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DOI
10.1103/PhysRevLett.107.221802

Publication date
2011

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Physical Review Letters

Citation for published version (APA):

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Search for a Standard Model Higgs Boson in the $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-\nu\bar{\nu}$ Decay Channel with the ATLAS Detector

G. Aad et al.*
(ATLAS Collaboration)
(Received 15 September 2011; published 22 November 2011)

A search for a heavy standard model Higgs boson decaying via $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-\nu\bar{\nu}$, where $\ell = e, \mu$, is presented. It is based on proton-proton collision data at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV, collected by the ATLAS experiment at the LHC in the first half of 2011 and corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 1.04 fb$^{-1}$. The data are compared to the expected standard model backgrounds. The data and the background expectations are found to be in agreement and upper limits are placed on the Higgs boson production cross section over the entire mass window considered; in particular, the production of a standard model Higgs boson is excluded in the region $340 < m_H < 450$ GeV at the 95% confidence level.

The ATLAS detector has been described elsewhere [8]. Simulated signal and background event samples are produced with Monte Carlo (MC) event generators, passed through a full GEANT4 [9] simulation of the ATLAS detector [10] and reconstructed with the same reconstruction software as the data.

The search for the standard model (SM) Higgs boson [1–3] is one of the most important aspects of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) physics program. Direct searches at the CERN LEP $e^+e^-$ collider have set a lower limit of 114.4 GeV on the Higgs boson mass, $m_H$, at 95% confidence level [4]. Searches by the CDF and D0 experiments at the Fermilab Tevatron $p\bar{p}$ collider have explored the mass range up to 200 GeV and exclude the additional region $156 < m_H < 177$ GeV [5]. For $m_H$ greater than twice the $Z$ boson mass, $m_Z$, a significant fraction of Higgs bosons decays to two $Z$ bosons. The $ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-\nu\bar{\nu}$ decay channel offers a substantial branching fraction in combination with a good separation from potential background processes owing to the high transverse momentum, $p_T$, of the electron or muon pair from the leptonic $Z$ decay and the high missing transverse momentum, $E_T^{\text{miss}}$, from the $Z$ decaying to neutrinos.

The cross section limits for a SM Higgs boson in the mass region $200 < m_H < 600$ GeV were set by the ATLAS and CMS collaborations in Refs. [6,7]. This letter extends the $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-\nu\bar{\nu}$ results therein, with a 30-fold increase in the integrated luminosity, as well as a significant improvement in the event reconstruction and background rejection.

The data sample considered in this search was recorded by the ATLAS experiment during the first half of the 2011 LHC run at a center-of-mass energy $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV. The integrated luminosity of the data sample, considering only data-taking periods where all relevant detector subsystems were operational, is 1.04 fb$^{-1}$.

The first cross section limits for a SM Higgs boson in the mass region $114.4 \text{ GeV} < m_H < 177 \text{ GeV}$ are set by the ATLAS experiment during the first half of the 2011 LHC run and correspond to an integrated luminosity of $30 \times 10^3$ fb$^{-1}$. The data are compared to the expected standard model backgrounds. The data and the background expectations are found to be in agreement and upper limits are placed on the Higgs boson production cross section over the entire mass window considered; in particular, the production of a standard model Higgs boson is excluded in the region $340 < m_H < 450$ GeV at the 95% confidence level.

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*Full author list given at the end of the article.

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The cross sections for Higgs boson production, the associated branching fractions [24], as well as their uncertainties, are compiled in Ref. [25]. They correspond to next-to-next-to-leading order in QCD for the gluon fusion [26–31] and the vector-boson fusion [32] processes. In addition, QCD soft-gluon resummations up to next-to-next-to-leading logarithms are available for the gluon fusion process [33], while next-to-leading order electroweak corrections are applied to both the gluon fusion [34,35] and the vector-boson fusion [36,37] processes. These cross section calculations do not account for the width of the Higgs boson, which is implemented through an ad hoc Breit-Wigner line shape applied at the event generator level. Recent studies [25,38] have indicated that effects due to off-shell Higgs boson production and interference with other SM processes may become sizeable at the highest masses ($m_H > 400$ GeV) considered in this search. In the absence of a full calculation, a conservative estimate of the possible size of such effects was made and the impact on the obtained limits in this channel was found to be less than 2% for $m_H = 400$ GeV growing to about 25% at $m_H = 600$ GeV.

Dilepton events are chosen to model a range of important background processes. The ALPGEN generator [39] interfaced with HERWIG for parton showers and hadronisation is used to simulate $W/Z + j$ backgrounds. MC@NLO, interfaced to HERWIG and JIMMY, is used for the production of top-pair, single top and diboson ($WW$, $WZ$ and $ZZ$) backgrounds. PYTHIA is used to simulate $b\bar{b}$ and $c\bar{c}$ samples as well as alternative samples for the $Z$ and $ZZ$ backgrounds. All simulated background samples are scaled to the highest available precision calculations for the relevant process. An overview of the used predictions and their uncertainties is given in Ref. [40].

Data used for the search in the electron and muon channels were collected primarily using single lepton triggers with $p_T$ thresholds of 20 and 18 GeV, respectively. The expected trigger efficiency is close to 100% in the electron channel and about 95% in the muon channel for signal events passing all the selection criteria described below.

Electron candidates are reconstructed from electromagnetic calorimeter clusters, with shapes consistent with those expected from electromagnetic showers, matched to tracks reconstructed in the inner detector. Details of the electron reconstruction and identification can be found in Ref. [41]. The electron candidates are required to pass the standard ATLAS “medium” selection criteria and have $p_T > 20$ GeV and pseudorapidity $|\eta| < 2.47$.

Muons are identified by reconstructing tracks in the muon spectrometer. These tracks are then extrapolated back to the beam line to find a matching inner detector track. Details of muon reconstruction and identification can be found in Ref. [41]. Only muons with $p_T > 20$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.5$ are considered.

Jets are used in this analysis to reject backgrounds from events with heavy quark decays or from events with fake $E_T^{\text{miss}}$ due to mismeasured jets. For this purpose jets are reconstructed from clusters of energy deposits in the calorimeters using the anti-$k_T$ algorithm [42] with a radius parameter $R = 0.4$. Only jets with $p_T > 25$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.5$ are considered.

To remove leptons associated with jets, such as those originating from semileptonic decays of $b$ hadrons, leptons are not considered in the analysis if the sum of inner detector track momenta in a cone $\Delta R < 0.2$ around the lepton direction is greater than 10% of the $p_T$ of the lepton itself or if the lepton is within a distance $\Delta R < 0.4$ of the nearest jet.

The missing transverse momentum is measured as the (negative) vectorial sum of the transverse momenta of all clusters in the calorimeters within $|\eta| < 4.5$ and all selected muons in the event. Calorimeter deposits associated with muons are subtracted to avoid double counting.

Events are required to contain a reconstructed primary vertex formed from at least 3 tracks and exactly two oppositely charged electrons or muons, consistent with originating from the primary vertex. The dilepton mass distribution is shown in Fig. 1. Inclusive $Z$ boson production is the dominant background at this stage of the analysis. To suppress backgrounds from top, $W$, and QCD multijet production, the dilepton invariant mass, $m_{\ell\ell}$, is required to satisfy $|m_Z - m_{\ell\ell}| < 15$ GeV.

To reduce the background from events with fake $E_T^{\text{miss}}$ due to mismeasured jets, events are rejected if the azimuthal angle between the missing transverse momentum vector, $\vec{P}_T^{\text{miss}}$, and the leading jet in the event satisfies $\Delta \phi(\vec{\vec{P}}_T^{\text{miss}}, \vec{P}_T^{\text{jet}}) < 0.3$. To reduce the background from top quark production, events with one or more $b$-tagged jets are rejected, where the $b$ tagging is based on a single

![FIG. 1 (color online). The dilepton invariant mass distribution for events with exactly two oppositely charged electrons or muons. The inset at the bottom of the figure shows the ratio between the data and the combined background expectations as well as a band corresponding to the combined systematic uncertainties of the analysis.](221802-2)
discriminating combining information from both the impact parameter with respect to the primary vertex of tracks associated to the jet and the presence of displaced secondary vertices associated to the jet’s tracks. The chosen cut achieves an efficiency of about 70% for identifying real $b$ jets, with a light-quark jet rejection of about 80 [43].

To exploit the mass dependent kinematic features of $H \rightarrow Z \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-\nu\bar{\nu}$ production, the search is subdivided into a low Higgs boson mass ($m_\ell < 280$ GeV) and a high Higgs boson mass ($m_\ell \geq 280$ GeV) search region, where dedicated cuts are applied to two important discriminating variables used to reduce the background contributions: $E_\text{Tmiss}$ and the azimuthal angle between the two leptons, $\Delta \phi(\ell, \ell)$. Figure 2 shows the distributions of these variables after the application of the $m_\ell\ell$ window cut. Since inclusive $Z$ production gives rise to a steeply falling $E_\text{Tmiss}$ distribution, systematic uncertainties on the $E_\text{Tmiss}$ reconstruction are particularly important to estimate this background correctly. The dominant contributions to the $E_\text{Tmiss}$ uncertainty come from the knowledge of the jet energy scale and the modelling of inclusive $Z$ production. Figure 2 shows that a good agreement within systematic uncertainties is observed between data and the combined background expectation. In the low $m_\ell$ region, events are required to satisfy $E_\text{Tmiss} > 66$ GeV, while in the high $m_\ell$ region the requirement is $E_\text{Tmiss} > 82$ GeV. These cuts reduce significantly the backgrounds from processes with no or modest genuine missing transverse momentum originating from unobserved neutrinos.

The boost of the $Z$ bosons originating from a Higgs boson decay increase with $m_\ell$, thus reducing the expected opening angle between the leptons. In the low $m_\ell$ region this boost is expected to be modest and a cut $1 < \Delta \phi(\ell, \ell) < 2.64$ is applied. In the high $m_\ell$ region an upper limit $\Delta \phi(\ell, \ell) < 2.25$ is required.

Finally, in the high $m_\ell$ region, events are also rejected if the azimuthal angle between the missing transverse momentum vector and the direction of the $Z \rightarrow \ell\ell$ boson candidate is $\Delta \phi(\vec{p}_\text{Tmiss}, \vec{p}_\text{T}(\ell)) < 1$. The efficiency of the event selection is very similar in the electron and muon channels, ranging from 3% for $m_\ell = 200$ GeV to about 48% for $m_\ell = 600$ GeV.

SM pair production of $Z$ bosons has a final state identical to the signal, and is therefore expected to survive most of the applied selection criteria and form a continuum in the transverse mass distribution (defined below). The normalization for this background is obtained from a calculation including next-to-leading order terms [44] with an additional 6% term to account for missing quark-box diagrams ($gg \rightarrow ZZ$) [45]. A 11% normalization uncertainty is assigned to this background, estimated from scale, PDF and model uncertainties. WW and WZ backgrounds are normalized in a similar way.

The background from inclusive $Z$ production is derived from MC, after checking that the simulation describes well the data in samples selected by requiring the presence of a lepton pair. The background from top events is also taken from the MC prediction. This prediction is verified to agree with data, within systematic uncertainties, in two independent control samples: the first one requires at least one identified $b$-jet, while the second selects events containing electron-muon pairs.

Additional backgrounds can arise from QCD multijet events or inclusive $W$ production due to heavy flavour decays or jets faking leptons. The normalization of the $W$ background is obtained from the ratio between data and MC in control samples of like-sign electron-electron and electron-muon events with high $E_\text{Tmiss}$. The QCD multijet background in the electron channel is determined using a data sample based on a loosened electron selection, thus dominated by jets; this sample is scaled to describe the tails of the $E_\text{Tmiss}$ distribution. In the muon channel, the background from heavy flavour decays is studied using simulation, whereas other muon sources from multijet events are constrained using a sample of like-sign muon pairs in data. In both cases the background is found to be negligible.

The signal efficiencies and overall background expectations are similar in the electron and the muon channels,
therefore only combined results are presented. The numbers of candidate $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+ \ell^- \nu \bar{\nu}$ events selected in data and the expected yields from signal and background processes are shown in Table I.

The systematic uncertainties include experimental uncertainties related to the selection and calibration of electrons, muons, jets and $b$ jets, which are also explicitly propagated to the $E_T^{miss}$ calculation. Shape uncertainties for the signal and for the single $Z$ and $ZZ$ backgrounds are estimated using PYTHIA as an alternative MC generator.

Normalization uncertainties for signal (gluon fusion $^{+14\%}_{-10\%}$ and VBF 4%) and diboson backgrounds (11%) are obtained from theory [25]; uncertainties for the inclusive $Z$ boson production (2.5%), top quark production (9%), inclusive $W$ boson production (100%) and QCD multijet production in the electron channel (50%) are estimated from data. A 3.7% luminosity uncertainty [46] is included for those processes for which the normalization is not obtained from the data. The dominant systematic uncertainties in the analysis are the $E_T^{miss}$ uncertainties for the $Z$ background, the $b$-tagging uncertainty for the top background and the normalization uncertainties for the signal and the $W$ and diboson backgrounds.

After the event selection, the Higgs boson search is performed by looking for an excess of data over the SM background expectation in the transverse mass distribution of the selected $ee\nu\nu$ and $\mu\mu\nu\nu$ events. The transverse mass is calculated from the lepton pair and the $p_T^{miss}$ vector as

$$m_T = \sqrt{\left[ m_{Z}^2 + \left| p_T^{\ell\ell} \right|^2 \right] + \left[ m_{Z}^2 + \left| p_T^{miss} \right|^2 \right] - \left[ \left| p_T^{\ell\ell} \right| + \left| p_T^{miss} \right| \right]}$$.

Table I. The expected number of background and signal events for the Higgs boson search in the $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+ \ell^- \nu \bar{\nu}$ channel, along with the observed numbers of candidates in data, for an integrated luminosity of 1.04 fb$^{-1}$. The quoted uncertainties are statistical and systematic, respectively. Signal to background ratios are also given for various masses (see text).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>low $m_H$ search</th>
<th>high $m_H$ search</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$Z$</td>
<td>19.1 $\pm$ 2.6 $\pm$ 0.9</td>
<td>6.0 $\pm$ 1.4 $\pm$ 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$W$</td>
<td>8.5 $\pm$ 2.3 $\pm$ 8.5</td>
<td>3.1 $\pm$ 1.0 $\pm$ 3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>top</td>
<td>29.9 $\pm$ 1.3 $\pm$ 6.0</td>
<td>14.9 $\pm$ 0.8 $\pm$ 3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multijet</td>
<td>0.4 $\pm$ 0.4 $\pm$ 0.2</td>
<td>0.0 $\pm$ 0.0 $\pm$ 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ZZ$</td>
<td>17.6 $\pm$ 0.4 $\pm$ 2.1</td>
<td>14.7 $\pm$ 0.4 $\pm$ 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$WZ$</td>
<td>16.7 $\pm$ 0.6 $\pm$ 2.0</td>
<td>12.1 $\pm$ 0.5 $\pm$ 1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$WW$</td>
<td>12.4 $\pm$ 0.4 $\pm$ 1.5</td>
<td>4.6 $\pm$ 0.3 $\pm$ 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>104.6 $\pm$ 3.8 $\pm$ 16.0</td>
<td>55.3 $\pm$ 2.0 $\pm$ 7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3 shows the $m_T$ distribution in the high $m_H$ search region. Signal to background ratios for different $m_H$ values, determined in a $m_T$ window defined to enclose 95% of the corresponding signal events, are listed in Table I.

The number and distribution of candidate $H \rightarrow ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+ \ell^- \nu \bar{\nu}$ events observed in the data agree with the expected backgrounds within the uncertainties, with no indication of an excess. Upper limits are set on the Higgs boson production cross section relative to its predicted SM value as a function of $m_H$. The limits are extracted from a maximum likelihood fit to the $m_T$ distribution following the $CL_s$ modified frequentist formalism with the profile likelihood test statistic [47,48]. All systematic uncertainties are taken into account.

Figure 4 shows the expected and observed limits at the 95% confidence level. The expected limit is lowest around $m_H = 380$ GeV where it is 1.1 times the SM Higgs boson cross section. Fluctuations in the background can lead to better or worse expected limits. Over the entire mass range the observed limits agree with the expectations within the $\pm 2\sigma$ band. A SM Higgs boson in the range 340 GeV < $m_H$ < 450 GeV is excluded at the 95% confidence level.

In summary, results of a search for a heavy SM Higgs boson with a mass in the range 200 < $m_H$ < 600 GeV decaying to $ZZ \rightarrow \ell^+ \ell^- \nu \bar{\nu}$ have been presented. These results are based on a data sample corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 1.04 fb$^{-1}$, recorded with the ATLAS detector at the LHC. No evidence for a signal is observed and cross section limits are placed over the entire mass range, excluding the production of a SM Higgs boson in the region 340 < $m_H$ < 450 GeV at the 95% confidence level.

We thank CERN for the very successful operation of the LHC, as well as the support staff from our institutions without whom ATLAS could not be operated efficiently. We acknowledge the support of ANPCyT, Argentina;
FIG. 4 (color online). Observed and expected 95% confidence level upper limits on the Higgs boson production cross section divided by the SM prediction. The green and yellow bands indicate the ±1σ and ±2σ fluctuations, respectively, around the median sensitivity. The limits are based on 1.04 fb\(^{-1}\) of data at \(\sqrt{s} = 7\) TeV.

YerPhI, Armenia; ARC, Australia; BMWF, Austria; ANAS, Azerbaijan; SSTC, Belarus; CNPq and FAPESP, Brazil; NSERC, NRC and CFI, Canada; CERN; CONICYT, Chile; CAS, MOST and NSFC, China; COLCIENCIAS, Colombia; MDC, CRM, MPO CR and VSC CR, Czech Republic; DNRF, DNSRC and Lundbeck Foundation, Denmark; ARTEMIS, European Union; IN2P3-CNRS, CEA-DSM/IRFU, France; GNAS, Georgia; BMBF, DFG, HGF, MPG and AvH Foundation, Germany; GSRT, Greece; IFIN-HH, INFN and CNR, Italy; INFN, Italy; MEXT and JSPS, Japan; CNRST, Morocco; FOM and NWO, Netherlands; RCN, Norway; MNiSW, Poland; GRICES and FCT, Portugal; MERSYS (MECTS), Romania; MES of Russia and ROSATOM, Russian Federation; JINR; MSTD, Serbia; MSSR, Slovakia; ARRS and MVZT, Slovenia; DST/NRF, South Africa; MICINN, Spain; SRC and Wallenberg Foundation, Sweden; SER, SNSF and Cantons of Bern and Geneva, Switzerland; NSC, Taiwan; TAEK, Turkey; STFC, the Royal Society and Leverhulme Trust, United Kingdom; DOE and NSF, United States of America. The crucial computing support from all WLCG partners is acknowledged gratefully, in particular, from CERN and the ATLAS Tier-1 facilities at TRIUMF (Canada), NDGF (Denmark, Norway, Sweden), CC-IN2P3 (France), KIT/GridKA (Germany), INFN-CNAF (Italy), NL-T1 (Netherlands), PIC (Spain), ASGC (Taiwan), RAL (UK) and BNL (USA) and in the Tier-2 facilities worldwide.


(ATLAS Collaboration)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of Physics, Dogus University, Istanbul, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics Engineering, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFN Sezione di Bologna, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physikalisches Institut, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Boston University, Boston Massachusetts, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Brandeis University, Waltham Massachusetts, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidade Federal do Rio De Janeiro COPPE/EE/IF, Rio De Janeiro, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Juiz de Fora, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal University of Sao Joao del Rei (UFSJ), Sao Joao del Rei, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instituto de Fisica, Universidade de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton New York, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering, Bucharest, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Politehnica Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West University in Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departamento de Física, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Carleton University, Ottawa ON, Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERN, Geneva, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrico Fermi Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago Illinois, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departamento de Fisica, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departamento de Física, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Valparaíso, Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute of High Energy Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Modern Physics, University of Science and Technology of China, Anhui, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Energy Physics Group, Shandong University, Shandong, China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratoire de Physique Corpusculaire, Clermont Université et Université Blaise Pascal and CNRS/IN2P3, Aubiere Cedex, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevis Laboratory, Columbia University, Irvington New York, USA</td>
</tr>
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<td>Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, Kobenhavn, Denmark</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipartimento di Fisica, Università della Calabria, Arcavata di Rende, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Physics and Applied Computer Science, AGH-University of Science and Technology, Krakow, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Henryk Niewodniczanski Institute of Nuclear Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics Department, Southern Methodist University, Dallas Texas, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESY, Hamburg and Zeuthen, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institut für Experimentelle Physik IV, Technische Universität Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institut für Kern- und Teilchenphysik, Technical University Dresden, Dresden, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Duke University, Durham North Carolina, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPA-School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Frascati, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fakultät für Mathematik und Physik, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg i. Br., Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFN Sezione di Genova, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Genova, Genova, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Andronikashvili Institute of Physics, Georgian Academy of Sciences, Tbilisi, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Energy Physics Institute, Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Physikalisches Institut, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, Giessen, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPA-School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Physikalisches Institut, Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratoire de Physique Subatomique et de Cosmologie, Université Joseph Fourier and CNRS/IN2P3, and Institut National Polytechnique de Grenoble, Grenoble, France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Physics, Hampton University, Hampton Virginia, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory for Particle Physics and Cosmology, Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirchhoff-Institut für Physik, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physikalisches Institut, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZITI Institut für technische Informatik, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Mannheim, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Science, Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
117Department of Physics, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom
118INFN Sezione di Pavia, Italy
119Dipartimento di Fisica Nucleare e Teorica, Università di Pavia, Pavia, Italy
120Department of Physics, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
121Petersburg Nuclear Physics Institute, Gatchina, Russia
121aINFN Sezione di Pisa, Italy
121bDipartimento di Fisica E. Fermi, Università di Pisa, Pisa, Italy
122Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
123aLaboratorio de Instrumentaccao e Fisica Experimental de Particulas-LIP, Lisboa, Portugal
123bDepartamento de Fisica Teorica y del Cosmos and CAPE, Universidad de Granada, Granada, Portugal
124Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic
125Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University in Prague, Praha, Czech Republic
126Czech Technical University in Prague, Praha, Czech Republic
127State Research Center Institute for High Energy Physics, Protvino, Russia
128Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom
129Physics Department, University of Regina, Regina SK, Canada
130Ritsumeikan University, Kusatsu, Shiga, Japan
131aINFN Sezione di Roma I, Italy
131bDipartimento di Fisica, Università La Sapienza, Roma, Italy
131cINFN Sezione di Roma Tor Vergata, Italy
131dDipartimento di Fisica, Università di Roma Tor Vergata, Roma, Italy
131eINFN Sezione di Roma Tre, Italy
131fDipartimento di Fisica, Università Roma Tre, Roma, Italy
132aFaculté des Sciences Ain Chock, Réseau Universitaire de Physique des Hautes Energies-Université Hassan II, Casablanca, Morocco
132bCentre National de l’Energie des Sciences Techniques Nucléaires, Rabat, Morocco
132cUniversité Cadi Ayyad, Faculté des sciences Semlalia Département de Physique, B. P. 2390 Marrakech 40000, Morocco
132dFaculté des Sciences, Université Mohamed Premier and LPTPM, Oujda, Morocco
132eFaculté des Sciences, Université Mohammed V, Rabat, Morocco
133aDSM/IRFU (Institut de Recherches sur les Lois Fondamentales de l’Univers), CEA Saclay (Commissariat a l’Energie Atomique), Gif-sur-Yvette, France
133eSanta Cruz Institute for Particle Physics, University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, California, USA
133fDepartment of Physics, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, USA
133gDepartment of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom
133hDepartment of Physics, Shinshu University, Nagano, Japan
133iFachbereich Physik, Universität Siegen, Siegen, Germany
133jDepartment of Physics, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, Canada
133kSLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, Stanford, California, USA
133lFaculty of Mathematics, Physics & Informatics, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic
133mDepartment of Subnuclear Physics, Institute of Experimental Physics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Kosice, Slovak Republic
133nDepartment of Physics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa
133oSchool of Physics, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
133pDepartment of Physics, Stockholm University, Sweden
133qThe Oskar Klein Centre, Stockholm, Sweden
133rPhysics Department, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
133sDepartment of Physics and Astronomy, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, USA
133tDepartment of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom
133uSchool of Physics, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
133vInstitute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
133wDepartment of Physics, Technion: Israel Inst. of Technology, Haifa, Israel
133xRaymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel
133yDepartment of Physics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece
133zInternational Center for Elementary Particle Physics and Department of Physics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
134aGraduate School of Science and Technology, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan
134bDepartment of Physics, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan
134cDepartment of Physics, University of Toronto, Toronto ON, Canada
134dTRIUMF, Vancouver BC, Canada
134eDepartment of Physics and Astronomy, York University, Toronto ON, Canada
134fInstitute of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan
134gScience and Technology Center, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts, USA
134hCentro de Investigaciones, Universidad Antonio Narino, Bogota, Colombia
Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of California Irvine, Irvine California, USA

INFN Gruppo Collegato di Udine, Italy

ICTP, Trieste, Italy

Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Udine, Udine, Italy

Department of Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, USA

Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden

Instituto de Fisica Corpuscular (IFIC) and Departamento de Fisica Atômica, Molecular y Nuclear and Departamento de Ingeniería Electrónica and Instituto de Microelectrónica de Barcelona (IMB-CNM), University of Valencia and CSIC, Valencia, Spain

Department of Physics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC, Canada

Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Victoria, Victoria BC, Canada

Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan

Department of Particle Physics, The Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel

Department of Physics, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Fachbereich C Physik, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany

Department of Physics, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA

Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia

Domaine scientifique de la Doua, Centre de Calcul CNRS/IN2P3, Villeurbanne Cedex, France

a Also at Laboratorio de Instrumentacao e Fisica Experimental de Particulas-LIP, Lisboa, Portugal.

b Also at Faculdade de Ciencias and CFNUL, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal.

c Also at Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom.

d Also at CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France.

e Deceased.

f Also at TRIUMF, Vancouver BC, Canada.

g Also at Department of Physics, California State University, Fresno CA, USA.

h Also at Faculty of Physics and Applied Computer Science, AGH-University of Science and Technology, Krakow, Poland.

i Also at Fermilab, Batavia IL, USA.

j Also at Department of Physics, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal.

k Also at Università di Napoli Parthenope, Napoli, Italy.

l Also at Institute of Particle Physics (IPP), Canada.

m Also at Department of Physics, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

n Also at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston LA, USA.

o Also at Group of Particle Physics, University of Montreal, Montreal QC, Canada.

p Also at Institute of Physics, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan.

q Also at Institut für Experimentalphysik, Universität Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany.

r Also at Manhattan College, New York NY, USA.

s Also at School of Physics and Engineering, Sun Yat-sen University, Guanzhou, China.

Also at Academia Sinica Grid Computing, Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Also at High Energy Physics Group, Shandong University, Shandong, China.

Also at Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland.

Also at Departamento de Fisica, Universidade de Minho, Braga, Portugal.

Also at Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC, USA.

Also at KFKI Research Institute for Particle and Nuclear Physics, Budapest, Hungary.

Also at California Institute of Technology, Pasadena CA, USA.

Also at Institute of Physics, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland.

Also at Department of Physics, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Also at Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Also at Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, USA.

Also at DSM/IRFU (Institut de Recherches sur les Lois Fondamentales de l'Univers), CEA Saclay (Commissariat a l’Energie Atomique), Gif-sur-Yvette, France.

Also at Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, UPMC and Université Paris-Diderot and CNRS/IN2P3, Paris, France.

Also at Department of Physics, Nanjing University, Jiangsu, China.