, P. Faccioli, P.G. Ferreira Parracho, M. Gallinaro, J. Hollar, N. Leonardo, L. Lloret Iglesias, M.V. Nemallapudi, J. Rodrigues Antunes, J. Seixas, O. Toldaiev, D. Vadruccio, J. Varela, P. Vischia

*Laboratório de Instrumentação e Física Experimental de Partículas, Lisboa, Portugal*

S. Afanasiev, P. Bunin, M. Gavrilenko, I. Golutvin, I. Gorbunov, A. Kamenev, V. Karjavin, A. Lanev, A. Malakhov, V. Matveev<sup>37,38</sup>, P. Moisenz, V. Palichik, V. Perelygin, S. Shmatov, S. Shulha, N. Skatchkov, V. Smirnov, N. Voytishin, A. Zarubin

*Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, Dubna, Russia*

L. Chtchipounov, V. Golovtsov, Y. Ivanov, V. Kim<sup>39</sup>, E. Kuznetsova<sup>40</sup>, V. Murzin, V. Oreshkin, V. Sulimov, A. Vorobyev

*Petersburg Nuclear Physics Institute, Gatchina (St. Petersburg), Russia*

Yu. Andreev, A. Dermenev, S. Gninenko, N. Golubev, A. Karneyeu, M. Kirsanov, N. Krasnikov, A. Pashenkov, D. Tliso, A. Toropin

*Institute for Nuclear Research, Moscow, Russia*

V. Epshteyn, V. Gavrilov, N. Lychkovskaya, V. Popov, I. Pozdnyakov, G. Safronov, A. Spiridonov, M. Toms, E. Vlasov, A. Zhokin

*Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics, Moscow, Russia*

R. Chistov<sup>41</sup>, V. Rusinov, E. Tarkovskii

*National Research Nuclear University 'Moscow Engineering Physics Institute' (MEPhI), Moscow, Russia*

V. Andreev, M. Azarkin<sup>38</sup>, I. Dremin<sup>38</sup>, M. Kirakosyan, A. Leonidov<sup>38</sup>, S.V. Rusakov, A. Terkulov

*P.N. Lebedev Physical Institute, Moscow, Russia*

A. Baskakov, A. Belyaev, E. Boos, V. Bunichev, M. Dubinin<sup>42</sup>, L. Dudko, V. Klyukhin, O. Kodolova, N. Korneeva, I. Lokhtin, I. Miagkov, S. Obraztsov, M. Perfilov, V. Savrin, P. Volkov

*Skobeltsyn Institute of Nuclear Physics, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia*

I. Azhgirey, I. Bayshev, S. Bitioukov, D. Elumakhov, V. Kachanov, A. Kalinin, D. Konstantinov, V. Krychkin, V. Petrov, R. Ryutin, A. Sobol, S. Troshin, N. Tyurin, A. Uzunian, A. Volkov

*State Research Center of Russian Federation, Institute for High Energy Physics, Protvino, Russia*

P. Adzic<sup>43</sup>, P. Cirkovic, D. Devetak, J. Milosevic, V. Rekovic

*University of Belgrade, Faculty of Physics and Vinca Institute of Nuclear Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia*

J. Alcaraz Maestre, E. Calvo, M. Cerrada, M. Chamizo Llatas, N. Colino, B. De La Cruz, A. Delgado Peris, A. Escalante Del Valle, C. Fernandez Bedoya, J.P. Fernández Ramos, J. Flix, M.C. Fouz, P. Garcia-Abia, O. Gonzalez Lopez, S. Goy Lopez, J.M. Hernandez, M.I. Josa, E. Navarro De Martino, A. Pérez-Calero Yzquierdo, J. Puerta Pelayo, A. Quintario Olmeda, I. Redondo, L. Romero, M.S. Soares

*Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas Medioambientales y Tecnológicas (CIEMAT), Madrid, Spain*

J.F. de Trocóniz, M. Missiroli, D. Moran

*Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain*

J. Cuevas, J. Fernandez Menendez, I. Gonzalez Caballero, J.R. González Fernández, E. Palencia Cortezon, S. Sanchez Cruz, J.M. Vizán García

*Universidad de Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain*

I.J. Cabrillo, A. Calderon, J.R. Castiñeiras De Saa, E. Curras, M. Fernandez, J. Garcia-Ferrero, G. Gomez, A. Lopez Virto, J. Marco, C. Martinez Rivero, F. Matorras, J. Piedra Gomez, T. Rodrigo, A. Ruiz-Jimeno, L. Scodellaro, N. Trevisani, I. Vila, R. Vilar Cortabitarte

*Instituto de Física de Cantabria (IFCA), CSIC-Universidad de Cantabria, Santander, Spain*



D. Abbaneo, E. Auffray, G. Auzinger, M. Bachtis, P. Baillon, A.H. Ball, D. Barney, P. Bloch, A. Bocci, A. Bonato, C. Botta, T. Camporesi, R. Castello, M. Cepeda, G. Cerminara, M. D'Alfonso, D. d'Enterria, A. Dabrowski, V. Daponte, A. David, M. De Gruttola, F. De Guio, A. De Roeck, E. Di Marco<sup>44</sup>, M. Dobson, M. Dordevic, B. Dorney, T. du Pree, D. Duggan, M. Dünser, N. Dupont, A. Elliott-Peisert, S. Fartoukh, G. Franzoni, J. Fulcher, W. Funk, D. Gigi, K. Gill, M. Girone, F. Glege, D. Gulhan, S. Gundacker, M. Guthoff, J. Hammer, P. Harris, J. Hegeman, V. Innocente, P. Janot, H. Kirschenmann, V. Knünz, A. Kornmayer<sup>15</sup>, M.J. Kortelainen, K. Kousouris, M. Krammer<sup>1</sup>, P. Lecoq, C. Lourenço, M.T. Lucchini, L. Malgeri, M. Mannelli, A. Martelli, F. Meijers, S. Mersi, E. Meschi, F. Moortgat, S. Morovic, M. Mulders, H. Neugebauer, S. Orfanelli<sup>45</sup>, L. Orsini, L. Pape, E. Perez, M. Peruzzi, A. Petrilli, G. Petrucciani, A. Pfeiffer, M. Pierini, A. Racz, T. Reis, G. Rolandi<sup>46</sup>, M. Rovere, M. Ruan, H. Sakulin, J.B. Sauvan, C. Schäfer, C. Schwick, M. Seidel, A. Sharma, P. Silva, M. Simon, P. Sphicas<sup>47</sup>, J. Steggemann, M. Stoye, Y. Takahashi, M. Tosi, D. Treille, A. Triossi, A. Tsirou, V. Veckalns<sup>48</sup>, G.I. Veres<sup>22</sup>, N. Wardle, A. Zagozdinska<sup>36</sup>, W.D. Zeuner

*CERN, European Organization for Nuclear Research, Geneva, Switzerland*

W. Bertl, K. Deiters, W. Erdmann, R. Horisberger, Q. Ingram, H.C. Kaestli, D. Kotlinski, U. Langenegger, T. Rohe

*Paul Scherrer Institut, Villigen, Switzerland*

F. Bachmair, L. Bäni, L. Bianchini, B. Casal, G. Dissertori, M. Dittmar, M. Donegà, P. Eller, C. Grab, C. Heidegger, D. Hits, J. Hoss, G. Kasieczka, P. Lecomte<sup>†</sup>, W. Lustermann, B. Mangano, M. Marionneau, P. Martinez Ruiz del Arbol, M. Masciovecchio, M.T. Meinhard, D. Meister, F. Micheli, P. Musella, F. Nessi-Tedaldi, F. Pandolfi, J. Pata, F. Pauss, G. Perrin, L. Perrozzi, M. Quittnat, M. Rossini, M. Schönemberger, A. Starodumov<sup>49</sup>, M. Takahashi, V.R. Tavolaro, K. Theofilatos, R. Wallny

*Institute for Particle Physics, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland*

T.K. Aarrestad, C. AMSler<sup>50</sup>, L. Caminada, M.F. Canelli, V. Chiochia, A. De Cosa, C. Galloni, A. Hinzmann, T. Hreus, B. Kilminster, C. Lange, J. Ngadiuba, D. Pinna, G. Rauco, P. Robmann, D. Salerno, Y. Yang

*Universität Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland*

V. Candelise, T.H. Doan, Sh. Jain, R. Khurana, M. Konyushikhin, C.M. Kuo, W. Lin, Y.J. Lu, A. Pozdnyakov, S.S. Yu

*National Central University, Chung-Li, Taiwan*

Arun Kumar, P. Chang, Y.H. Chang, Y.W. Chang, Y. Chao, K.F. Chen, P.H. Chen, C. Dietz, F. Fiori, W.-S. Hou, Y. Hsiung, Y.F. Liu, R.-S. Lu, M. Miñano Moya, E. Paganis, A. Psallidas, J.f. Tsai, Y.M. Tzeng

*National Taiwan University (NTU), Taipei, Taiwan*

B. Asavapibhop, G. Singh, N. Srimanobhas, N. Suwonjandee

*Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Science, Department of Physics, Bangkok, Thailand*

A. Adiguzel, M.N. Bakirci<sup>51</sup>, S. Damarseckin, Z.S. Demiroglu, C. Dozen, E. Eskut, S. Girgis, G. Gokbulut, Y. Guler, E. Gurpinar, I. Hos, E.E. Kangal<sup>52</sup>, O. Kara, U. Kiminsu, M. Oglakci, G. Onengut<sup>53</sup>, K. Ozdemir<sup>54</sup>, S. Ozturk<sup>51</sup>, A. Polatoz, D. Sunar Cerci<sup>55</sup>, S. Turkcapar, I.S. Zorbakir, C. Zorbilmez

*Cukurova University, Adana, Turkey*

B. Bilin, S. Bilmis, B. Isildak<sup>56</sup>, G. Karapinar<sup>57</sup>, M. Yalvac, M. Zeyrek

*Middle East Technical University, Physics Department, Ankara, Turkey*

E. Gülmez, M. Kaya<sup>58</sup>, O. Kaya<sup>59</sup>, E.A. Yetkin<sup>60</sup>, T. Yetkin<sup>61</sup>

*Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey*

A. Cakir, K. Cankocak, S. Sen<sup>62</sup>

*Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey*

B. Grynyov

*Institute for Scintillation Materials of National Academy of Science of Ukraine, Kharkov, Ukraine*

L. Levchuk, P. Sorokin

*National Scientific Center, Kharkov Institute of Physics and Technology, Kharkov, Ukraine*

R. Aggleton, F. Ball, L. Beck, J.J. Brooke, D. Burns, E. Clement, D. Cussans, H. Flacher, J. Goldstein, M. Grimes, G.P. Heath, H.F. Heath, J. Jacob, L. Kreczko, C. Lucas, D.M. Newbold<sup>63</sup>, S. Paramesvaran, A. Poll, T. Sakuma, S. Seif El Nasr-storey, D. Smith, V.J. Smith

*University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom*

K.W. Bell, A. Belyaev<sup>64</sup>, C. Brew, R.M. Brown, L. Calligaris, D. Cieri, D.J.A. Cockerill, J.A. Coughlan, K. Harder, S. Harper, E. Olaiya, D. Petyt, C.H. Shepherd-Themistocleous, A. Thea, I.R. Tomalin, T. Williams

*Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom*

M. Baber, R. Bainbridge, O. Buchmuller, A. Bundock, D. Burton, S. Casasso, M. Citron, D. Colling, L. Corpe, P. Dauncey, G. Davies, A. De Wit, M. Della Negra, P. Dunne, A. Elwood, D. Futyan, Y. Haddad, G. Hall, G. Iles, R. Lane, C. Laner, R. Lucas<sup>63</sup>, L. Lyons, A.-M. Magnan, S. Malik, L. Mastrolorenzo, J. Nash, A. Nikitenko<sup>49</sup>, J. Pela, B. Penning, M. Pesaresi, D.M. Raymond, A. Richards, A. Rose, C. Seez, A. Tapper, K. Uchida, M. Vazquez Acosta<sup>65</sup>, T. Virdee<sup>15</sup>, S.C. Zenz

*Imperial College, London, United Kingdom*

J.E. Cole, P.R. Hobson, A. Khan, P. Kyberd, D. Leslie, I.D. Reid, P. Symonds, L. Teodorescu, M. Turner

*Brunel University, Uxbridge, United Kingdom*

A. Borzou, K. Call, J. Dittmann, K. Hatakeyama, H. Liu, N. Pastika

*Baylor University, Waco, USA*

O. Charaf, S.I. Cooper, C. Henderson, P. Rumerio

*The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, USA*

D. Arcaro, A. Avetisyan, T. Bose, D. Gastler, D. Rankin, C. Richardson, J. Rohlf, L. Sulak, D. Zou

*Boston University, Boston, USA*

G. Benelli, E. Berry, D. Cutts, A. Garabedian, J. Hakala, U. Heintz, O. Jesus, E. Laird, G. Landsberg, Z. Mao, M. Narain, S. Piperov, S. Sagir, E. Spencer, R. Syarif

*Brown University, Providence, USA*

R. Breedon, G. Breto, D. Burns, M. Calderon De La Barca Sanchez, S. Chauhan, M. Chertok, J. Conway, R. Conway, P.T. Cox, R. Erbacher, C. Flores, G. Funk, M. Gardner, W. Ko, R. Lander, C. Mclean, M. Mulhearn, D. Pellett, J. Pilot, F. Ricci-Tam, S. Shalhout, J. Smith, M. Squires, D. Stolp, M. Tripathi, S. Wilbur, R. Yohay

*University of California, Davis, Davis, USA*

R. Cousins, P. Everaerts, A. Florent, J. Hauser, M. Ignatenko, D. Saltzberg, E. Takasugi, V. Valuev, M. Weber

*University of California, Los Angeles, USA*

K. Burt, R. Clare, J. Ellison, J.W. Gary, G. Hanson, J. Heilman, P. Jandir, E. Kennedy, F. Lacroix, O.R. Long, M. Malberti, M. Olmedo Negrete, M.I. Paneva, A. Shrinivas, H. Wei, S. Wimpenny, B.R. Yates

*University of California, Riverside, Riverside, USA*

J.G. Branson, G.B. Cerati, S. Cittolin, M. Derdzinski, R. Gerosa, A. Holzner, D. Klein, J. Letts, I. Macneill, D. Olivito, S. Padhi, M. Pieri, M. Sani, V. Sharma, S. Simon, M. Tadel, A. Vartak, S. Wasserbaech<sup>66</sup>, C. Welke, J. Wood, F. Würthwein, A. Yagil, G. Zevi Della Porta

*University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, USA*

R. Bhandari, J. Bradmiller-Feld, C. Campagnari, A. Dishaw, V. Dutta, K. Flowers, M. Franco Sevilla, P. Geffert, C. George, F. Golf, L. Gouskos, J. Gran, R. Heller, J. Incandela, N. Mccoll, S.D. Mullin, A. Ovcharova, J. Richman, D. Stuart, I. Suarez, C. West, J. Yoo

*University of California, Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, USA*

D. Anderson, A. Apresyan, J. Bendavid, A. Bornheim, J. Bunn, Y. Chen, J. Duarte, A. Mott, H.B. Newman, C. Pena, M. Spiropulu, J.R. Vlimant, S. Xie, R.Y. Zhu

*California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, USA*

M.B. Andrews, V. Azzolini, B. Carlson, T. Ferguson, M. Paulini, J. Russ, M. Sun, H. Vogel, I. Vorobiev

*Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, USA*

J.P. Cumalat, W.T. Ford, F. Jensen, A. Johnson, M. Krohn, T. Mulholland, K. Stenson, S.R. Wagner

*University of Colorado Boulder, Boulder, USA*

J. Alexander, J. Chaves, J. Chu, S. Dittmer, K. Mcdermott, N. Mirman, G. Nicolas Kaufman, J.R. Patterson, A. Rinkevicius, A. Ryd, L. Skinnari, L. Soffi, S.M. Tan, Z. Tao, J. Thom, J. Tucker, P. Wittich, M. Zientek

*Cornell University, Ithaca, USA*

D. Winn

*Fairfield University, Fairfield, USA*

S. Abdullin, M. Albrow, G. Apollinari, S. Banerjee, L.A.T. Bauerdick, A. Beretvas, J. Berryhill, P.C. Bhat, G. Bolla, K. Burkett, J.N. Butler, H.W.K. Cheung, F. Chlebana, S. Cihangir, M. Cremonesi, V.D. Elvira, I. Fisk, J. Freeman, E. Gottschalk, L. Gray, D. Green, S. Grünendahl, O. Gutsche, D. Hare, R.M. Harris, S. Hasegawa, J. Hirschauer, Z. Hu, B. Jayatilaka, S. Jindariani, M. Johnson, U. Joshi, B. Klima, B. Kreis, S. Lammel, J. Linacre, D. Lincoln, R. Lipton, T. Liu, R. Lopes De Sá, J. Lykken, K. Maeshima, N. Magini, J.M. Marraffino, S. Maruyama, D. Mason, P. McBride, P. Merkel, S. Mrenna, S. Nahn, C. Newman-Holmes<sup>†</sup>, V. O'Dell, K. Pedro, O. Prokofyev, G. Rakness, L. Ristori, E. Sexton-Kennedy, A. Soha, W.J. Spalding, L. Spiegel, S. Stoynev, N. Strobbe, L. Taylor, S. Tkaczyk, N.V. Tran, L. Uplegger, E.W. Vaandering, C. Vernieri, M. Verzocchi, R. Vidal, M. Wang, H.A. Weber, A. Whitbeck

*Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, Batavia, USA*

D. Acosta, P. Avery, P. Bortignon, D. Bourilkov, A. Brinkerhoff, A. Carnes, M. Carver, D. Curry, S. Das, R.D. Field, I.K. Furic, J. Konigsberg, A. Korytov, P. Ma, K. Matchev, H. Mei, P. Milenovic<sup>67</sup>, G. Mitselmakher, D. Rank, L. Shchutska, D. Sperka, L. Thomas, J. Wang, S. Wang, J. Yelton

*University of Florida, Gainesville, USA*

S. Linn, P. Markowitz, G. Martinez, J.L. Rodriguez

*Florida International University, Miami, USA*

A. Ackert, J.R. Adams, T. Adams, A. Askew, S. Bein, B. Diamond, S. Hagopian, V. Hagopian, K.F. Johnson, A. Khatiwada, H. Prosper, A. Santra, M. Weinberg

*Florida State University, Tallahassee, USA*

M.M. Baarmand, V. Bhopatkar, S. Colafranceschi<sup>68</sup>, M. Hohlmann, D. Noonan, T. Roy, F. Yumiceva

*Florida Institute of Technology, Melbourne, USA*

M.R. Adams, L. Apanasevich, D. Berry, R.R. Betts, I. Bucinskaite, R. Cavanaugh, O. Evdokimov, L. Gauthier, C.E. Gerber, D.J. Hofman, P. Kurt, C. O'Brien, I.D. Sandoval Gonzalez, P. Turner, N. Varelas, Z. Wu, M. Zakaria, J. Zhang

*University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Chicago, USA*

B. Bilki<sup>69</sup>, W. Clarida, K. Dilsiz, S. Durgut, R.P. Gandrajula, M. Haytmyradov, V. Khristenko, J.-P. Merlo, H. Mermerkaya<sup>70</sup>, A. Mestvirishvili, A. Moeller, J. Nachtman, H. Ogul, Y. Onel, F. Ozok<sup>71</sup>, A. Penzo, C. Snyder, E. Tiras, J. Wetzel, K. Yi

*The University of Iowa, Iowa City, USA*

I. Anderson, B. Blumenfeld, A. Cocoros, N. Eminizer, D. Fehling, L. Feng, A.V. Gritsan, P. Maksimovic, M. Osherson, J. Roskes, U. Sarica, M. Swartz, M. Xiao, Y. Xin, C. You

*Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA*

A. Al-bataineh, P. Baringer, A. Bean, J. Bowen, C. Bruner, J. Castle, R.P. Kenny III, A. Kropivnitskaya, D. Majumder, W. Mcbrayer, M. Murray, S. Sanders, R. Stringer, J.D. Tapia Takaki, Q. Wang

*The University of Kansas, Lawrence, USA*

A. Ivanov, K. Kaadze, S. Khalil, M. Makouski, Y. Maravin, A. Mohammadi, L.K. Saini, N. Skhirtladze, S. Toda

*Kansas State University, Manhattan, USA*

D. Lange, F. Rebassoo, D. Wright

*Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, USA*

C. Anelli, A. Baden, O. Baron, A. Belloni, B. Calvert, S.C. Eno, C. Ferraioli, J.A. Gomez, N.J. Hadley, S. Jabeen, R.G. Kellogg, T. Kolberg, J. Kunkle, Y. Lu, A.C. Mignerey, Y.H. Shin, A. Skuja, M.B. Tonjes, S.C. Tonwar

*University of Maryland, College Park, USA*

D. Abercrombie, B. Allen, A. Apyan, R. Barbieri, A. Baty, R. Bi, K. Bierwagen, S. Brandt, W. Busza, I.A. Cali, Z. Demiragli, L. Di Matteo, G. Gomez Ceballos, M. Goncharov, D. Hsu, Y. Iiyama, G.M. Innocenti, M. Klute, D. Kovalskyi, K. Krajczar, Y.S. Lai, Y.-J. Lee, A. Levin, P.D. Luckey, A.C. Marini, C. McGinn, C. Mironov, S. Narayanan, X. Niu, C. Paus, C. Roland, G. Roland, J. Salfeld-Nebgen, G.S.F. Stephans, K. Sumorok, K. Tatar, M. Varma, D. Velicanu, J. Veverka, J. Wang, T.W. Wang, B. Wyslouch, M. Yang, V. Zhukova

*Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, USA*

A.C. Benvenuti, R.M. Chatterjee, A. Evans, A. Finkel, A. Gude, P. Hansen, S. Kalafut, S.C. Kao, Y. Kubota, Z. Lesko, J. Mans, S. Nourbakhsh, N. Ruckstuhl, R. Rusack, N. Tambe, J. Turkewitz

*University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA*

J.G. Acosta, S. Oliveros

*University of Mississippi, Oxford, USA*



E. Avdeeva, R. Bartek, K. Bloom, S. Bose, D.R. Claes, A. Dominguez, C. Fangmeier, R. Gonzalez Suarez, R. Kamalieddin, D. Knowlton, I. Kravchenko, A. Malta Rodrigues, F. Meier, J. Monroy, J.E. Siado, G.R. Snow, B. Stieger

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, USA*

M. Alyari, J. Dolen, J. George, A. Godshalk, C. Harrington, I. Iashvili, J. Kaisen, A. Kharchilava, A. Kumar, A. Parker, S. Rappoccio, B. Roozbahani

*State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, USA*

G. Alverson, E. Barberis, D. Baumgartel, M. Chasco, A. Hortiangtham, A. Massironi, D.M. Morse, D. Nash, T. Orimoto, R. Teixeira De Lima, D. Trocino, R.-J. Wang, D. Wood

*Northeastern University, Boston, USA*

S. Bhattacharya, K.A. Hahn, A. Kubik, J.F. Low, N. Mucia, N. Odell, B. Pollack, M.H. Schmitt, K. Sung, M. Trovato, M. Velasco

*Northwestern University, Evanston, USA*

N. Dev, M. Hildreth, K. Hurtado Anampa, C. Jessop, D.J. Karmgard, N. Kellams, K. Lannon, N. Marinelli, F. Meng, C. Mueller, Y. Musienko<sup>37</sup>, M. Planer, A. Reinsvold, R. Ruchti, G. Smith, S. Taroni, N. Valls, M. Wayne, M. Wolf, A. Woodard

*University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, USA*

J. Alimena, L. Antonelli, J. Brinson, B. Bylsma, L.S. Durkin, S. Flowers, B. Francis, A. Hart, C. Hill, R. Hughes, W. Ji, B. Liu, W. Luo, D. Puigh, B.L. Winer, H.W. Wulsin

*The Ohio State University, Columbus, USA*

S. Cooperstein, O. Driga, P. Elmer, J. Hardenbrook, P. Hebda, J. Luo, D. Marlow, T. Medvedeva, M. Mooney, J. Olsen, C. Palmer, P. Piroué, D. Stickland, C. Tully, A. Zuranski

*Princeton University, Princeton, USA*

S. Malik

*University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez, USA*

A. Barker, V.E. Barnes, D. Benedetti, S. Folgueras, L. Gutay, M.K. Jha, M. Jones, A.W. Jung, K. Jung, D.H. Miller, N. Neumeister, B.C. Radburn-Smith, X. Shi, J. Sun, A. Svyatkovskiy, F. Wang, W. Xie, L. Xu

*Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA*

N. Parashar, J. Stupak

*Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, USA*

A. Adair, B. Akgun, Z. Chen, K.M. Ecklund, F.J.M. Geurts, M. Guilbaud, W. Li, B. Michlin, M. Northup, B.P. Padley, R. Redjimi, J. Roberts, J. Rorie, Z. Tu, J. Zabel

*Rice University, Houston, USA*

B. Betchart, A. Bodek, P. de Barbaro, R. Demina, Y.t. Duh, T. Ferbel, M. Galanti, A. Garcia-Bellido, J. Han, O. Hindrichs, A. Khukhunaishvili, K.H. Lo, P. Tan, M. Verzetti

*University of Rochester, Rochester, USA*

J.P. Chou, E. Contreras-Campana, Y. Gershtein, T.A. Gómez Espinosa, E. Halkiadakis, M. Heindl, D. Hidas, E. Hughes, S. Kaplan, R. Kunnawalkam Elayavalli, S. Kyriacou, A. Lath, K. Nash, H. Saka, S. Salur, S. Schnetzer, D. Sheffield, S. Somalwar, R. Stone, S. Thomas, P. Thomassen, M. Walker

*Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Piscataway, USA*

M. Foerster, J. Heideman, G. Riley, K. Rose, S. Spanier, K. Thapa

*University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA*

O. Bouhali<sup>72</sup>, A. Celik, M. Dalchenko, M. De Mattia, A. Delgado, S. Dildick, R. Eusebi, J. Gilmore, T. Huang, E. Juska, T. Kamon<sup>73</sup>, V. Krutelyov, R. Mueller, Y. Pakhotin, R. Patel, A. Perloff, L. Perniè, D. Rathjens, A. Rose, A. Safonov, A. Tatarinov, K.A. Ulmer

*Texas A&M University, College Station, USA*

N. Akchurin, C. Cowden, J. Damgov, C. Dragoiu, P.R. Duderø, J. Faulkner, S. Kunori, K. Lamichhane, S.W. Lee, T. Libeiro, S. Undleeb, I. Volobouev, Z. Wang

*Texas Tech University, Lubbock, USA*

A.G. Delannoy, S. Greene, A. Gurrola, R. Janjam, W. Johns, C. Maguire, A. Melo, H. Ni, P. Sheldon, S. Tuo, J. Velkovska, Q. Xu

*Vanderbilt University, Nashville, USA*

M.W. Arenton, P. Barria, B. Cox, J. Goodell, R. Hirosky, A. Ledovskoy, H. Li, C. Neu, T. Sinthuprasith, X. Sun, Y. Wang, E. Wolfe, F. Xia

*University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA*

C. Clarke, R. Harr, P.E. Karchin, P. Lamichhane, J. Sturdy

*Wayne State University, Detroit, USA*

D.A. Belknap, S. Dasu, L. Dodd, S. Duric, B. Gomber, M. Grothe, M. Herndon, A. Hervé, P. Klabbbers, A. Lanaro, A. Levine, K. Long, R. Loveless, I. Ojalvo, T. Perry, G.A. Pierro, G. Polese, T. Ruggles, A. Savin, A. Sharma, N. Smith, W.H. Smith, D. Taylor, N. Woods

*University of Wisconsin – Madison, Madison, WI, USA*

† Deceased.

<sup>1</sup> Also at Vienna University of Technology, Vienna, Austria.

<sup>2</sup> Also at State Key Laboratory of Nuclear Physics and Technology, Peking University, Beijing, China.

<sup>3</sup> Also at Institut Pluridisciplinaire Hubert Curien, Université de Strasbourg, Université de Haute Alsace Mulhouse, CNRS/IN2P3, Strasbourg, France.

<sup>4</sup> Also at Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, Brazil.

<sup>5</sup> Also at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)–IN2P3, Paris, France.

<sup>6</sup> Also at Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bruxelles, Belgium.

<sup>7</sup> Also at Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron, Hamburg, Germany.

<sup>8</sup> Also at Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, Dubna, Russia.

<sup>9</sup> Also at Suez University, Suez, Egypt.

<sup>10</sup> Now at British University in Egypt, Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>11</sup> Also at Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>12</sup> Also at Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>13</sup> Now at Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>14</sup> Also at Université de Haute Alsace, Mulhouse, France.

<sup>15</sup> Also at CERN, European Organization for Nuclear Research, Geneva, Switzerland.

<sup>16</sup> Also at Skobeltsyn Institute of Nuclear Physics, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>17</sup> Also at Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

<sup>18</sup> Also at RWTH Aachen University, III. Physikalisches Institut A, Aachen, Germany.

<sup>19</sup> Also at University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.

<sup>20</sup> Also at Brandenburg University of Technology, Cottbus, Germany.

<sup>21</sup> Also at Institute of Nuclear Research ATOMKI, Debrecen, Hungary.

<sup>22</sup> Also at MTA-ELTE Lendület CMS Particle and Nuclear Physics Group, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>23</sup> Also at University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary.

<sup>24</sup> Also at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhopal, India.

- <sup>25</sup> Also at Institute of Physics, Bhubaneswar, India.
- <sup>26</sup> Also at University of Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India.
- <sup>27</sup> Also at University of Ruhuna, Matara, Sri Lanka.
- <sup>28</sup> Also at Isfahan University of Technology, Isfahan, Iran.
- <sup>29</sup> Also at University of Tehran, Department of Engineering Science, Tehran, Iran.
- <sup>30</sup> Also at Plasma Physics Research Center, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
- <sup>31</sup> Also at Università degli Studi di Siena, Siena, Italy.
- <sup>32</sup> Also at Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA.
- <sup>33</sup> Also at International Islamic University of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- <sup>34</sup> Also at Malaysian Nuclear Agency, MOSTI, Kajang, Malaysia.
- <sup>35</sup> Also at Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, Mexico City, Mexico.
- <sup>36</sup> Also at Warsaw University of Technology, Institute of Electronic Systems, Warsaw, Poland.
- <sup>37</sup> Also at Institute for Nuclear Research, Moscow, Russia.
- <sup>38</sup> Now at National Research Nuclear University 'Moscow Engineering Physics Institute' (MEPhI), Moscow, Russia.
- <sup>39</sup> Also at St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, St. Petersburg, Russia.
- <sup>40</sup> Also at University of Florida, Gainesville, USA.
- <sup>41</sup> Also at P.N. Lebedev Physical Institute, Moscow, Russia.
- <sup>42</sup> Also at California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, USA.
- <sup>43</sup> Also at Faculty of Physics, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.
- <sup>44</sup> Also at INFN Sezione di Roma; Università di Roma, Roma, Italy.
- <sup>45</sup> Also at National Technical University of Athens, Athens, Greece.
- <sup>46</sup> Also at Scuola Normale e Sezione dell'INFN, Pisa, Italy.
- <sup>47</sup> Also at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece.
- <sup>48</sup> Also at Riga Technical University, Riga, Latvia.
- <sup>49</sup> Also at Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics, Moscow, Russia.
- <sup>50</sup> Also at Albert Einstein Center for Fundamental Physics, Bern, Switzerland.
- <sup>51</sup> Also at Gaziosmanpasa University, Tokat, Turkey.
- <sup>52</sup> Also at Mersin University, Mersin, Turkey.
- <sup>53</sup> Also at Cag University, Mersin, Turkey.
- <sup>54</sup> Also at Piri Reis University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>55</sup> Also at Adiyaman University, Adiyaman, Turkey.
- <sup>56</sup> Also at Ozyegin University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>57</sup> Also at Izmir Institute of Technology, Izmir, Turkey.
- <sup>58</sup> Also at Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>59</sup> Also at Kafkas University, Kars, Turkey.
- <sup>60</sup> Also at Istanbul Bilgi University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>61</sup> Also at Yildiz Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>62</sup> Also at Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey.
- <sup>63</sup> Also at Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom.
- <sup>64</sup> Also at School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom.
- <sup>65</sup> Also at Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias, La Laguna, Spain.
- <sup>66</sup> Also at Utah Valley University, Orem, USA.
- <sup>67</sup> Also at University of Belgrade, Faculty of Physics and Vinca Institute of Nuclear Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia.
- <sup>68</sup> Also at Facoltà Ingegneria, Università di Roma, Roma, Italy.
- <sup>69</sup> Also at Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne, USA.
- <sup>70</sup> Also at Erzincan University, Erzincan, Turkey.
- <sup>71</sup> Also at Mimar Sinan University, Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkey.
- <sup>72</sup> Also at Texas A&M University at Qatar, Doha, Qatar.
- <sup>73</sup> Also at Kyungpook National University, Daegu, Republic of Korea.