



Measurement of the cross section for inclusive isolated-photon production in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV using the ATLAS detector

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive isolated-photon production in pp collisions at a centre-of-mass energy of 13 TeV is studied with the ATLAS detector at the LHC using a data set with an integrated luminosity of 3.2 fb^{-1} . The cross section is measured as a function of the photon transverse energy above 125 GeV in different regions of photon pseudorapidity. Next-to-leading-order perturbative QCD and Monte Carlo event-generator predictions are compared to the cross-section measurements and provide an adequate description of the data.

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1. Introduction

The production of prompt photons in proton–proton (pp) collisions, $pp \rightarrow \gamma + X$, provides a testing ground for perturbative QCD (pQCD) with a hard colourless probe. All photons produced in pp collisions that are not secondaries from hadron decays are considered as “prompt”. Two processes contribute to prompt-photon production in $pp \rightarrow \gamma + X$: the direct process, in which the photon originates directly from the hard interaction, and the fragmentation process, in which the photon is emitted in the fragmentation of a high transverse momentum (p_T) parton [1,2]. Measurements of inclusive prompt-photon production were used recently to investigate novel approaches to the description of parton radiation [3] and the importance of resummation of threshold logarithms in QCD and of the electroweak corrections [4]. Comparisons of prompt-photon data and pQCD are usually limited by the theoretical uncertainties associated with the missing higher-order terms in the perturbative expansion. The extension of the recent next-to-next-to-leading-order (NNLO) pQCD calculations for jet production [5] to prompt-photon production¹ will allow a more stringent test of pQCD. To make such a test with small experimental and theoretical uncertainties, it is optimal to perform measurements of prompt-photon production at high photon transverse energies and at the highest possible centre-of-mass energy of the colliding particles.

Since the dominant production mechanism in pp collisions at the LHC proceeds via the $qg \rightarrow q\gamma$ process, measurements of

prompt-photon production are sensitive at leading order (LO) to the gluon density in the proton [7–16]. Although prompt photon data were initially included in the determination of the proton parton distribution functions (PDFs), their use was abandoned some years ago. Since then, theoretical developments [13,14] have shown ways to improve the description of the data in terms of pQCD, and a recent study quantified the impact of prompt-photon data from hadron colliders on the gluon density in the proton [15]. New measurements of prompt-photon production at higher centre-of-mass energies are expected to further constrain the gluon density in the proton when combined with previous data.

These measurements can also be used to tune the Monte Carlo (MC) models to improve the understanding of prompt-photon production. In addition, precise measurements of these processes aid those searches for which they are an important background, such as the search for new phenomena in final states with a photon and missing transverse momentum.

Measurements of prompt-photon production at a hadron collider require isolated photons to avoid the large contribution of photons from decays of energetic π^0 and η mesons inside jets. The production of inclusive isolated photons in pp collisions at centre-of-mass energies of $\sqrt{s} = 7$ and 8 TeV was measured by the ATLAS [17–20] and CMS [21,22] collaborations.

This paper presents measurements of isolated-photon production in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV with the ATLAS detector at the LHC using a data set with an integrated luminosity of 3.2 fb^{-1} collected during 2015. These measurements are performed in a phase-space region overlapping with that used in the previous ATLAS measurement at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV [20]. Cross sections as functions

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¹ After completion of the work presented here, first NNLO calculations for prompt-photon production have been completed [6].

of the photon transverse energy² (E_T^γ) are measured in the range $E_T^\gamma > 125$ GeV for different regions of the photon pseudorapidity (η^γ). The threshold in E_T^γ is chosen so as to avoid the low- E_T^γ region where both systematic and theoretical uncertainties increase. Next-to-leading-order (NLO) pQCD and MC event-generator predictions are compared to the measurements.

2. The ATLAS detector

The ATLAS detector [23] is a multi-purpose detector with a forward-backward symmetric cylindrical geometry. It consists of an inner tracking detector surrounded by a thin superconducting solenoid, electromagnetic and hadronic calorimeters, and a muon spectrometer incorporating three large superconducting toroid magnets. The inner-detector system is immersed in a 2 T axial magnetic field and provides charged-particle tracking in the range $|\eta| < 2.5$. The high-granularity silicon pixel detector is closest to the interaction region and provides four measurements per track; the innermost layer, known as the insertable B-layer [24], was added in 2014 and provides high-resolution hits at small radius to improve the tracking performance. The pixel detector is followed by the silicon microstrip tracker, which typically provides four three-dimensional measurement points per track. These silicon detectors are complemented by the transition radiation tracker, which enables radially extended track reconstruction up to $|\eta| = 2.0$. The calorimeter system covers the range $|\eta| < 4.9$. Within the region $|\eta| < 3.2$, electromagnetic calorimetry is provided by barrel and endcap high-granularity lead/liquid-argon (LAr) electromagnetic calorimeters, with an additional thin LAr presampler covering $|\eta| < 1.8$ to correct for energy loss in material upstream of the calorimeters; for $|\eta| < 2.5$ the LAr calorimeters are divided into three layers in depth. Hadronic calorimetry is provided by a steel/scintillator-tile calorimeter, segmented into three barrel structures within $|\eta| < 1.7$, and two copper/LAr hadronic endcap calorimeters, which cover the region $1.5 < |\eta| < 3.2$. The solid angle coverage is completed out to $|\eta| = 4.9$ with forward copper/LAr and tungsten/LAr calorimeter modules, which are optimised for electromagnetic and hadronic measurements, respectively. Events are selected using a first-level trigger implemented in custom electronics, which reduces the maximum event rate of 40 MHz to a design value of 100 kHz using a subset of detector information. Software algorithms with access to the full detector information are then used in the high-level trigger to yield a recorded event rate of about 1 kHz [25].

3. Data selection

The data used in this analysis were collected with the ATLAS detector during the pp collision running period of 2015, when the LHC operated with a bunch spacing of 25 ns and a centre-of-mass energy of $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV. Only events taken in stable beam conditions and satisfying detector and data-quality requirements are considered. The total integrated luminosity of the collected sample amounts to 3.16 ± 0.07 fb^{-1} [26,27]. Events were recorded using a single-photon trigger, with a transverse energy threshold of 120 GeV. The trigger efficiency for isolated photons with

$E_T^\gamma > 125$ GeV and $|\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$, excluding $1.37 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.56$, is higher than 99%.

Events are required to have a reconstructed primary vertex. Primary vertices are formed from sets of two or more reconstructed tracks, each with $p_T > 400$ MeV and $|\eta| < 2.5$, that are mutually consistent with having originated at the same three-dimensional point within the luminous region of the colliding proton beams. If multiple primary vertices are reconstructed, the one with the highest sum of the p_T^2 of the associated tracks is selected as the primary vertex.

Photon and electron candidates are reconstructed from clusters of energy deposited in the electromagnetic calorimeter. Candidates without a matching track or reconstructed conversion vertex³ in the inner detector are classified as unconverted photons [28]. Those with a matching reconstructed conversion vertex or a matching track consistent with originating from a photon conversion are classified as converted photons. Those matched to a track consistent with originating from an electron produced in the beam interaction region are classified as electrons.

The photon identification is based primarily on shower shapes in the calorimeter [28]. An initial selection is derived using the information from the hadronic calorimeter and the lateral shower shape in the second layer of the electromagnetic calorimeter, where most of the photon energy is contained. The final tight selection applies stringent criteria [28] to these variables, different for converted and unconverted photon candidates. It also places requirements on the shower shape in the finely segmented first calorimeter layer to ensure the compatibility of the measured shower profile with that originating from a single photon impacting the calorimeter. When applying the photon identification criteria to simulated events, corrections are made for small differences in the average values of the shower-shape variables between data and simulation. The efficiency of the photon identification varies in the range 92–98% for $E_T^\gamma = 125$ GeV and 86–98% for $E_T^\gamma = 1$ TeV, depending on η^γ and whether the photon candidate is classified as unconverted or converted [28,29]. For $E_T^\gamma > 125$ GeV, the uncertainty in the photon identification efficiency varies between 1% and 5%, depending on η^γ and E_T^γ .

The photon energy measurement is made using calorimeter and tracking information. A dedicated energy calibration [30] is then applied to the candidates to account for upstream energy loss and both lateral and longitudinal leakage; a multivariate regression algorithm to calibrate electron and photon energy measurements was developed and optimised on simulated events. The calibration of the layer energies in the calorimeter is based on the measurement performed with 2012 data at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV [30]. The overall energy scale in data and the difference in the energy resolution's constant term⁴ between data and simulation are estimated with a sample of Z -boson decays to electrons recorded in 2012 and reprocessed using the same electron reconstruction and calibration scheme as used for the 2015 data taking and event processing. The energy scale and resolution corrections are checked using Z -boson decays to electrons recorded in the 2015 data set. Uncertainties in the measurements performed with this sample are estimated following a procedure similar to that discussed in Ref. [30]. The difference between the values measured with the 2015 data and those predicted from the reprocessed 2012 data is also taken into account in the uncertainties. The uncertainty in the photon energy scale at high E_T^γ is typically 0.5–2.0%, depending on η^γ . Events with at least one photon candidate with calibrated

² ATLAS uses a right-handed coordinate system with its origin at the nominal interaction point (IP) in the centre of the detector and the z -axis along the beam pipe. The x -axis points from the IP to the centre of the LHC ring, and the y -axis points upwards. Cylindrical coordinates (r, ϕ) are used in the transverse plane, ϕ being the azimuthal angle around the z -axis. The pseudorapidity is defined in terms of the polar angle θ as $\eta = -\ln \tan(\theta/2)$. Angular distance is measured in units of $\Delta R \equiv \sqrt{(\Delta\eta)^2 + (\Delta\phi)^2}$. The transverse energy is defined as $E_T = E \sin\theta$, where E is the energy.

³ Conversion vertex candidates are reconstructed from pairs of oppositely charged tracks in the inner detector that are likely to be electrons [28].

⁴ The relative energy resolution is parameterised as $\sigma(E)/E = a/\sqrt{E} \oplus c$, where a is the sampling term and c is the constant term.

Table 1

Kinematic requirements and number of selected events in data for each phase-space region.

Phase-space region				
Requirement on E_T^γ	$E_T^\gamma > 125 \text{ GeV}$			
Isolation requirement		$E_T^{\text{iso}} < 4.8 + 4.2 \cdot 10^{-3} \cdot E_T^\gamma \text{ [GeV]}$		
Requirement on $ \eta^\gamma $	$ \eta^\gamma < 0.6$	$0.6 < \eta^\gamma < 1.37$	$1.56 < \eta^\gamma < 1.81$	$1.81 < \eta^\gamma < 2.37$
Number of events	356 604	480 466	140 955	275 483

$E_T^\gamma > 125 \text{ GeV}$ and $|\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$ are selected. Candidates in the region $1.37 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.56$, which includes the transition region between the barrel and endcap calorimeters, are not considered.

The photon candidate is required to be isolated based on the amount of transverse energy inside a cone of size $\Delta R = 0.4$ in the η - ϕ plane around the photon candidate, excluding an area of size $\Delta\eta \times \Delta\phi = 0.125 \times 0.175$ centred on the photon. The isolation transverse energy is computed from topological clusters of calorimeter cells [31] and is denoted by E_T^{iso} . The measured value of E_T^{iso} is corrected for leakage of the photon's energy into the isolation cone and the estimated contributions from the underlying event (UE) and additional inelastic pp interactions (pile-up). The latter two corrections are computed simultaneously on an event-by-event basis [18] and the combined correction is typically 2 GeV. The combined correction is computed using a method suggested in Refs. [32,33]: the k_t jet algorithm [34,35] with jet radius $R = 0.5$ is used to reconstruct all jets taking as input topological clusters of calorimeter cells; no explicit transverse momentum threshold is applied. The ambient-transverse energy density for the event (ρ), from pile-up and the underlying event, is computed using the median of the distribution of the ratio between the jet transverse energy and its area. Finally, ρ is multiplied by the area of the isolation cone to compute the correction to E_T^{iso} . In addition, for simulated events, data-driven corrections to E_T^{iso} are applied such that the peak position in the E_T^{iso} distribution coincides in data and simulation. After all these corrections, E_T^{iso} is required to be lower than $E_{T,\text{cut}}^{\text{iso}}(E_T^\gamma)[\text{GeV}] \equiv 4.8 + 4.2 \cdot 10^{-3} \cdot E_T^\gamma \text{ [GeV]}$ [20]. The isolation requirement significantly reduces the main background, which consists of multi-jet events where one jet typically contains a π^0 or η meson that carries most of the jet energy and is misidentified as a photon because it decays into an almost collinear photon pair.

A small fraction of the events contain more than one photon candidate satisfying the selection criteria. In such events, the highest- E_T^γ (leading) photon is considered for further study. The total number of data events selected by using the requirements discussed above amounts to 1253 508. A summary of the kinematic requirements as well as the number of selected events in data in each $|\eta^\gamma|$ region are included in Table 1. The selected sample of events is used to unfold the distribution in E_T^γ separately for each of the four regions in $|\eta^\gamma|$ indicated in Table 1; the unfolding is performed using the samples of MC events described in Section 4.1 and the results are compared to the predictions from the PYTHIA and SHERPA generators as well as to the predictions from NLO pQCD (see Section 8).

4. Monte Carlo simulations and theoretical predictions

4.1. Monte Carlo simulations

Samples of MC events were generated to study the characteristics of signal events. The MC programs PYTHIA 8.186 [36] and SHERPA 2.1.1 [37] were used to generate the simulated events. In both generators, the partonic processes were simulated using tree-level matrix elements, with the inclusion of initial- and final-state parton showers. Fragmentation into hadrons was performed

using the Lund string model [38] in the case of PYTHIA, and in SHERPA events by a modified version of the cluster model [39]. The LO NNPDF2.3 [40] PDFs were used for PYTHIA (NLO CT10 [41] for SHERPA) to parameterise the proton structure. Both samples include a simulation of the UE. The event-generator parameters were set according to the “A14” tune for PYTHIA [42] and the “CT10” tune for SHERPA. All the samples of generated events were passed through the GEANT4-based [43] ATLAS detector- and trigger-simulation programs [44]. They were reconstructed and analysed by the same program chain as the data. Pile-up from additional pp collisions in the same and neighbouring bunch crossings was simulated by overlaying each MC event with a variable number of simulated inelastic pp collisions generated using PYTHIA8 with the A2 tune [45]. The MC events were weighted to reproduce the distribution of the average number of interactions per bunch crossing (μ) observed in the data, referred to as “pile-up reweighting”; in this procedure, the μ value in the data is divided by a factor of 1.16 ± 0.07 , a rescaling which improves the agreement between the data and simulation for the observed number of primary vertices and recovers the fraction of visible cross-section of inelastic pp collisions as measured in the data [46].

The PYTHIA simulation of the signal includes LO photon-plus-jet events from both direct processes (the hard subprocesses $qg \rightarrow q\gamma$ and $q\bar{q} \rightarrow g\gamma$, called the “hard” component) and photon bremsstrahlung in QCD dijet events (called the “bremsstrahlung” component). The SHERPA samples were generated with LO matrix elements for photon-plus-jet final states with up to three additional partons ($2 \rightarrow n$ processes with n from 2 to 5); the matrix elements were merged with the SHERPA parton shower [47] using the ME+PS@LO prescription. While the bremsstrahlung component was modelled in PYTHIA by final-state QED radiation arising from calculations of all $2 \rightarrow 2$ QCD processes, it was accounted for in SHERPA through the matrix elements of $2 \rightarrow n$ processes with $n \geq 3$; in the generation of the SHERPA samples, a requirement on the photon isolation at the matrix-element level was imposed using the criterion defined in Ref. [48].⁵

The predictions of the MC generators at particle level are defined using those particles with a lifetime τ longer than 10 ps; these particles are referred to as “stable”. The particles associated with the overlaid pp collisions (pile-up) are not considered. The particle-level isolation requirement on the photon was built summing the transverse energy of all stable particles, except for muons and neutrinos, in a cone of size $\Delta R = 0.4$ around the photon direction after the contribution from the UE was subtracted; the same subtraction procedure used on data was applied at the particle level. Therefore, the cross sections quoted from MC simulations refer to photons that are isolated by requiring $E_T^{\text{iso}}(\text{particle}) < E_{T,\text{cut}}^{\text{iso}}(E_T^\gamma)$.

⁵ This criterion, commonly called Frixione's criterion, requires the total transverse energy inside a cone of size \mathcal{V} around the generated final-state photon, excluding the photon itself, to be below a certain threshold, $E_T^{\text{max}}(\mathcal{V}) = \epsilon E_T^\gamma ((1 - \cos \mathcal{V})/(1 - \cos \mathcal{R}))^n$, for all $\mathcal{V} < \mathcal{R}$. The parameters for the threshold were chosen to be $\mathcal{R} = 0.3$, $n = 2$ and $\epsilon = 0.025$.

4.2. Next-to-leading-order pQCD predictions

The NLO pQCD predictions presented in this paper are computed using the program JETPHOX 1.3.1_2 [49,13]. This program includes a full NLO pQCD calculation of both the direct and fragmentation contributions to the cross section for the $pp \rightarrow \gamma + X$ process.

The number of massless quark flavours is set to five. The renormalisation scale μ_R (at which the strong coupling is evaluated), factorisation scale μ_F (at which the proton PDFs are evaluated) and fragmentation scale μ_f (at which the fragmentation function is evaluated) are chosen to be $\mu_R = \mu_F = \mu_f = E_T^\gamma$. The calculations are performed using the MMHT2014 [50] parameterisations of the proton PDFs and the BFG set II of parton-to-photon fragmentation functions at NLO [51]. The strong coupling constant is calculated at two loops with $\alpha_s(m_Z) = 0.120$. Predictions based on other proton PDF sets, namely CT14 [52] and NNPDF3.0 [53], are also computed. The calculations are performed using a parton-level isolation criterion which requires the total transverse energy from the partons inside a cone of size $\Delta R = 0.4$ around the photon direction to be below $E_{T,\text{cut}}^{\text{iso}}(E_T^\gamma)$.

The NLO pQCD predictions refer to the parton level while the measurements refer to the particle level. Since the data are corrected for pile-up and UE effects and the distributions are unfolded to a phase-space definition in which the requirement on E_T^{iso} at particle level is applied after subtraction of the UE, it is expected that parton-to-hadron corrections to the NLO pQCD predictions are small. This is confirmed by computing the ratio of the particle-level cross section for a PYTHIA sample with UE effects to the parton-level cross section without UE effects⁶: the ratio is consistent with unity within 1% over the measured range in E_T^γ . Therefore, no correction is applied to the NLO pQCD predictions and an uncertainty of 1% is assigned.

5. Background estimation and signal extraction

A non-negligible background contribution remains in the selected sample, even after imposing the tight identification and isolation requirements on the photon. This background originates mainly from multi-jet processes in which a jet is misidentified as a photon.

The background subtraction relies on a data-driven method based on signal-suppressed control regions. The background contamination in the selected sample is estimated using the same two-dimensional sideband technique as in the previous analyses [17,18,54,20,55] and then subtracted bin-by-bin from the observed yield. In this method, the photon is classified as:

- “isolated”, if $E_T^{\text{iso}} < E_{T,\text{cut}}^{\text{iso}}(E_T^\gamma)$;
- “non-isolated”, if $E_T^{\text{iso}} > E_{T,\text{cut}}^{\text{iso}}(E_T^\gamma) + 2 \text{ GeV}$ and $E_T^{\text{iso}} < 50 \text{ GeV}$;
- “tight”, if it satisfies the tight photon identification criteria;
- “non-tight”, if it fails at least one of four tight requirements on the shower-shape variables computed from the energy deposits in the first layer of the electromagnetic calorimeter, but satisfies the tight requirement on the total lateral shower width in the first layer and all the other tight identification criteria [28].

In the two-dimensional plane formed by E_T^{iso} and the photon identification variables, which are chosen because they are ex-

pected to be independent for the background, four regions are defined:

- A: the “signal” region, containing tight isolated photon candidates;
- B: the “non-isolated” background control region, containing tight non-isolated photon candidates;
- C: the “non-tight” background control region, containing isolated non-tight photon candidates;
- D: the background control region containing non-isolated non-tight photon candidates.

The signal yield N_A^{sig} in region A is estimated by using the relation

$$N_A^{\text{sig}} = N_A - R^{\text{bg}} \cdot (N_B - f_B N_A^{\text{sig}}) \cdot \frac{(N_C - f_C N_A^{\text{sig}})}{(N_D - f_D N_A^{\text{sig}})}, \quad (1)$$

where N_K , with $K = A, B, C, D$, is the number of events in region K and $R^{\text{bg}} = N_A^{\text{bg}} \cdot N_D^{\text{bg}} / (N_B^{\text{bg}} \cdot N_C^{\text{bg}})$ is the so-called background correlation and is taken as $R^{\text{bg}} = 1$ for the nominal results; N_K^{bg} with $K = A, B, C, D$ is the number of background events in each region. Equation (1) takes into account the expected number of signal events in the three background control regions (N_K^{sig}) via the signal leakage fractions, $f_K = N_K^{\text{sig}} / N_A^{\text{sig}}$ with $K = B, C, D$, which are estimated using the MC simulations of the signal. A systematic uncertainty is assigned to the modelling of the signal leakage fractions (see Section 7.1). The only assumption underlying Eq. (1) is that the isolation and identification variables are independent for background events, thus $R^{\text{bg}} = 1$. This assumption is verified both in simulated background samples and in data in a background-dominated region [20]. A study of R^{bg} in background-dominated regions, accounting for signal leakage using either the PYTHIA or SHERPA simulations, shows deviations from unity which are then propagated through Equation (1) and taken as systematic uncertainties. The signal purity, defined as N_A^{sig} / N_A , is above 90% for $E_T^\gamma = 125 \text{ GeV}$ in all $|\eta^\gamma|$ regions and increases as E_T^γ increases. The signal purity is similar whether PYTHIA or SHERPA is used to extract the signal leakage fractions and the difference is taken as a systematic uncertainty.

There is an additional background from electrons misidentified as photons, mainly produced in Drell-Yan $Z^{(*)}/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-$ and $W^{(*)} \rightarrow e\nu$ processes. Such misidentified electrons are largely suppressed by the photon selection. The remaining electron background is estimated using MC techniques and found to be negligible in the phase-space region of the analysis presented here.

6. Unfolding

The isolated-photon cross section is measured as a function of E_T^γ in different regions of $|\eta^\gamma|$. The phase-space regions are listed in Table 1. The data distributions, after background subtraction, are unfolded to the particle level using bin-by-bin correction factors determined using the MC samples. These correction factors take into account the efficiency of the selection criteria and the purity and efficiency of the photon reconstruction. The data distributions are unfolded to the particle level via the formula

$$\frac{d\sigma}{dE_T^\gamma}(i) = \frac{N_A^{\text{sig}}(i) C^{\text{MC}}(i)}{\mathcal{L} \Delta E_T^\gamma(i)}, \quad (2)$$

where $(d\sigma/dE_T^\gamma)(i)$ is the cross section as a function of the observable E_T^γ in bin i , $N_A^{\text{sig}}(i)$ is the number of background-subtracted data events in bin i , $C^{\text{MC}}(i)$ is the correction factor in bin i , \mathcal{L} is

⁶ The effects of hadronisation and UE are also studied separately; the effects of including the UE do not cancel those of hadronisation and are dominant.

the integrated luminosity and $\Delta E_T^\gamma(i)$ is the width of bin i . The correction factors are computed using the MC samples of events as $C^{\text{MC}}(i) = N_{\text{part}}^{\text{MC}}(i)/N_{\text{reco}}^{\text{MC}}(i)$, where $N_{\text{part}}^{\text{MC}}(i)$ is the number of events which satisfy the kinematic constraints of the phase-space region at the particle level, and $N_{\text{reco}}^{\text{MC}}(i)$ is the number of events which meet all the selection criteria at the reconstruction level.

The nominal cross sections are measured using the correction factors from PYTHIA and the deviations from these results when using SHERPA to unfold the data are taken to represent systematic uncertainties in how the parton-shower and hadronisation models affect the corrections. The correction factors increase as E_T^γ increases and vary between 1.04 and 1.24 depending on E_T^γ and η^γ . The results of the bin-by-bin unfolding procedure are checked with a Bayesian unfolding method [56], giving consistent results.

7. Experimental and theoretical uncertainties

7.1. Experimental uncertainties

The primary sources of systematic uncertainty that affect the measurements are investigated. These sources include photon identification, photon energy scale and resolution, background subtraction, modelling of the final state, pile-up, MC sample statistics, trigger and luminosity.

- **Photon identification efficiency.** The uncertainty in the photon identification efficiency is estimated from the effect of differences between shower-shape variable distributions in data and simulation. From the studies presented in Ref. [28], this procedure is found to provide a conservative estimate of the uncertainties.⁷ The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections increases from 1–2% at $E_T^\gamma = 125$ GeV to 2–6% at $E_T^\gamma \sim 1$ TeV.
- **Photon energy scale and resolution.** A detailed assessment of the uncertainties in the photon energy scale and resolution is made using the same method developed with 8 TeV data [30]. The sources of uncertainty include: the uncertainty in the overall energy scale adjustment using $Z \rightarrow e^+e^-$; the uncertainty in the non-linearity of the energy measurement at the cell level; the uncertainty in the relative calibration of the different calorimeter layers; the uncertainty in the amount of material in front of the calorimeter; the uncertainty in the modelling of the reconstruction of photon conversions; the uncertainty in the modelling of the lateral shower shape; the uncertainty in the modelling of the sampling term; the uncertainty in the measurement of the constant term in Z -boson decays. Additional systematic uncertainties are included to take into account the differences between the 2012 and 2015 configurations. These uncertainties are modelled using independent components to account for their η dependence. All the components are propagated through the analysis separately to maintain the full information about the correlations. The systematic uncertainties in the measured cross sections due to the effects mentioned above are estimated by varying by $\pm 1\sigma$ each individual source of uncertainty separately in the MC simulations and then added in quadrature. The resulting uncertainty increases from about 2% at $E_T^\gamma = 125$ GeV to about 5% at $E_T^\gamma \sim 1$ TeV except in the $1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.81$

region, where it increases from about 7% at $E_T^\gamma = 125$ GeV to about 18% at $E_T^\gamma \sim 1$ TeV.

- **Definition of the background control regions.** The estimation of the background contamination in the signal region is affected by the choice of background control regions. The control regions B and D are defined by the lower and upper limits on E_T^{iso} and the choice of inverted photon identification variables used in the selection of non-tight photons. To study the dependence on the specific choices, these definitions are varied over a wide range. The lower limit on E_T^{iso} in regions B and D is varied by ± 1 GeV, which is larger than any difference between data and simulations and still provides a sufficient sample to perform the data-driven subtraction. The upper limit on E_T^{iso} in regions B and D is removed. The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections is negligible.

Likewise, the choice of inverted photon identification variables is varied. The analysis is repeated using different sets of variables: tighter (looser) identification criteria are defined by applying tight requirements to an extended (restricted) set of shower-shape variables in the first calorimeter layer. The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections is typically smaller than 2%.

- **Photon identification and isolation correlation in the background.** The photon isolation and identification variables used to define the plane in the two-dimensional sideband method to subtract the background are assumed to be independent for background events ($R^{\text{bg}} = 1$ in Eq. (1)). Any correlation between these variables affects the estimation of the purity of the signal and leads to systematic uncertainties in the background-subtraction procedure. A range in R^{bg} is set to cover the deviations from unity observed for the estimations based on subtracting the signal leakage with either PYTHIA or SHERPA MC samples. The resulting range in R^{bg} , which is taken as the uncertainty, is $0.8 < R^{\text{bg}} < 1.2$ for $0.6 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$ and $1.81 < |\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$; for the region $|\eta^\gamma| < 0.6$ ($1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.81$), the range is $0.8 < R^{\text{bg}} < 1.2$ ($0.75 < R^{\text{bg}} < 1.25$) at low E_T^γ and increases to $0.65 < R^{\text{bg}} < 1.35$ ($0.6 < R^{\text{bg}} < 1.4$) at high E_T^γ . The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections is typically smaller than 2%.

- **Parton-shower and hadronisation model dependence.** The effects due to the parton-shower and hadronisation models in the signal purity and correction factors are studied separately; the effects are estimated as the differences observed between the nominal results and those obtained using SHERPA MC samples either for the determination of the signal leakage fractions or the unfolding correction factors. The resulting uncertainties in the measured cross sections are typically smaller than 2%.

- **Photon isolation modelling.** The differences between the nominal results and those obtained without applying the data-driven corrections to E_T^{iso} in simulated events are taken as systematic uncertainties in the measurements due to the modelling of E_T^{iso} in the MC simulation. The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections is smaller than 2%.

- **Signal modelling.** The MC simulation of the signal is used to estimate the signal leakage fractions in the two-dimensional sideband method for background subtraction and to compute the bin-by-bin correction factors. The PYTHIA simulation is used with the mixture of the hard and bremsstrahlung components as predicted by the generator to yield the background-subtracted data distributions and to compute the correction factors; in the predicted mixture, the relative contribution of the bremsstrahlung component amounts to $\approx 30\%$. The uncertainty related to the simulation of the hard and bremsstrahlung components is estimated by performing the background subtraction and the calculation of the correction

⁷ The photon identification efficiencies from data-driven methods and MC simulations were compared in Ref. [28]. No significant difference is observed between the data-driven measurements and the nominal or corrected (for the small differences in the average values of the shower-shape variables between data and simulation) simulation for $E_T^\gamma > 60$ GeV.

factors using a mixture with either two or zero times the amount of the bremsstrahlung component. The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections is typically smaller than 1%.

- **Pile-up.** The uncertainty is estimated by changing the nominal rescaling factor of 1.16 from 1.09 to 1.23 and re-evaluating the reweighting factors. The resulting uncertainty in the measured cross sections is typically smaller than 0.5%.

The total systematic uncertainty is computed by adding in quadrature the uncertainties from the sources listed above and the statistical uncertainty of the MC samples as well as the uncertainty in the trigger efficiency. The uncertainty in the integrated luminosity is 2.1% [27]. This uncertainty is fully correlated in all bins of all the measured cross sections and is shown separately. The total systematic uncertainty is smaller than 5% for $|\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$. For $1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.81$ ($1.81 < |\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$), it increases from $\approx 8\%$ (4%) at $E_T^\gamma = 125$ GeV to $\approx 19\%$ (11%) at the high end of the spectrum. For $E_T^\gamma \lesssim 600$ GeV, the systematic uncertainty dominates the total experimental uncertainty, while for higher E_T^γ values, the statistical uncertainty of the data limits the precision of the measurements.

7.2. Theoretical uncertainties

The following sources of uncertainty in the theoretical predictions are considered:

- The uncertainty in the NLO pQCD predictions due to terms beyond NLO is estimated by repeating the calculations using values of μ_R , μ_F and μ_f scaled by the factors 0.5 and 2. The three scales are either varied simultaneously, individually or by fixing one and varying the other two. In all cases, the condition $0.5 \leq \mu_A/\mu_B \leq 2$ is imposed, where $A, B = R, F, f$ and $A \neq B$. The final uncertainty is taken as the largest deviation from the nominal value among the 14 possible variations.
- The uncertainty in the NLO pQCD predictions due to imperfect knowledge of the proton PDFs is estimated by repeating the calculations using the 50 sets from the MMHT2014 error analysis [50] and applying the Hessian method [57,58] for evaluation of the PDF uncertainties.
- The uncertainty in the NLO pQCD predictions due to that in the value of $\alpha_s(m_Z)$ is estimated by repeating the calculations using two additional sets of proton PDFs from the MMHT2014 analysis, for which different values of $\alpha_s(m_Z)$ were assumed in the fits, namely $\alpha_s(m_Z) = 0.118$ and 0.122; in this way, the correlation between α_s and the PDFs is preserved.
- An uncertainty of 1% is assigned due to the non-perturbative effects of hadronisation and UE (see Section 4.2).

The dominant theoretical uncertainty is that arising from the terms beyond NLO and amounts to 10–15% for all η^γ regions. The uncertainty arising from those in the PDFs increases from 1% at $E_T^\gamma = 125$ GeV to 3–4% at high E_T^γ . The uncertainty arising from the value of $\alpha_s(m_Z)$ is below 2%. The total theoretical uncertainty is obtained by adding in quadrature the individual uncertainties listed above and amounts to 10–15%.

8. Results

Fig. 1 shows the isolated-photon cross section as a function of E_T^γ in four different regions of η^γ . The measured cross sections decrease by approximately five orders of magnitude in the measured range. Values of E_T^γ up to 1.5 TeV are accessed. The cross-section distributions measured in the four different regions of η^γ have similar shapes.

The predictions of the PYTHIA and SHERPA MC models are compared to the measurements in Fig. 1. These predictions are normalised to the measured integrated cross section in each η^γ region. The difference in normalisation between data and PYTHIA (SHERPA) is $\sim +10\%$ (+30%) and attributed to the fact that these generators are based on tree-level matrix elements, which are affected by a large normalisation uncertainty due to missing higher-order terms. The predictions of both PYTHIA and SHERPA give a good description of the shape of the measured cross-section distributions for $E_T^\gamma \lesssim 500$ GeV in the range $|\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$ and in the whole measured E_T^γ range for $1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$.

Fig. 2 shows the measured isolated-photon cross sections as functions of E_T^γ in four different regions of η^γ compared with the predictions of the NLO pQCD calculations of JETPHOX based on the MMHT2014 proton PDF set. The ratios of the theoretical predictions based on different PDF sets to the measured cross sections are shown in Fig. 3. The predictions based on MMHT2014, CT14 and NNPDF3.0 are very similar, the differences being much smaller than the theoretical scale uncertainties. For most of the points, the theoretical uncertainties are larger than those of experimental origin. Differences are observed between data and the predictions of up to 10–15% depending on E_T^γ and $|\eta^\gamma|$; since the theoretical uncertainties are 10–15% and cover those differences, it is concluded that the NLO pQCD predictions provide an adequate description of the measurements.

The measured cross sections are larger than those at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV [20] by approximately a factor of two at low E_T^γ ($E_T^\gamma \sim 125$ GeV) and by approximately an order of magnitude at the high end of the spectrum in each region of $|\eta^\gamma|$. Such increases in the measured cross section are expected from the increase in the centre-of-mass energy. The experimental uncertainties of the measurements at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ and 13 TeV are comparable. For both centre-of-mass energies the NLO theoretical uncertainties are of similar size and comparable to the differences between the predictions and the data; since, in addition, the experimental uncertainties are smaller than those differences, the inclusion of NNLO pQCD corrections might improve the description of the two sets of measurements.

The measured fiducial cross section for inclusive isolated-photon production in the phase-space region given by $E_T^\gamma > 125$ GeV and $|\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$ (excluding the region of $1.37 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.56$) and isolation $E_T^{\text{iso}} < E_{T,\text{cut}}^{\text{iso}}(E_T^\gamma)$ is

$$\sigma_{\text{meas}} = 399 \pm 13 \text{ (exp.)} \pm 8 \text{ (lumi.) pb},$$

where “exp.” denotes the sum in quadrature of the statistical and systematic uncertainties and “lumi.” denotes the uncertainty due to that in the integrated luminosity, details of which are listed in Table 2.

The fiducial cross section predicted at NLO in pQCD by JETPHOX using the MMHT2014 PDFs is

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma_{\text{NLO}} &= 352^{+36}_{-29} \text{ (scale)} \pm 3 \text{ (PDF)} \pm 6 \text{ (\alpha_s)} \\ &\quad \pm 4 \text{ (non-perturb.) pb}, \end{aligned}$$

which is 12% lower than the measurement, but consistent within the experimental and theoretical uncertainties.

9. Summary

A measurement of the cross section for inclusive isolated-photon production in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV with the ATLAS detector at the LHC is presented using a data set with an integrated luminosity of 3.2 fb^{-1} . Cross sections as functions of E_T^γ are measured in four different regions of η^γ for photons with

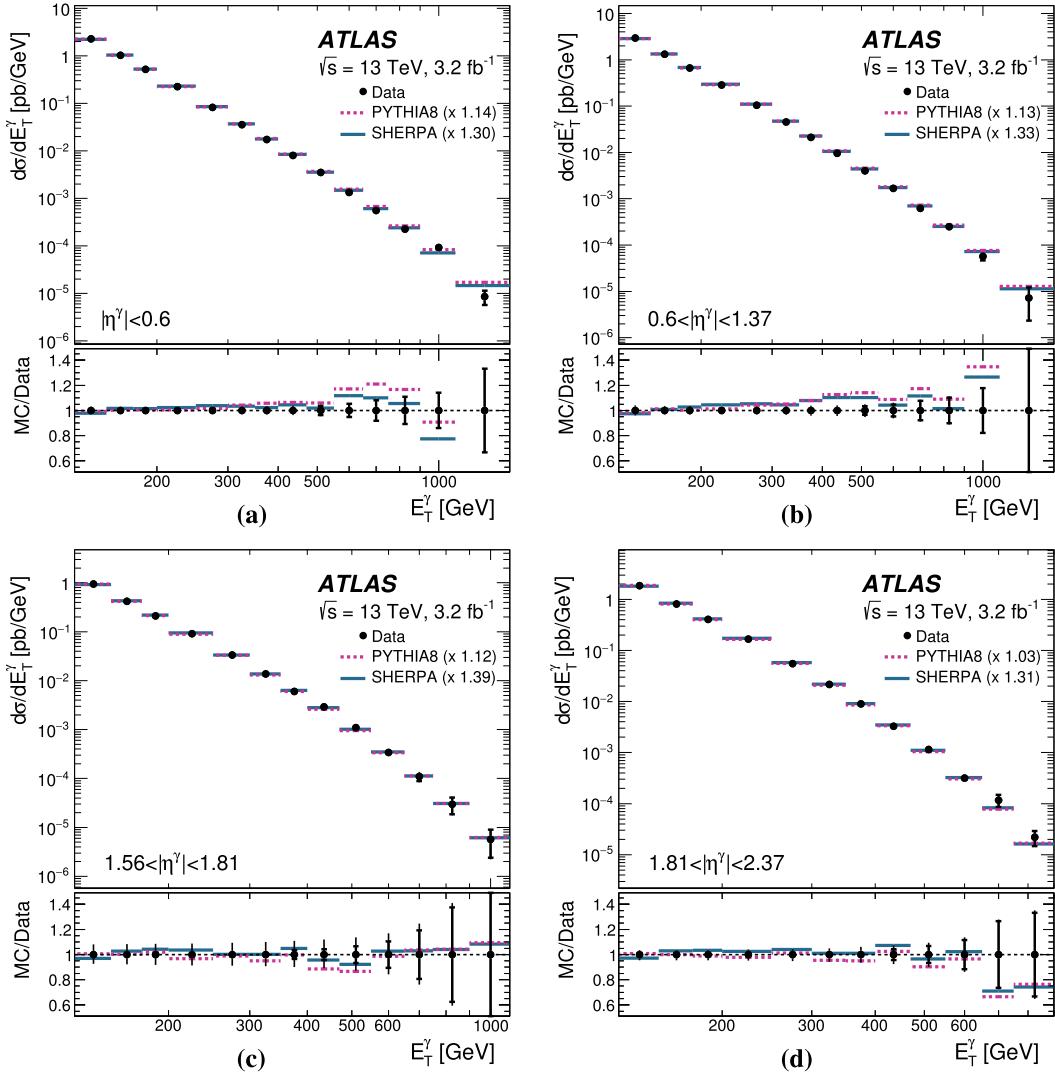


Fig. 1. Measured cross sections for isolated-photon production (dots) as functions of E_T^γ in (a) $|\eta^\gamma| < 0.6$, (b) $0.6 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$, (c) $1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.81$ and (d) $1.81 < |\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$. The predictions from PYTHIA (dashed lines) and SHERPA (solid lines) are also shown; these predictions are normalised to the measured integrated cross section in each region of $|\eta^\gamma|$ using the values indicated in parentheses. The bottom part of each figure shows the ratio of the MC predictions to the measured cross section. The inner (outer) error bars represent the statistical uncertainties (the statistical and systematic uncertainties, excluding that on the luminosity, added in quadrature). For most of the points, the inner error bars are smaller than the marker size and, thus, not visible.

Table 2

Uncertainties (in pb) in the fiducial cross section: photon identification (“ γ ID”), photon energy scale and resolution (“ γ ES+ER”), lower limit in E_T^{iso} in regions B and D (“ E_T^{iso} Gap”), removal of upper limit in E_T^{iso} in regions B and D (“ E_T^{iso} upp. lim.”), variation of the inverted photon identification variables (“ γ invert. var.”), correlation between γ ID and isolation in the background (“ R^{bg} ”), signal leakage fractions of SHERPA (“Leak. SHERPA”), unfolding with SHERPA (“Unf. SHERPA”), modelling of E_T^{iso} in MC simulation (“ E_T^{iso} MC”), mixture of hard and bremsstrahlung components in MC samples (“Hard and brem”), pile-up (“Pile-up”), statistical uncertainty in MC samples (“MC stat.”), trigger (“Trigger”), statistical uncertainty in data (“Data stat.”) and luminosity (“Luminosity”).

Uncertainties [pb]				
γ ID	(−5.2, +5.4)	γ ES+ER	(−7.9, +8.4)	E_T^{iso} Gap
E_T^{iso} upp. lim.	+0.6	γ invert. var.	(−4.1, +3.5)	R^{bg}
Leak. SHERPA	±4.1	Unf. SHERPA	±2.9	E_T^{iso} MC
Hard and brem	(−1.0, +1.9)	Pile-up	(−1.1, +1.3)	MC stat.
Trigger	±1.1	Data stat.	±0.4	Luminosity

$E_T^\gamma > 125$ GeV and $|\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$, excluding the region $1.37 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.56$. Selection of isolated photons is ensured by requiring that the transverse energy in a cone of size $\Delta R = 0.4$ around the photon is smaller than $4.8 + 4.2 \cdot 10^{-3} \cdot E_T^\gamma$ [GeV]. Values of E_T^γ up to 1.5 TeV are measured. The fiducial cross section is measured to be $\sigma_{meas} = 399 \pm 13$ (exp.) ± 8 (lumi.) pb.

The experimental systematic uncertainties are evaluated such that the correlations with previous ATLAS measurements of prompt-photon production can be used in the fits of the proton parton distribution functions. A combined fit at NNLO pQCD of the measurements in pp collisions at centre-of-mass energies of 8 and 13 TeV which takes into account the correlated systematic uncer-

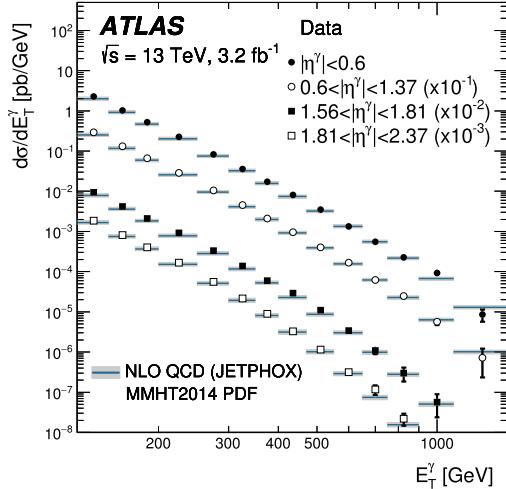


Fig. 2. Measured cross sections for isolated-photon production as functions of E_T^γ in $|\eta^\gamma| < 0.6$ (black dots), $0.6 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$ (open circles), $1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.81$ (black squares) and $1.81 < |\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$ (open squares). The NLO pQCD predictions from JETPHOX based on the MMHT2014 PDFs (solid lines) are also shown. The measurements and the predictions are normalised by the factors shown in parentheses to aid visibility. The error bars represent the statistical and systematic uncertainties added in quadrature. The shaded bands display the theoretical uncertainty.

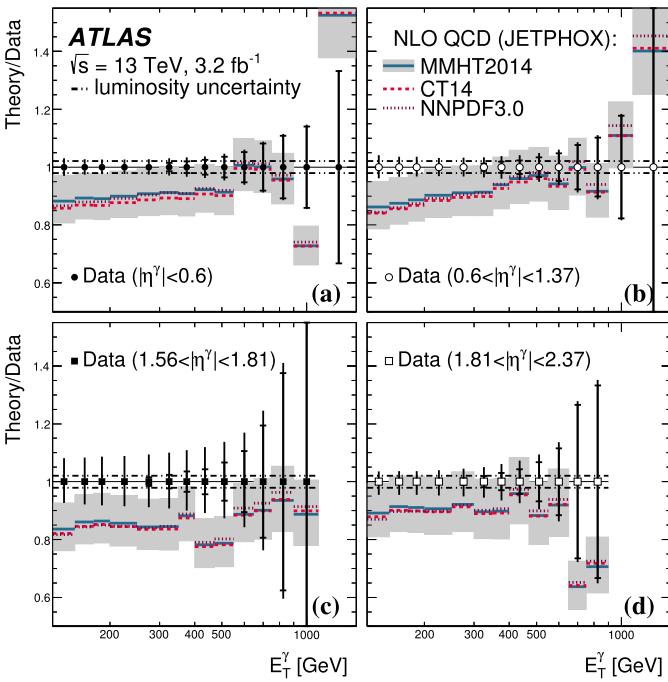


Fig. 3. Ratio of the NLO pQCD predictions from JETPHOX based on the MMHT2014 PDFs to the measured cross sections for isolated-photon production (solid lines) as a function of E_T^γ in (a) $|\eta^\gamma| < 0.6$, (b) $0.6 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$, (c) $1.56 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.81$ and (d) $1.81 < |\eta^\gamma| < 2.37$. The inner (outer) error bars represent the statistical uncertainties (statistical and systematic uncertainties, excluding that on the luminosity, added in quadrature), the dot-dot-dashed lines represent the uncertainty due to the luminosity measurement and the shaded bands display the theoretical uncertainty of the calculation based on the MMHT2014 PDFs. The ratio of the NLO pQCD predictions based on the CT14 (dashed lines) or NNPDF3.0 (dotted lines) PDF sets to the data are also included.

tainties has the potential to constrain further the proton PDFs than either set of measurements alone.

The predictions of the PYTHIA and SHERPA Monte Carlo models give a good description of the shape of the measured cross-section distributions except for $E_T^\gamma \gtrsim 500$ GeV in the regions $|\eta^\gamma| < 0.6$

and $0.6 < |\eta^\gamma| < 1.37$. The next-to-leading-order pQCD predictions, using JETPHOX and based on different sets of proton PDFs, provide an adequate description of the data within the experimental and theoretical uncertainties. For most of the phase space the theoretical uncertainties are larger than those of experimental nature and dominated by the terms beyond NLO, from which it is concluded that NNLO pQCD corrections are needed to make an even more stringent test of the theory.

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- A.V. Akimov 98, G.L. Alberghi 22a,22b, J. Albert 172, M.J. Alconada Verzini 74, M. Aleksa 32,
 I.N. Aleksandrov 68, C. Alexa 28b, G. Alexander 155, T. Alexopoulos 10, M. Alhroob 115, B. Ali 130,
 M. Aliev 76a,76b, G. Alimonti 94a, J. Alison 33, S.P. Alkire 38, B.M.M. Allbrooke 151, B.W. Allen 118,
 P.P. Allport 19, A. Aloisio 106a,106b, A. Alonso 39, F. Alonso 74, C. Alpigiani 140, A.A. Alshehri 56, M. Alstaty 88,
 B. Alvarez Gonzalez 32, D. Alvarez Piqueras 170, M.G. Alviggi 106a,106b, B.T. Amadio 16,
 Y. Amaral Coutinho 26a, C. Amelung 25, D. Amidei 92, S.P. Amor Dos Santos 128a,128c, A. Amorim 128a,128b,
 S. Amoroso 32, G. Amundsen 25, C. Anastopoulos 141, L.S. Ancu 52, N. Andari 19, T. Andeen 11,
 C.F. Anders 60b, J.K. Anders 77, K.J. Anderson 33, A. Andreazza 94a,94b, V. Andrei 60a, S. Angelidakis 9,
 I. Angelozzi 109, A. Angerami 38, F. Anghinolfi 32, A.V. Anisenkov 111,d, N. Anjos 13, A. Annovi 126a,126b,
 C. Antel 60a, M. Antonelli 50, A. Antonov 100,* D.J. Antrim 166, F. Anulli 134a, M. Aoki 69, L. Aperio Bella 32,
 G. Arabidze 93, Y. Arai 69, J.P. Araque 128a, V. Araujo Ferraz 26a, A.T.H. Arce 48, R.E. Ardell 80, F.A. Arduh 74,
 J-F. Arguin 97, S. Argyropoulos 66, M. Arik 20a, A.J. Armbruster 145, L.J. Armitage 79, O. Arnaez 32,
 H. Arnold 51, M. Arratia 30, O. Arslan 23, A. Artamonov 99, G. Artoni 122, S. Artz 86, S. Asai 157, N. Asbah 45,
 A. Ashkenazi 155, L. Asquith 151, K. Assamagan 27, R. Astalos 146a, M. Atkinson 169, N.B. Atlay 143,
 K. Augsten 130, G. Avolio 32, B. Axen 16, M.K. Ayoub 119, G. Azuelos 97,e, A.E. Baas 60a, M.J. Baca 19,
 H. Bachacou 138, K. Bachas 76a,76b, M. Backes 122, M. Backhaus 32, P. Bagiacchi 134a,134b, P. Bagnaia 134a,134b,
 J.T. Baines 133, M. Bajic 39, O.K. Baker 179, E.M. Baldin 111,d, P. Balek 175, T. Balestri 150, F. Balli 138,
 W.K. Balunas 124, E. Banas 42, Sw. Banerjee 176,f, A.A.E. Bannoura 178, L. Barak 32, E.L. Barberio 91,
 D. Barberis 53a,53b, M. Barbero 88, T. Barillari 103, M-S Barisits 32, T. Barklow 145, N. Barlow 30,
 S.L. Barnes 36c, B.M. Barnett 133, R.M. Barnett 16, Z. Barnovska-Blenessy 36a, A. Baroncelli 136a, G. Barone 25,
 A.J. Barr 122, L. Barranco Navarro 170, F. Barreiro 85, J. Barreiro Guimarães da Costa 35a, R. Bartoldus 145,
 A.E. Barton 75, P. Bartos 146a, A. Basalaev 125, A. Bassalat 119,g, R.L. Bates 56, S.J. Batista 161, J.R. Batley 30,
 M. Battaglia 139, M. Bauce 134a,134b, F. Bauer 138, H.S. Bawa 145,h, J.B. Beacham 113, M.D. Beattie 75,
 T. Beau 83, P.H. Beauchemin 165, P. Bechtle 23, H.P. Beck 18,i, K. Becker 122, M. Becker 86, M. Beckingham 173,
 C. Becot 112, A.J. Beddall 20e, A. Beddall 20b, V.A. Bednyakov 68, M. Bedognetti 109, C.P. Bee 150,
 T.A. Beermann 32, M. Begalli 26a, M. Begel 27, J.K. Behr 45, A.S. Bell 81, G. Bella 155, L. Bellagamba 22a,
 A. Bellerive 31, M. Bellomo 89, K. Belotskiy 100, O. Beltramello 32, N.L. Belyaev 100, O. Benary 155,*
 D. Benchekroun 137a, M. Bender 102, K. Bendtz 148a,148b, N. Benekos 10, Y. Benhammou 155,
 E. Benhar Noccioli 179, J. Benitez 66, D.P. Benjamin 48, M. Benoit 52, J.R. Bensinger 25, S. Bentvelsen 109,
 L. Beresford 122, M. Beretta 50, D. Berge 109, E. Bergeaas Kuutmann 168, N. Berger 5, J. Beringer 16,
 S. Berlendis 58, N.R. Bernard 89, G. Bernardi 83, C. Bernius 112, F.U. Bernlochner 23, T. Berry 80, P. Berta 131,
 C. Bertella 86, G. Bertoli 148a,148b, F. Bertolucci 126a,126b, I.A. Bertram 75, C. Bertsche 45, D. Bertsche 115,
 G.J. Besjes 39, O. Bessidskaia Bylund 148a,148b, M. Bessner 45, N. Besson 138, C. Betancourt 51, A. Bethani 87,
 S. Bethke 103, A.J. Bevan 79, R.M. Bianchi 127, M. Bianco 32, O. Biebel 102, D. Biedermann 17, R. Bielski 87,
 N.V. Biesuz 126a,126b, M. Biglietti 136a, J. Bilbao De Mendizabal 52, T.R.V. Billoud 97, H. Bilokon 50,
 M. Bindi 57, A. Bingul 20b, C. Bini 134a,134b, S. Biondi 22a,22b, T. Bisanz 57, C. Bitrich 47, D.M. Bjergaard 48,
 C.W. Black 152, J.E. Black 145, K.M. Black 24, D. Blackburn 140, R.E. Blair 6, T. Blazek 146a, I. Bloch 45,
 C. Blocker 25, A. Blue 56, W. Blum 86,* U. Blumenschein 79, S. Blunier 34a, G.J. Bobbink 109,
 V.S. Bobrovnikov 111,d, S.S. Bocchetta 84, A. Bocci 48, C. Bock 102, M. Boehler 51, D. Boerner 178,
 D. Bogavac 102, A.G. Bogdanchikov 111, C. Bohm 148a, V. Boisvert 80, P. Bokan 168,j, T. Bold 41a,
 A.S. Boldyrev 101, M. Bomben 83, M. Bona 79, M. Boonekamp 138, A. Borisov 132, G. Borissov 75,
 J. Bortfeldt 32, D. Bortoletto 122, V. Bortolotto 62a,62b,62c, K. Bos 109, D. Boscherini 22a, M. Bosman 13,
 J.D. Bossio Sola 29, J. Boudreau 127, J. Bouffard 2, E.V. Bouhova-Thacker 75, D. Boumediene 37,
 C. Bourdarios 119, S.K. Boutle 56, A. Boveia 113, J. Boyd 32, I.R. Boyko 68, J. Bracinik 19, A. Brandt 8,
 G. Brandt 57, O. Brandt 60a, U. Bratzler 158, B. Brau 89, J.E. Brau 118, W.D. Breaden Madden 56,
 K. Brendlinger 45, A.J. Brennan 91, L. Brenner 109, R. Brenner 168, S. Bressler 175, D.L. Briglin 19,
 T.M. Bristow 49, D. Britton 56, D. Blitzger 45, F.M. Brochu 30, I. Brock 23, R. Brock 93, G. Brooijmans 38,
 T. Brooks 80, W.K. Brooks 34b, J. Brosamer 16, E. Brost 110, J.H. Broughton 19, P.A. Bruckman de Renstrom 42,
 D. Bruncko 146b, A. Bruni 22a, G. Bruni 22a, L.S. Bruni 109, BH Brunt 30, M. Bruschi 22a, N. Bruscino 23,
 P. Bryant 33, L. Bryngemark 84, T. Buanes 15, Q. Buat 144, P. Buchholz 143, A.G. Buckley 56, I.A. Budagov 68,
 F. Buehrer 51, M.K. Bugge 121, O. Bulekov 100, D. Bullock 8, H. Burckhart 32, S. Burdin 77, C.D. Burgard 51,
 A.M. Burger 5, B. Burghgrave 110, K. Burka 42, S. Burke 133, I. Burmeister 46, J.T.P. Burr 122, E. Busato 37,

- D. Büscher ⁵¹, V. Büscher ⁸⁶, P. Bussey ⁵⁶, J.M. Butler ²⁴, C.M. Buttar ⁵⁶, J.M. Butterworth ⁸¹, P. Butti ³², W. Buttinger ²⁷, A. Buzatu ^{35c}, A.R. Buzykaev ^{111,d}, S. Cabrera Urbán ¹⁷⁰, D. Caforio ¹³⁰, V.M. Cairo ^{40a,40b}, O. Cakir ^{4a}, N. Calace ⁵², P. Calafiura ¹⁶, A. Calandri ⁸⁸, G. Calderini ⁸³, P. Calfayan ⁶⁴, G. Callea ^{40a,40b}, L.P. Caloba ^{26a}, S. Calvente Lopez ⁸⁵, D. Calvet ³⁷, S. Calvet ³⁷, T.P. Calvet ⁸⁸, R. Camacho Toro ³³, S. Camarda ³², P. Camarri ^{135a,135b}, D. Cameron ¹²¹, R. Caminal Armadans ¹⁶⁹, C. Camincher ⁵⁸, S. Campana ³², M. Campanelli ⁸¹, A. Camplani ^{94a,94b}, A. Campoverde ¹⁴³, V. Canale ^{106a,106b}, M. Cano Bret ^{36c}, J. Cantero ¹¹⁶, T. Cao ¹⁵⁵, M.D.M. Capeans Garrido ³², I. Caprini ^{28b}, M. Caprini ^{28b}, M. Capua ^{40a,40b}, R.M. Carbone ³⁸, R. Cardarelli ^{135a}, F. Cardillo ⁵¹, I. Carli ¹³¹, T. Carli ³², G. Carlino ^{106a}, B.T. Carlson ¹²⁷, L. Carminati ^{94a,94b}, R.M.D. Carney ^{148a,148b}, S. Caron ¹⁰⁸, E. Carquin ^{34b}, G.D. Carrillo-Montoya ³², J. Carvalho ^{128a,128c}, D. Casadei ¹⁹, M.P. Casado ^{13,k}, M. Casolino ¹³, D.W. Casper ¹⁶⁶, R. Castelijn ¹⁰⁹, A. Castelli ¹⁰⁹, V. Castillo Gimenez ¹⁷⁰, N.F. Castro ^{128a,l}, A. Catinaccio ³², J.R. Catmore ¹²¹, A. Cattai ³², J. Caudron ²³, V. Cavalieri ¹⁶⁹, E. Cavallaro ¹³, D. Cavalli ^{94a}, M. Cavalli-Sforza ¹³, V. Cavasinni ^{126a,126b}, E. Celebi ^{20a}, F. Ceradini ^{136a,136b}, L. Cerdà Alberich ¹⁷⁰, A.S. Cerqueira ^{26b}, A. Cerri ¹⁵¹, L. Cerrito ^{135a,135b}, F. Cerutti ¹⁶, A. Cervelli ¹⁸, S.A. Cetin ^{20d}, A. Chafaq ^{137a}, D. Chakraborty ¹¹⁰, S.K. Chan ⁵⁹, W.S. Chan ¹⁰⁹, Y.L. Chan ^{62a}, P. Chang ¹⁶⁹, J.D. Chapman ³⁰, D.G. Charlton ¹⁹, A. Chatterjee ⁵², C.C. Chau ¹⁶¹, C.A. Chavez Barajas ¹⁵¹, S. Che ¹¹³, S. Cheatham ^{167a,167c}, A. Chegwidden ⁹³, S. Chekanov ⁶, S.V. Chekulaev ^{163a}, G.A. Chelkov ^{68,m}, M.A. Chelstowska ³², C. Chen ⁶⁷, H. Chen ²⁷, S. Chen ^{35b}, S. Chen ¹⁵⁷, X. Chen ^{35c,n}, Y. Chen ⁷⁰, H.C. Cheng ⁹², H.J. Cheng ^{35a}, Y. Cheng ³³, A. Cheplakov ⁶⁸, E. Cheremushkina ¹³², R. Cherkaoui El Moursli ^{137e}, V. Chernyatin ^{27,*}, E. Cheu ⁷, L. Chevalier ¹³⁸, V. Chiarella ⁵⁰, G. Chiarella ^{126a,126b}, G. Chiodini ^{76a}, A.S. Chisholm ³², A. Chitan ^{28b}, Y.H. Chiu ¹⁷², M.V. Chizhov ⁶⁸, K. Choi ⁶⁴, A.R. Chomont ³⁷, S. Chouridou ⁹, B.K.B. Chow ¹⁰², V. Christodoulou ⁸¹, D. Chromek-Burckhart ³², M.C. Chu ^{62a}, J. Chudoba ¹²⁹, A.J. Chuinard ⁹⁰, J.J. Chwastowski ⁴², L. Chytka ¹¹⁷, A.K. Ciftci ^{4a}, D. Cinca ⁴⁶, V. Cindro ⁷⁸, I.A. Cioara ²³, C. Ciocca ^{22a,22b}, A. Ciocio ¹⁶, F. Cirotto ^{106a,106b}, Z.H. Citron ¹⁷⁵, M. Citterio ^{94a}, M. Ciubancan ^{28b}, A. Clark ⁵², B.L. Clark ⁵⁹, M.R. Clark ³⁸, P.J. Clark ⁴⁹, R.N. Clarke ¹⁶, C. Clement ^{148a,148b}, Y. Coadou ⁸⁸, M. Cobal ^{167a,167c}, A. Coccaro ⁵², J. Cochran ⁶⁷, L. Colasurdo ¹⁰⁸, B. Cole ³⁸, A.P. Colijn ¹⁰⁹, J. Collot ⁵⁸, T. Colombo ¹⁶⁶, P. Conde Muñoz ^{128a,128b}, E. Coniavitis ⁵¹, S.H. Connell ^{147b}, I.A. Connelly ⁸⁷, V. Consorti ⁵¹, S. Constantinescu ^{28b}, G. Conti ³², F. Conventi ^{106a,o}, M. Cooke ¹⁶, B.D. Cooper ⁸¹, A.M. Cooper-Sarkar ¹²², F. Cormier ¹⁷¹, K.J.R. Cormier ¹⁶¹, T. Cornelissen ¹⁷⁸, M. Corradi ^{134a,134b}, F. Corriveau ^{90,p}, A. Cortes-Gonzalez ³², G. Cortiana ¹⁰³, G. Costa ^{94a}, M.J. Costa ¹⁷⁰, D. Costanzo ¹⁴¹, G. Cottin ³⁰, G. Cowan ⁸⁰, B.E. Cox ⁸⁷, K. Cranmer ¹¹², S.J. Crawley ⁵⁶, R.A. Creager ¹²⁴, G. Cree ³¹, S. Crépé-Renaudin ⁵⁸, F. Crescioli ⁸³, W.A. Cribbs ^{148a,148b}, M. Crispin Ortuzar ¹²², M. Cristinziani ²³, V. Croft ¹⁰⁸, G. Crosetti ^{40a,40b}, A. Cueto ⁸⁵, T. Cuhadar Donszelmann ¹⁴¹, J. Cummings ¹⁷⁹, M. Curatolo ⁵⁰, J. Cúth ⁸⁶, H. Czirr ¹⁴³, P. Czodrowski ³², G. D'amen ^{22a,22b}, S. D'Auria ⁵⁶, M. D'Onofrio ⁷⁷, M.J. Da Cunha Sargedas De Sousa ^{128a,128b}, C. Da Via ⁸⁷, W. Dabrowski ^{41a}, T. Dado ^{146a}, T. Dai ⁹², O. Dale ¹⁵, F. Dallaire ⁹⁷, C. Dallapiccola ⁸⁹, M. Dam ³⁹, J.R. Dandoy ¹²⁴, N.P. Dang ⁵¹, A.C. Daniells ¹⁹, N.S. Dann ⁸⁷, M. Danninger ¹⁷¹, M. Dano Hoffmann ¹³⁸, V. Dao ¹⁵⁰, G. Darbo ^{53a}, S. Darmora ⁸, J. Dassoulas ³, A. DattaGupta ¹¹⁸, T. Daubney ⁴⁵, W. Davey ²³, C. David ⁴⁵, T. Davidek ¹³¹, M. Davies ¹⁵⁵, P. Davison ⁸¹, E. Dawe ⁹¹, I. Dawson ¹⁴¹, K. De ⁸, R. de Asmundis ^{106a}, A. De Benedetti ¹¹⁵, S. De Castro ^{22a,22b}, S. De Cecco ⁸³, N. De Groot ¹⁰⁸, P. de Jong ¹⁰⁹, H. De la Torre ⁹³, F. De Lorenzi ⁶⁷, A. De Maria ⁵⁷, D. De Pedis ^{134a}, A. De Salvo ^{134a}, U. De Sanctis ¹⁵¹, A. De Santo ¹⁵¹, K. De Vasconcelos Corga ⁸⁸, J.B. De Vivie De Regie ¹¹⁹, W.J. Dearnaley ⁷⁵, R. Debbe ²⁷, C. Debenedetti ¹³⁹, D.V. Dedovich ⁶⁸, N. Dehghanian ³, I. Deigaard ¹⁰⁹, M. Del Gaudio ^{40a,40b}, J. Del Peso ⁸⁵, T. Del Prete ^{126a,126b}, D. Delgove ¹¹⁹, F. Deliot ¹³⁸, C.M. Delitzsch ⁵², A. Dell'Acqua ³², L. Dell'Asta ²⁴, M. Dell'Orso ^{126a,126b}, M. Della Pietra ^{106a,106b}, D. della Volpe ⁵², M. Delmastro ⁵, P.A. Delsart ⁵⁸, D.A. DeMarco ¹⁶¹, S. Demers ¹⁷⁹, M. Demichev ⁶⁸, A. Demilly ⁸³, S.P. Denisov ¹³², D. Denysiuk ¹³⁸, D. Derendarz ⁴², J.E. Derkaoui ^{137d}, F. Derue ⁸³, P. Dervan ⁷⁷, K. Desch ²³, C. Deterre ⁴⁵, K. Dette ⁴⁶, P.O. Deviveiros ³², A. Dewhurst ¹³³, S. Dhaliwal ²⁵, A. Di Ciaccio ^{135a,135b}, L. Di Ciaccio ⁵, W.K. Di Clemente ¹²⁴, C. Di Donato ^{106a,106b}, A. Di Girolamo ³², B. Di Girolamo ³², B. Di Micco ^{136a,136b}, R. Di Nardo ³², K.F. Di Petrillo ⁵⁹, A. Di Simone ⁵¹, R. Di Sipio ¹⁶¹, D. Di Valentino ³¹, C. Diaconu ⁸⁸, M. Diamond ¹⁶¹, F.A. Dias ⁴⁹, M.A. Diaz ^{34a}, E.B. Diehl ⁹², J. Dietrich ¹⁷, S. Díez Cornell ⁴⁵, A. Dimitrijevska ¹⁴, J. Dingfelder ²³, P. Dita ^{28b}, S. Dita ^{28b}, F. Dittus ³², F. Djama ⁸⁸, T. Djobava ^{54b},

- J.I. Djupsland 60a, M.A.B. do Vale 26c, D. Dobos 32, M. Dobre 28b, C. Doglioni 84, J. Dolejsi 131, Z. Dolezal 131, M. Donadelli 26d, S. Donati 126a, 126b, P. Dondero 123a, 123b, J. Donini 37, J. Dopke 133, A. Doria 106a, M.T. Dova 74, A.T. Doyle 56, E. Drechsler 57, M. Dris 10, Y. Du 36b, J. Duarte-Campderros 155, E. Duchovni 175, G. Duckeck 102, O.A. Ducu 97,q, D. Duda 109, A. Dudarev 32, A. Chr. Dudder 86, E.M. Duffield 16, L. Duflot 119, M. Dührssen 32, M. Dumancic 175, A.E. Dumitriu 28b, A.K. Duncan 56, M. Dunford 60a, H. Duran Yildiz 4a, M. Düren 55, A. Durglishvili 54b, D. Duschinger 47, B. Dutta 45, M. Dyndal 45, C. Eckardt 45, K.M. Ecker 103, R.C. Edgar 92, T. Eifert 32, G. Eigen 15, K. Einsweiler 16, T. Ekelof 168, M. El Kacimi 137c, V. Ellajosyula 88, M. Ellert 168, S. Elles 5, F. Ellinghaus 178, A.A. Elliot 172, N. Ellis 32, J. Elmsheuser 27, M. Elsing 32, D. Emeliyanov 133, Y. Enari 157, O.C. Endner 86, J.S. Ennis 173, J. Erdmann 46, A. Ereditato 18, G. Ernis 178, M. Ernst 27, S. Errede 169, E. Ertel 86, M. Escalier 119, H. Esch 46, C. Escobar 127, B. Esposito 50, A.I. Etienvre 138, E. Etzion 155, H. Evans 64, A. Ezhilov 125, F. Fabbri 22a, 22b, L. Fabbri 22a, 22b, G. Facini 33, R.M. Fakhrutdinov 132, S. Falciano 134a, R.J. Falla 81, J. Faltova 32, Y. Fang 35a, M. Fanti 94a, 94b, A. Farbin 8, A. Farilla 136a, C. Farina 127, E.M. Farina 123a, 123b, T. Farooque 93, S. Farrell 16, S.M. Farrington 173, P. Farthouat 32, F. Fassi 137e, P. Fassnacht 32, D. Fassouliotis 9, M. Faucci Giannelli 80, A. Favareto 53a, 53b, W.J. Fawcett 122, L. Fayard 119, O.L. Fedin 125,r, W. Fedorko 171, S. Feigl 121, L. Feligioni 88, C. Feng 36b, E.J. Feng 32, H. Feng 92, A.B. Fenyuk 132, L. Feremenga 8, P. Fernandez Martinez 170, S. Fernandez Perez 13, J. Ferrando 45, A. Ferrari 168, P. Ferrari 109, R. Ferrari 123a, D.E. Ferreira de Lima 60b, A. Ferrer 170, D. Ferrere 52, C. Ferretti 92, F. Fiedler 86, A. Filipčič 78, M. Filipuzzi 45, F. Filthaut 108, M. Fincke-Keeler 172, K.D. Finelli 152, M.C.N. Fiolhais 128a, 128c,s, L. Fiorini 170, A. Fischer 2, C. Fischer 13, J. Fischer 178, W.C. Fisher 93, N. Flaschel 45, I. Fleck 143, P. Fleischmann 92, R.R.M. Fletcher 124, T. Flick 178, B.M. Flierl 102, L.R. Flores Castillo 62a, M.J. Flowerdew 103, G.T. Forcolin 87, A. Formica 138, A. Forti 87, A.G. Foster 19, D. Fournier 119, H. Fox 75, S. Fracchia 13, P. Francavilla 83, M. Franchini 22a, 22b, D. Francis 32, L. Franconi 121, M. Franklin 59, M. Frate 166, M. Fraternali 123a, 123b, D. Freeborn 81, S.M. Fressard-Batraneanu 32, B. Freund 97, D. Froidevaux 32, J.A. Frost 122, C. Fukunaga 158, E. Fullana Torregrosa 86, T. Fusayasu 104, J. Fuster 170, C. Gabaldon 58, O. Gabizon 154, A. Gabrielli 22a, 22b, A. Gabrielli 16, G.P. Gach 41a, S. Gadatsch 32, S. Gadomski 80, G. Gagliardi 53a, 53b, L.G. Gagnon 97, P. Gagnon 64, C. Galea 108, B. Galhardo 128a, 128c, E.J. Gallas 122, B.J. Gallop 133, P. Gallus 130, G. Galster 39, K.K. Gan 113, S. Ganguly 37, J. Gao 36a, Y. Gao 77, Y.S. Gao 145,h, F.M. Garay Walls 49, C. García 170, J.E. García Navarro 170, M. Garcia-Sciveres 16, R.W. Gardner 33, N. Garelli 145, V. Garonne 121, A. Gascon Bravo 45, K. Gasnikova 45, C. Gatti 50, A. Gaudiello 53a, 53b, G. Gaudio 123a, I.L. Gavrilenko 98, C. Gay 171, G. Gaycken 23, E.N. Gazis 10, C.N.P. Gee 133, M. Geisen 86, M.P. Geisler 60a, K. Gellerstedt 148a, 148b, C. Gemme 53a, M.H. Genest 58, C. Geng 36a,t, S. Gentile 134a, 134b, C. Gentsos 156, S. George 80, D. Gerbaudo 13, A. Gershon 155, S. Ghasemi 143, M. Ghneimat 23, B. Giacobbe 22a, S. Giagu 134a, 134b, P. Giannetti 126a, 126b, S.M. Gibson 80, M. Gignac 171, M. Gilchriese 16, D. Gillberg 31, G. Gilles 178, D.M. Gingrich 3,e, N. Giokaris 9,* M.P. Giordani 167a, 167c, F.M. Giorgi 22a, P.F. Giraud 138, P. Giromini 59, D. Giugni 94a, F. Giulii 122, C. Giuliani 103, M. Giulini 60b, B.K. Gjelsten 121, S. Gkaitatzis 156, I. Gkalias 9, E.L. Gkougkousis 139, L.K. Gladilin 101, C. Glasman 85, J. Glatzer 13, P.C.F. Glaysher 45, A. Glazov 45, M. Goblirsch-Kolb 25, J. Godlewski 42, S. Goldfarb 91, T. Golling 52, D. Golubkov 132, A. Gomes 128a, 128b, 128d, R. Gonçalo 128a, R. Goncalves Gama 26a, J. Goncalves Pinto Firmino Da Costa 138, G. Gonella 51, L. Gonella 19, A. Gongadze 68, S. González de la Hoz 170, S. Gonzalez-Sevilla 52, L. Goossens 32, P.A. Gorbounov 99, H.A. Gordon 27, I. Gorelov 107, B. Gorini 32, E. Gorini 76a, 76b, A. Gorišek 78, A.T. Goshaw 48, C. Gössling 46, M.I. Gostkin 68, C.R. Goudet 119, D. Goujdami 137c, A.G. Goussiou 140, N. Govender 147b,u, E. Gozani 154, L. Gruber 57, I. Grabowska-Bold 41a, P.O.J. Gradin 58, J. Gramling 52, E. Gramstad 121, S. Grancagnolo 17, V. Gratchev 125, P.M. Gravila 28f, H.M. Gray 32, Z.D. Greenwood 82,v, C. Grefe 23, K. Gregersen 81, I.M. Gregor 45, P. Grenier 145, K. Grevtsov 5, J. Griffiths 8, A.A. Grillo 139, K. Grimm 75, S. Grinstein 13,w, Ph. Gris 37, J.-F. Grivaz 119, S. Groh 86, E. Gross 175, J. Grosse-Knetter 57, G.C. Grossi 82, Z.J. Grout 81, L. Guan 92, W. Guan 176, J. Guenther 65, F. Guescini 163a, D. Guest 166, O. Gueta 155, B. Gui 113, E. Guido 53a, 53b, T. Guillemin 5, S. Guindon 2, U. Gul 56, C. Gumpert 32, J. Guo 36c, W. Guo 92, Y. Guo 36a, R. Gupta 43, S. Gupta 122, G. Gustavino 134a, 134b, P. Gutierrez 115, N.G. Gutierrez Ortiz 81, C. Gutschow 81, C. Guyot 138, M.P. Guzik 41a, C. Gwenlan 122, C.B. Gwilliam 77, A. Haas 112, C. Haber 16, H.K. Hadavand 8, A. Hadef 88, S. Hageböck 23, M. Hagihara 164, H. Hakobyan 180,* M. Haleem 45, J. Haley 116, G. Halladjian 93, G.D. Hallewell 88, K. Hamacher 178, P. Hamal 117, K. Hamano 172, A. Hamilton 147a,

- G.N. Hamity 141, P.G. Hamnett 45, L. Han 36a, S. Han 35a, K. Hanagaki 69,x, K. Hanawa 157, M. Hance 139, B. Haney 124, P. Hanke 60a, R. Hanna 138, J.B. Hansen 39, J.D. Hansen 39, M.C. Hansen 23, P.H. Hansen 39, K. Hara 164, A.S. Hard 176, T. Harenberg 178, F. Hariri 119, S. Harkusha 95, R.D. Harrington 49, P.F. Harrison 173, F. Hartjes 109, N.M. Hartmann 102, M. Hasegawa 70, Y. Hasegawa 142, A. Hasib 49, S. Hassani 138, S. Haug 18, R. Hauser 93, L. Hauswald 47, L.B. Havener 38, M. Havranek 130, C.M. Hawkes 19, R.J. Hawkings 32, D. Hayakawa 159, D. Hayden 93, C.P. Hays 122, J.M. Hays 79, H.S. Hayward 77, S.J. Haywood 133, S.J. Head 19, T. Heck 86, V. Hedberg 84, L. Heelan 8, K.K. Heidegger 51, S. Heim 45, T. Heim 16, B. Heinemann 45,y, J.J. Heinrich 102, L. Heinrich 112, C. Heinz 55, J. Hejbal 129, L. Helary 32, A. Held 171, S. Hellman 148a,148b, C. Helsens 32, J. Henderson 122, R.C.W. Henderson 75, Y. Heng 176, S. Henkelmann 171, A.M. Henriques Correia 32, S. Henrot-Versille 119, G.H. Herbert 17, H. Herde 25, V. Herget 177, Y. Hernández Jiménez 147c, G. Herten 51, R. Hertenberger 102, L. Hervas 32, T.C. Herwig 124, G.G. Hesketh 81, N.P. Hessey 163a, J.W. Hetherly 43, S. Higashino 69, E. Higón-Rodriguez 170, E. Hill 172, J.C. Hill 30, K.H. Hiller 45, S.J. Hillier 19, I. Hinchliffe 16, M. Hirose 51, D. Hirschbuehl 178, B. Hiti 78, O. Hladík 129, X. Hoad 49, J. Hobbs 150, N. Hod 163a, M.C. Hodgkinson 141, P. Hodgson 141, A. Hoecker 32, M.R. Hoeferkamp 107, F. Hoenig 102, D. Hohn 23, T.R. Holmes 16, M. Homann 46, S. Honda 164, T. Honda 69, T.M. Hong 127, B.H. Hooberman 169, W.H. Hopkins 118, Y. Horii 105, A.J. Horton 144, J-Y. Hostachy 58, S. Hou 153, A. Hoummada 137a, J. Howarth 45, J. Hoya 74, M. Hrabovsky 117, I. Hristova 17, J. Hrvnac 119, T. Hrynevich 96, P.J. Hsu 63, S.-C. Hsu 140, Q. Hu 36a, S. Hu 36c, Y. Huang 35a, Z. Hubacek 130, F. Hubaut 88, F. Huegging 23, T.B. Huffman 122, E.W. Hughes 38, G. Hughes 75, M. Huhtinen 32, P. Huo 150, N. Huseynov 68,c, J. Huston 93, J. Huth 59, G. Iacobucci 52, G. Iakovidis 27, I. Ibragimov 143, L. Iconomou-Fayard 119, P. Iengo 32, O. Igonkina 109,z, T. Iizawa 174, Y. Ikegami 69, M. Ikeno 69, Y. Ilchenko 11,aa, D. Iliadis 156, N. Ilic 145, G. Introzzi 123a,123b, P. Ioannou 9,* M. Iodice 136a, K. Iordanidou 38, V. Ippolito 59, N. Ishijima 120, M. Ishino 157, M. Ishitsuka 159, C. Issever 122, S. Isti 20a, F. Ito 164, J.M. Iturbe Ponce 87, R. Iuppa 162a,162b, H. Iwasaki 69, J.M. Izen 44, V. Izzo 106a, S. Jabbar 3, P. Jackson 1, V. Jain 2, K.B. Jakobi 86, K. Jakobs 51, S. Jakobsen 32, T. Jakoubek 129, D.O. Jamin 116, D.K. Jana 82, R. Jansky 65, J. Janssen 23, M. Janus 57, P.A. Janus 41a, G. Jarlskog 84, N. Javadov 68,c, T. Javůrek 51, M. Javurkova 51, F. Jeanneau 138, L. Jeanty 16, J. Jejelava 54a,ab, A. Jelinskas 173, P. Jenni 51,ac, C. Jeske 173, S. Jézéquel 5, H. Ji 176, J. Jia 150, H. Jiang 67, Y. Jiang 36a, Z. Jiang 145, S. Jiggins 81, J. Jimenez Pena 170, S. Jin 35a, A. Jinaru 28b, O. Jinnouchi 159, H. Jivan 147c, P. Johansson 141, K.A. Johns 7, C.A. Johnson 64, W.J. Johnson 140, K. Jon-And 148a,148b, R.W.L. Jones 75, S. Jones 7, T.J. Jones 77, J. Jongmanns 60a, P.M. Jorge 128a,128b, J. Jovicevic 163a, X. Ju 176, A. Juste Rozas 13,w, M.K. Köhler 175, A. Kaczmar ska 42, M. Kado 119, H. Kagan 113, M. Kagan 145, S.J. Kahn 88, T. Kaji 174, E. Kajomovitz 48, C.W. Kalderon 84, A. Kaluza 86, S. Kama 43, A. Kamenshchikov 132, N. Kanaya 157, S. Kaneti 30, L. Kanjur 78, V.A. Kantserov 100, J. Kanzaki 69, B. Kaplan 112, L.S. Kaplan 176, D. Kar 147c, K. Karakostas 10, N. Karastathis 10, M.J. Kareem 57, E. Karentzos 10, S.N. Karpov 68, Z.M. Karpova 68, K. Karthik 112, V. Kartvelishvili 75, A.N. Karyukhin 132, K. Kasahara 164, L. Kashif 176, R.D. Kass 113, A. Kastanas 149, Y. Kataoka 157, C. Kato 157, A. Katre 52, J. Katzy 45, K. Kawade 105, K. Kawagoe 73, T. Kawamoto 157, G. Kawamura 57, E.F. Kay 77, V.F. Kazanin 111,d, R. Keeler 172, R. Kehoe 43, J.S. Keller 45, J.J. Kempster 80, H. Keoshkerian 161, O. Kepka 129, B.P. Kerševan 78, S. Kersten 178, R.A. Keyes 90, M. Khader 169, F. Khalil-zada 12, A. Khanov 116, A.G. Kharlamov 111,d, T. Kharlamova 111,d, A. Khodinov 160, T.J. Khoo 52, V. Khovanskiy 99,* E. Khramov 68, J. Khubua 54b,ad, S. Kido 70, C.R. Kilby 80, H.Y. Kim 8, S.H. Kim 164, Y.K. Kim 33, N. Kimura 156, O.M. Kind 17, B.T. King 77, D. Kirchmeier 47, J. Kirk 133, A.E. Kiryunin 103, T. Kishimoto 157, D. Kisielewska 41a, K. Kiuchi 164, O. Kivernyk 138, E. Kladiva 146b, T. Klapdor-Kleingrothaus 51, M.H. Klein 38, M. Klein 77, U. Klein 77, K. Kleinknecht 86, P. Klimek 110, A. Klimentov 27, R. Klingenberg 46, T. Klioutchnikova 32, E.-E. Kluge 60a, P. Kluit 109, S. Kluth 103, J. Knapik 42, E. Kneringer 65, E.B.F.G. Knoops 88, A. Knue 103, A. Kobayashi 157, D. Kobayashi 159, T. Kobayashi 157, M. Kobel 47, M. Kocian 145, P. Kodys 131, T. Koffas 31, E. Koffeman 109, N.M. Köhler 103, T. Koi 145, M. Kolb 60b, I. Koletsou 5, A.A. Komar 98,* Y. Komori 157, T. Kondo 69, N. Kondrashova 36c, K. Köneke 51, A.C. König 108, T. Kono 69,ae, R. Konoplich 112,af, N. Konstantinidis 81, R. Kopelian sky 64, S. Koperny 41a, A.K. Kopp 51, K. Korcyl 42, K. Kordas 156, A. Korn 81, A.A. Korol 111,d, I. Korolkov 13, E.V. Korolkova 141, O. Kortner 103, S. Kortner 103, T. Kosek 131, V.V. Kostyukhin 23, A. Kotwal 48, A. Koulouris 10, A. Kourkoumeli-Charalampidi 123a,123b, C. Kourkoumelis 9, V. Kouskoura 27,

- A.B. Kowalewska ⁴², R. Kowalewski ¹⁷², T.Z. Kowalski ^{41a}, C. Kozakai ¹⁵⁷, W. Kozanecki ¹³⁸, A.S. Kozhin ¹³²,
 V.A. Kramarenko ¹⁰¹, G. Kramberger ⁷⁸, D. Krasnopolovtsev ¹⁰⁰, M.W. Krasny ⁸³, A. Krasznahorkay ³²,
 D. Krauss ¹⁰³, A. Kravchenko ²⁷, J.A. Kremer ^{41a}, M. Kretz ^{60c}, J. Kretzschmar ⁷⁷, K. Kreutzfeldt ⁵⁵,
 P. Krieger ¹⁶¹, K. Krizka ³³, K. Kroeninger ⁴⁶, H. Kroha ¹⁰³, J. Kroll ¹²⁴, J. Kroseberg ²³, J. Krstic ¹⁴,
 U. Kruchonak ⁶⁸, H. Krüger ²³, N. Krumnack ⁶⁷, M.C. Kruse ⁴⁸, M. Kruska ²⁴, T. Kubota ⁹¹, H. Kucuk ⁸¹,
 S. Kuday ^{4b}, J.T. Kuechler ¹⁷⁸, S. Kuehn ⁵¹, A. Kugel ^{60c}, F. Kugler ¹⁷⁷, T. Kuhl ⁴⁵, V. Kukhtin ⁶⁸, R. Kukla ⁸⁸,
 Y. Kulchitsky ⁹⁵, S. Kuleshov ^{34b}, Y.P. Kulinich ¹⁶⁹, M. Kuna ^{134a,134b}, T. Kunigo ⁷¹, A. Kupco ¹²⁹,
 O. Kuprash ¹⁵⁵, H. Kurashige ⁷⁰, L.L. Kurchaninov ^{163a}, Y.A. Kurochkin ⁹⁵, M.G. Kurth ^{35a}, V. Kus ¹²⁹,
 E.S. Kuwertz ¹⁷², M. Kuze ¹⁵⁹, J. Kvita ¹¹⁷, T. Kwan ¹⁷², D. Kyriazopoulos ¹⁴¹, A. La Rosa ¹⁰³,
 J.L. La Rosa Navarro ^{26d}, L. La Rotonda ^{40a,40b}, C. Lacasta ¹⁷⁰, F. Lacava ^{134a,134b}, J. Lacey ⁴⁵, H. Lacker ¹⁷,
 D. Lacour ⁸³, E. Ladygin ⁶⁸, R. Lafaye ⁵, B. Laforge ⁸³, T. Lagouri ¹⁷⁹, S. Lai ⁵⁷, S. Lammers ⁶⁴, W. Lampl ⁷,
 E. Lançon ²⁷, U. Landgraf ⁵¹, M.P.J. Landon ⁷⁹, M.C. Lanfermann ⁵², V.S. Lang ^{60a}, J.C. Lange ¹³,
 A.J. Lankford ¹⁶⁶, F. Lanni ²⁷, K. Lantsch ²³, A. Lanza ^{123a}, A. Lapertosa ^{53a,53b}, S. Laplace ⁸³, J.F. Laporte ¹³⁸,
 T. Lari ^{94a}, F. Lasagni Manghi ^{22a,22b}, M. Lassnig ³², P. Laurelli ⁵⁰, W. Lavrijsen ¹⁶, A.T. Law ¹³⁹, P. Laycock ⁷⁷,
 T. Lazovich ⁵⁹, M. Lazzaroni ^{94a,94b}, B. Le ⁹¹, O. Le Dortz ⁸³, E. Le Guirriec ⁸⁸, E.P. Le Quillec ¹³⁸,
 M. LeBlanc ¹⁷², T. LeCompte ⁶, F. Ledroit-Guillon ⁵⁸, C.A. Lee ²⁷, S.C. Lee ¹⁵³, L. Lee ¹, B. Lefebvre ⁹⁰,
 G. Lefebvre ⁸³, M. Lefebvre ¹⁷², F. Legger ¹⁰², C. Leggett ¹⁶, A. Lehan ⁷⁷, G. Lehmann Miotto ³², X. Lei ⁷,
 W.A. Leight ⁴⁵, A.G. Lester ¹⁷⁹, M.A.L. Leite ^{26d}, R. Leitner ¹³¹, D. Lelloouch ¹⁷⁵, B. Lemmer ⁵⁷, K.J.C. Leney ⁸¹,
 T. Lenz ²³, B. Lenzi ³², R. Leone ⁷, S. Leone ^{126a,126b}, C. Leonidopoulos ⁴⁹, G. Lerner ¹⁵¹, C. Leroy ⁹⁷,
 A.A.J. Lesage ¹³⁸, C.G. Lester ³⁰, M. Levchenko ¹²⁵, J. Levêque ⁵, D. Levin ⁹², L.J. Levinson ¹⁷⁵, M. Levy ¹⁹,
 D. Lewis ⁷⁹, M. Leyton ⁴⁴, B. Li ^{36a,t}, C. Li ^{36a}, H. Li ¹⁵⁰, L. Li ⁴⁸, L. Li ^{36c}, Q. Li ^{35a}, S. Li ⁴⁸, X. Li ^{36c}, Y. Li ¹⁴³,
 Z. Liang ^{35a}, B. Liberti ^{135a}, A. Liblong ¹⁶¹, K. Lie ¹⁶⁹, J. Liebal ²³, W. Liebig ¹⁵, A. Limosani ¹⁵², S.C. Lin ^{153,ag},
 T.H. Lin ⁸⁶, B.E. Lindquist ¹⁵⁰, A.E. Lioti ⁵², E. Lipeles ¹²⁴, A. Lipniacka ¹⁵, M. Lisovsky ^{60b}, T.M. Liss ¹⁶⁹,
 A. Lister ¹⁷¹, A.M. Litke ¹³⁹, B. Liu ^{153,ah}, H. Liu ⁹², H. Liu ²⁷, J. Liu ^{36b}, J.B. Liu ^{36a}, K. Liu ⁸⁸, L. Liu ¹⁶⁹,
 M. Liu ^{36a}, Y.L. Liu ^{36a}, Y. Liu ^{36a}, M. Livan ^{123a,123b}, A. Lleres ⁵⁸, J. Llorente Merino ^{35a}, S.L. Lloyd ⁷⁹,
 C.Y. Lo ^{62b}, F. Lo Sterzo ¹⁵³, E.M. Lobodzinska ⁴⁵, P. Loch ⁷, F.K. Loebinger ⁸⁷, K.M. Loew ²⁵, A. Loginov ^{179,*},
 T. Lohse ¹⁷, K. Lohwasser ⁴⁵, M. Lokajicek ¹²⁹, B.A. Long ²⁴, J.D. Long ¹⁶⁹, R.E. Long ⁷⁵, L. Longo ^{76a,76b},
 K.A.Looper ¹¹³, J.A. Lopez ^{34b}, D. Lopez Mateos ⁵⁹, I. Lopez Paz ¹³, A. Lopez Solis ⁸³, J. Lorenz ¹⁰²,
 N. Lorenzo Martinez ⁶⁴, M. Losada ²¹, P.J. Lösel ¹⁰², X. Lou ^{35a}, A. Lounis ¹¹⁹, J. Love ⁶, P.A. Love ⁷⁵,
 H. Lu ^{62a}, N. Lu ⁹², Y.J. Lu ⁶³, H.J. Lubatti ¹⁴⁰, C. Luci ^{134a,134b}, A. Lucotte ⁵⁸, C. Luedtke ⁵¹, F. Luehring ⁶⁴,
 W. Lukas ⁶⁵, L. Luminari ^{134a}, O. Lundberg ^{148a,148b}, B. Lund-Jensen ¹⁴⁹, P.M. Luzi ⁸³, D. Lynn ²⁷,
 R. Lysak ¹²⁹, E. Lytken ⁸⁴, V. Lyubushkin ⁶⁸, H. Ma ²⁷, L.L. Ma ^{36b}, Y. Ma ^{36b}, G. Maccarrone ⁵⁰,
 A. Macchiolo ¹⁰³, C.M. Macdonald ¹⁴¹, B. Maćek ⁷⁸, J. Machado Miguens ^{124,128b}, D. Madaffari ⁸⁸,
 R. Madar ³⁷, H.J. Maddocks ¹⁶⁸, W.F. Mader ⁴⁷, A. Madsen ⁴⁵, J. Maeda ⁷⁰, S. Maeland ¹⁵, T. Maeno ²⁷,
 A. Maevskiy ¹⁰¹, E. Magradze ⁵⁷, J. Mahlstedt ¹⁰⁹, C. Maiani ¹¹⁹, C. Maidantchik ^{26a}, A.A. Maier ¹⁰³,
 T. Maier ¹⁰², A. Maio ^{128a,128b,128d}, S. Majewski ¹¹⁸, Y. Makida ⁶⁹, N. Makovec ¹¹⁹, B. Malaescu ⁸³,
 Pa. Malecki ⁴², V.P. Maleev ¹²⁵, F. Malek ⁵⁸, U. Mallik ⁶⁶, D. Malon ⁶, C. Malone ³⁰, S. Maltezos ¹⁰,
 S. Malyukov ³², J. Mamuzic ¹⁷⁰, G. Mancini ⁵⁰, L. Mandelli ^{94a}, I. Mandić ⁷⁸, J. Maneira ^{128a,128b},
 L. Manhaes de Andrade Filho ^{26b}, J. Manjarres Ramos ^{163b}, A. Mann ¹⁰², A. Manousos ³², B. Mansoulie ¹³⁸,
 J.D. Mansour ^{35a}, R. Mantifel ⁹⁰, M. Mantoani ⁵⁷, S. Manzoni ^{94a,94b}, L. Mapelli ³², G. Marceca ²⁹,
 L. March ⁵², G. Marchiori ⁸³, M. Marcisovsky ¹²⁹, M. Marjanovic ³⁷, D.E. Marley ⁹², F. Marroquim ^{26a},
 S.P. Marsden ⁸⁷, Z. Marshall ¹⁶, M.U.F Martensson ¹⁶⁸, S. Marti-Garcia ¹⁷⁰, C.B. Martin ¹¹³, T.A. Martin ¹⁷³,
 V.J. Martin ⁴⁹, B. Martin dit Latour ¹⁵, M. Martinez ^{13,w}, V.I. Martinez Outschoorn ¹⁶⁹, S. Martin-Haugh ¹³³,
 V.S. Martouli ^{28b}, A.C. Martyniuk ⁸¹, A. Marzin ¹¹⁵, L. Masetti ⁸⁶, T. Mashimo ¹⁵⁷, R. Mashinistov ⁹⁸,
 J. Masik ⁸⁷, A.L. Maslennikov ^{111,d}, L. Massa ^{135a,135b}, P. Mastrandrea ⁵, A. Mastroberardino ^{40a,40b},
 T. Masubuchi ¹⁵⁷, P. Mättig ¹⁷⁸, J. Maurer ^{28b}, S.J. Maxfield ⁷⁷, D.A. Maximov ^{111,d}, R. Mazini ¹⁵³,
 I. Maznas ¹⁵⁶, S.M. Mazza ^{94a,94b}, N.C. Mc Fadden ¹⁰⁷, G. Mc Goldrick ¹⁶¹, S.P. Mc Kee ⁹², A. McCarn ⁹²,
 R.L. McCarthy ¹⁵⁰, T.G. McCarthy ¹⁰³, L.I. McLyclmont ⁸¹, E.F. McDonald ⁹¹, J.A. McFayden ⁸¹,
 G. Mchedlidze ⁵⁷, S.J. McMahon ¹³³, P.C. McNamara ⁹¹, R.A. McPherson ^{172,p}, S. Meehan ¹⁴⁰, T.J. Megy ⁵¹,
 S. Mehlhase ¹⁰², A. Mehta ⁷⁷, T. Meideck ⁵⁸, K. Meier ^{60a}, C. Meineck ¹⁰², B. Meirose ⁴⁴, D. Melini ^{170,ai},
 B.R. Mellado Garcia ^{147c}, M. Melo ^{146a}, F. Meloni ¹⁸, S.B. Menary ⁸⁷, L. Meng ⁷⁷, X.T. Meng ⁹²,
 A. Mengarelli ^{22a,22b}, S. Menke ¹⁰³, E. Meoni ¹⁶⁵, S. Mergelmeyer ¹⁷, P. Mermot ⁵², L. Merola ^{106a,106b},

- C. Meroni ^{94a}, F.S. Merritt ³³, A. Messina ^{134a,134b}, J. Metcalfe ⁶, A.S. Mete ¹⁶⁶, C. Meyer ¹²⁴, J.-P. Meyer ¹³⁸, J. Meyer ¹⁰⁹, H. Meyer Zu Theenhausen ^{60a}, F. Miano ¹⁵¹, R.P. Middleton ¹³³, S. Miglioranzi ^{53a,53b}, L. Mijović ⁴⁹, G. Mikenberg ¹⁷⁵, M. Mikestikova ¹²⁹, M. Mikuž ⁷⁸, M. Milesi ⁹¹, A. Milic ²⁷, D.W. Miller ³³, C. Mills ⁴⁹, A. Milov ¹⁷⁵, D.A. Milstead ^{148a,148b}, A.A. Minaenko ¹³², Y. Minami ¹⁵⁷, I.A. Minashvili ⁶⁸, A.I. Mincer ¹¹², B. Mindur ^{41a}, M. Mineev ⁶⁸, Y. Minegishi ¹⁵⁷, Y. Ming ¹⁷⁶, L.M. Mir ¹³, K.P. Mistry ¹²⁴, T. Mitani ¹⁷⁴, J. Mitrevski ¹⁰², V.A. Mitsou ¹⁷⁰, A. Miucci ¹⁸, P.S. Miyagawa ¹⁴¹, A. Mizukami ⁶⁹, J.U. Mjörnmark ⁸⁴, M. Mlynarikova ¹³¹, T. Moa ^{148a,148b}, K. Mochizuki ⁹⁷, P. Mogg ⁵¹, S. Mohapatra ³⁸, S. Molander ^{148a,148b}, R. Moles-Valls ²³, R. Monden ⁷¹, M.C. Mondragon ⁹³, K. Mönig ⁴⁵, J. Monk ³⁹, E. Monnier ⁸⁸, A. Montalbano ¹⁵⁰, J. Montejo Berlingen ³², F. Monticelli ⁷⁴, S. Monzani ^{94a,94b}, R.W. Moore ³, N. Morange ¹¹⁹, D. Moreno ²¹, M. Moreno Llácer ⁵⁷, P. Morettini ^{53a}, S. Morgenstern ³², D. Mori ¹⁴⁴, T. Mori ¹⁵⁷, M. Morii ⁵⁹, M. Morinaga ¹⁵⁷, V. Morisbak ¹²¹, A.K. Morley ¹⁵², G. Mornacchi ³², J.D. Morris ⁷⁹, L. Morvaj ¹⁵⁰, P. Moschovakos ¹⁰, M. Mosidze ^{54b}, H.J. Moss ¹⁴¹, J. Moss ^{145,aj}, K. Motohashi ¹⁵⁹, R. Mount ¹⁴⁵, E. Mountricha ²⁷, E.J.W. Moyse ⁸⁹, S. Muanza ⁸⁸, R.D. Mudd ¹⁹, F. Mueller ¹⁰³, J. Mueller ¹²⁷, R.S.P. Mueller ¹⁰², D. Muenstermann ⁷⁵, P. Mullen ⁵⁶, G.A. Mullier ¹⁸, F.J. Munoz Sanchez ⁸⁷, W.J. Murray ^{173,133}, H. Musheghyan ⁵⁷, M. Muškinja ⁷⁸, A.G. Myagkov ^{132,ak}, M. Myska ¹³⁰, B.P. Nachman ¹⁶, O. Nackenhorst ⁵², K. Nagai ¹²², R. Nagai ^{69,ae}, K. Nagano ⁶⁹, Y. Nagasaka ⁶¹, K. Nagata ¹⁶⁴, M. Nagel ⁵¹, E. Nagy ⁸⁸, A.M. Nairz ³², Y. Nakahama ¹⁰⁵, K. Nakamura ⁶⁹, T. Nakamura ¹⁵⁷, I. Nakano ¹¹⁴, R.F. Naranjo Garcia ⁴⁵, R. Narayan ¹¹, D.I. Narrias Villar ^{60a}, I. Naryshkin ¹²⁵, T. Naumann ⁴⁵, G. Navarro ²¹, R. Nayyar ⁷, H.A. Neal ⁹², P.Yu. Nechaeva ⁹⁸, T.J. Neep ¹³⁸, A. Negri ^{123a,123b}, M. Negrini ^{22a}, S. Nektarijevic ¹⁰⁸, C. Nellist ¹¹⁹, A. Nelson ¹⁶⁶, S. Nemecek ¹²⁹, P. Nemethy ¹¹², A.A. Nepomuceno ^{26a}, M. Nessi ^{32,al}, M.S. Neubauer ¹⁶⁹, M. Neumann ¹⁷⁸, R.M. Neves ¹¹², P. Nevski ²⁷, P.R. Newman ¹⁹, T.Y. Ng ^{62c}, T. Nguyen Manh ⁹⁷, R.B. Nickerson ¹²², R. Nicolaidou ¹³⁸, J. Nielsen ¹³⁹, V. Nikolaenko ^{132,ak}, I. Nikolic-Audit ⁸³, K. Nikolopoulos ¹⁹, J.K. Nilsen ¹²¹, P. Nilsson ²⁷, Y. Ninomiya ¹⁵⁷, A. Nisati ^{134a}, N. Nishu ^{35c}, R. Nisius ¹⁰³, T. Nobe ¹⁵⁷, Y. Noguchi ⁷¹, M. Nomachi ¹²⁰, I. Nomidis ³¹, M.A. Nomura ²⁷, T. Nooney ⁷⁹, M. Nordberg ³², N. Norjoharuddeen ¹²², O. Novgorodova ⁴⁷, S. Nowak ¹⁰³, M. Nozaki ⁶⁹, L. Nozka ¹¹⁷, K. Ntekas ¹⁶⁶, E. Nurse ⁸¹, F. Nuti ⁹¹, D.C. O’Neil ¹⁴⁴, A.A. O’Rourke ⁴⁵, V. O’Shea ⁵⁶, F.G. Oakham ^{31,e}, H. Oberlack ¹⁰³, T. Obermann ²³, J. Ocariz ⁸³, A. Ochi ⁷⁰, I. Ochoa ³⁸, J.P. Ochoa-Ricoux ^{34a}, S. Oda ⁷³, S. Odaka ⁶⁹, H. Ogren ⁶⁴, A. Oh ⁸⁷, S.H. Oh ⁴⁸, C.C. Ohm ¹⁶, H. Ohman ¹⁶⁸, H. Oide ^{53a,53b}, H. Okawa ¹⁶⁴, Y. Okumura ¹⁵⁷, T. Okuyama ⁶⁹, A. Olariu ^{28b}, L.F. Oleiro Seabra ^{128a}, S.A. Olivares Pino ⁴⁹, D. Oliveira Damazio ²⁷, A. Olszewski ⁴², J. Olszowska ⁴², A. Onofre ^{128a,128e}, K. Onogi ¹⁰⁵, P.U.E. Onyisi ^{11,aa}, M.J. Oreglia ³³, Y. Oren ¹⁵⁵, D. Orestano ^{136a,136b}, N. Orlando ^{62b}, R.S. Orr ¹⁶¹, B. Osculati ^{53a,53b,*}, R. Ospanov ⁸⁷, G. Otero y Garzon ²⁹, H. Otono ⁷³, M. Ouchrif ^{137d}, F. Ould-Saada ¹²¹, A. Ouraou ¹³⁸, K.P. Oussoren ¹⁰⁹, Q. Ouyang ^{35a}, M. Owen ⁵⁶, R.E. Owen ¹⁹, V.E. Ozcan ^{20a}, N. Ozturk ⁸, K. Pachal ¹⁴⁴, A. Pacheco Pages ¹³, L. Pacheco Rodriguez ¹³⁸, C. Padilla Aranda ¹³, S. Pagan Griso ¹⁶, M. Paganini ¹⁷⁹, F. Paige ²⁷, P. Pais ⁸⁹, G. Palacino ⁶⁴, S. Palazzo ^{40a,40b}, S. Palestini ³², M. Palka ^{41b}, D. Pallin ³⁷, E. St. Panagiotopoulou ¹⁰, I. Panagoulias ¹⁰, C.E. Pandini ⁸³, J.G. Panduro Vazquez ⁸⁰, P. Pani ³², S. Panitkin ²⁷, D. Pantea ^{28b}, L. Paolozzi ⁵², Th.D. Papadopoulou ¹⁰, K. Papageorgiou ⁹, A. Paramonov ⁶, D. Paredes Hernandez ¹⁷⁹, A.J. Parker ⁷⁵, M.A. Parker ³⁰, K.A. Parker ⁴⁵, F. Parodi ^{53a,53b}, J.A. Parsons ³⁸, U. Parzefall ⁵¹, V.R. Pascuzzi ¹⁶¹, J.M. Pasner ¹³⁹, E. Pasqualucci ^{134a}, S. Passaggio ^{53a}, Fr. Pastore ⁸⁰, S. Pataraia ¹⁷⁸, J.R. Pater ⁸⁷, T. Pauly ³², J. Pearce ¹⁷², B. Pearson ¹¹⁵, L.E. Pedersen ³⁹, S. Pedraza Lopez ¹⁷⁰, R. Pedro ^{128a,128b}, S.V. Peleganchuk ^{111,d}, O. Penc ¹²⁹, C. Peng ^{35a}, H. Peng ^{36a}, J. Penwell ⁶⁴, B.S. Peralva ^{26b}, M.M. Perego ¹³⁸, D.V. Perepelitsa ²⁷, L. Perini ^{94a,94b}, H. Pernegger ³², S. Perrella ^{106a,106b}, R. Peschke ⁴⁵, V.D. Peshekhonov ⁶⁸, K. Peters ⁴⁵, R.F.Y. Peters ⁸⁷, B.A. Petersen ³², T.C. Petersen ³⁹, E. Petit ⁵⁸, A. Petridis ¹, C. Petridou ¹⁵⁶, P. Petroff ¹¹⁹, E. Petrolo ^{134a}, M. Petrov ¹²², F. Petrucci ^{136a,136b}, N.E. Pettersson ⁸⁹, A. Peyaud ¹³⁸, R. Pezoa ^{34b}, P.W. Phillips ¹³³, G. Piacquadio ¹⁵⁰, E. Pianori ¹⁷³, A. Picazio ⁸⁹, E. Piccaro ⁷⁹, M.A. Pickering ¹²², R. Piegaia ²⁹, J.E. Pilcher ³³, A.D. Pilkington ⁸⁷, A.W.J. Pin ⁸⁷, M. Pinamonti ^{167a,167c,am}, J.L. Pinfold ³, H. Pirumov ⁴⁵, M. Pitt ¹⁷⁵, L. Plazak ^{146a}, M.-A. Pleier ²⁷, V. Pleskot ⁸⁶, E. Plotnikova ⁶⁸, D. Pluth ⁶⁷, P. Podberezko ¹¹¹, R. Poettgen ^{148a,148b}, L. Poggioli ¹¹⁹, D. Pohl ²³, G. Polesello ^{123a}, A. Poley ⁴⁵, A. Policicchio ^{40a,40b}, R. Polifka ³², A. Polini ^{22a}, C.S. Pollard ⁵⁶, V. Polychronakos ²⁷, K. Pommès ³², L. Pontecorvo ^{134a}, B.G. Pope ⁹³, G.A. Popeneciu ^{28d}, A. Poppleton ³², S. Pospisil ¹³⁰, K. Potamianos ¹⁶, I.N. Potrap ⁶⁸, C.J. Potter ³⁰, C.T. Potter ¹¹⁸, G. Poulard ³², J. Poveda ³², M.E. Pozo Astigarraga ³², P. Pralavorio ⁸⁸, A. Pranko ¹⁶, S. Prell ⁶⁷, D. Price ⁸⁷, L.E. Price ⁶, M. Primavera ^{76a}, S. Prince ⁹⁰,

- K. Prokofiev 62c, F. Prokoshin 34b, S. Protopopescu 27, J. Proudfoot 6, M. Przybycien 41a, D. Puddu 136a, 136b, A. Puri 169, P. Puzo 119, J. Qian 92, G. Qin 56, Y. Qin 87, A. Quadt 57, W.B. Quayle 167a, 167b, M. Queitsch-Maitland 45, D. Quilty 56, S. Raddum 121, V. Radeka 27, V. Radescu 122, S.K. Radhakrishnan 150, P. Radloff 118, P. Rados 91, F. Ragusa 94a, 94b, G. Rahal 181, J.A. Raine 87, S. Rajagopalan 27, C. Rangel-Smith 168, M.G. Ratti 94a, 94b, D.M. Rauch 45, F. Rauscher 102, S. Rave 86, T. Ravenscroft 56, I. Ravinovich 175, M. Raymond 32, A.L. Read 121, N.P. Readioff 77, M. Reale 76a, 76b, D.M. Rebuzzi 123a, 123b, A. Redelbach 177, G. Redlinger 27, R. Reece 139, R.G. Reed 147c, K. Reeves 44, L. Rehnisch 17, J. Reichert 124, A. Reiss 86, C. Rembser 32, H. Ren 35a, M. Rescigno 134a, S. Resconi 94a, E.D. Ressegue 124, S. Rettie 171, E. Reynolds 19, O.L. Rezanova 111, d, P. Reznicek 131, R. Rezvani 97, R. Richter 103, S. Richter 81, E. Richter-Was 41b, O. Ricken 23, M. Ridel 83, P. Rieck 103, C.J. Riegel 178, J. Rieger 57, O. Rifki 115, M. Rijssenbeek 150, A. Rimoldi 123a, 123b, M. Rimoldi 18, L. Rinaldi 22a, B. Ristić 52, E. Ritsch 32, I. Riu 13, F. Rizatdinova 116, E. Rizvi 79, C. Rizzi 13, R.T. Roberts 87, S.H. Robertson 90, p, A. Robichaud-Veronneau 90, D. Robinson 30, J.E.M. Robinson 45, A. Robson 56, C. Roda 126a, 126b, Y. Rodina 88, an, A. Rodriguez Perez 13, D. Rodriguez Rodriguez 170, S. Roe 32, C.S. Rogan 59, O. Røhne 121, J. Roloff 59, A. Romaniouk 100, M. Romano 22a, 22b, S.M. Romano Saez 37, E. Romero Adam 170, N. Rompotis 77, M. Ronzani 51, L. Roos 83, S. Rosati 134a, K. Rosbach 51, P. Rose 139, N.-A. Rosien 57, V. Rossetti 148a, 148b, E. Rossi 106a, 106b, L.P. Rossi 53a, J.H.N. Rosten 30, R. Rosten 140, M. Rotaru 28b, I. Roth 175, J. Rothberg 140, D. Rousseau 119, A. Rozanov 88, Y. Rozen 154, X. Ruan 147c, F. Rubbo 145, F. Rühr 51, A. Ruiz-Martinez 31, Z. Rurikova 51, N.A. Rusakovich 68, A. Ruschke 102, H.L. Russell 140, J.P. Rutherford 7, N. Ruthmann 32, Y.F. Ryabov 125, M. Rybar 169, G. Rybkin 119, S. Ryu 6, A. Ryzhov 132, G.F. Rzehorz 57, A.F. Saavedra 152, G. Sabato 109, S. Sacerdoti 29, H.F-W. Sadrozinski 139, R. Sadykov 68, F. Safai Tehrani 134a, P. Saha 110, M. Sahinsoy 60a, M. Saimpert 45, T. Saito 157, H. Sakamoto 157, Y. Sakurai 174, G. Salamanna 136a, 136b, J.E. Salazar Loyola 34b, D. Salek 109, P.H. Sales De Bruin 140, D. Salihagic 103, A. Salnikov 145, J. Salt 170, D. Salvatore 40a, 40b, F. Salvatore 151, A. Salvucci 62a, 62b, 62c, A. Salzburger 32, D. Sammel 51, D. Sampsonidis 156, J. Sánchez 170, V. Sanchez Martinez 170, A. Sanchez Pineda 106a, 106b, H. Sandaker 121, R.L. Sandbach 79, C.O. Sander 45, M. Sandhoff 178, C. Sandoval 21, D.P.C. Sankey 133, M. Sannino 53a, 53b, A. Sansoni 50, C. Santoni 37, R. Santonico 135a, 135b, H. Santos 128a, I. Santoyo Castillo 151, K. Sapp 127, A. Sapronov 68, J.G. Saraiva 128a, 128d, B. Sarrazin 23, O. Sasaki 69, K. Sato 164, E. Sauvan 5, G. Savage 80, P. Savard 161, e, N. Savic 103, C. Sawyer 133, L. Sawyer 82, v, J. Saxon 33, C. Sbarra 22a, A. Sbrizzi 22a, 22b, T. Scanlon 81, D.A. Scannicchio 166, M. Scarcella 152, V. Scarfone 40a, 40b, J. Schaarschmidt 140, P. Schacht 103, B.M. Schachtner 102, D. Schaefer 32, L. Schaefer 124, R. Schaefer 45, J. Schaeffer 86, S. Schaepe 23, S. Schaetzl 60b, U. Schäfer 86, A.C. Schaffer 119, D. Schaille 102, R.D. Schamberger 150, V. Scharf 60a, V.A. Schegelsky 125, D. Scheirich 131, M. Schernau 166, C. Schiavi 53a, 53b, S. Schier 139, C. Schillo 51, M. Schioppa 40a, 40b, S. Schlenker 32, K.R. Schmidt-Sommerfeld 103, K. Schmieden 32, C. Schmitt 86, S. Schmitt 45, S. Schmitz 86, B. Schneider 163a, U. Schnoor 51, L. Schoeffel 138, A. Schoening , B.D. Schoenrock 93, E. Schopf 23, M. Schott 86, J.F.P. Schouwenberg 108, J. Schovancova 8, S. Schramm 52, N. Schuh 86, A. Schulte 86, M.J. Schultens 23, H.-C. Schultz-Coulon 60a, H. Schulz 17, M. Schumacher 51, B.A. Schumm 139, Ph. Schune 138, A. Schwartzman 145, T.A. Schwarz 92, H. Schweiger 87, Ph. Schwemling 138, R. Schwienhorst 93, J. Schwindling 138, T. Schwindt 23, G. Sciolla 25, F. Scuri 126a, 126b, F. Scutti 91, J. Searcy 92, P. Seema 23, S.C. Seidel 107, A. Seiden 139, J.M. Seixas 26a, G. Sekhniaidze 106a, K. Sekhon 92, S.J. Sekula 43, N. Semprini-Cesari 22a, 22b, C. Serfon 121, L. Serin 119, L. Serkin 167a, 167b, M. Sessa 136a, 136b, R. Seuster 172, H. Severini 115, T. Sfiligoj 78, F. Sforza 32, A. Sfyrla 52, E. Shabalina 57, N.W. Shaikh 148a, 148b, L.Y. Shan 35a, R. Shang 169, J.T. Shank 24, M. Shapiro 16, P.B. Shatalov 99, K. Shaw 167a, 167b, S.M. Shaw 87, A. Shcherbakova 148a, 148b, C.Y. Shehu 151, Y. Shen 115, P. Sherwood 81, L. Shi 153, ao, S. Shimizu 70, C.O. Shimmin 179, M. Shimojima 104, S. Shirabe 73, M. Shiyakova 68, ap, J. Shlomi 175, A. Shmeleva 98, D. Shoaleh Saadi 97, M.J. Shochet 33, S. Shojaii 94a, D.R. Shope 115, S. Shrestha 113, E. Shulga 100, M.A. Shupe 7, P. Sicho 129, A.M. Sickles 169, P.E. Sidebo 149, E. Sideras Haddad 147c, O. Sidiropoulou 177, D. Sidorov 116, A. Sidoti 22a, 22b, F. Siegert 47, Dj. Sijacki 14, J. Silva 128a, 128d, S.B. Silverstein 148a, V. Simak 130, Lj. Simic 14, S. Simion 119, E. Simioni 86, B. Simmons 81, M. Simon 86, P. Sinervo 161, N.B. Sinev 118, M. Sioli 22a, 22b, G. Siragusa 177, I. Siral 92, S.Yu. Sivoklokov 101, J. Sjölin 148a, 148b, M.B. Skinner 75, P. Skubic 115, M. Slater 19, T. Slavicek 130, M. Slawinska 109, K. Sliwa 165, R. Slovak 131, V. Smakhtin 175, B.H. Smart 5, L. Smestad 15, J. Smiesko 146a, S.Yu. Smirnov 100,

- Y. Smirnov ¹⁰⁰, L.N. Smirnova ^{101,aq}, O. Smirnova ⁸⁴, J.W. Smith ⁵⁷, M.N.K. Smith ³⁸, R.W. Smith ³⁸,
M. Smizanska ⁷⁵, K. Smolek ¹³⁰, A.A. Snesarev ⁹⁸, I.M. Snyder ¹¹⁸, S. Snyder ²⁷, R. Sobie ^{172,p}, F. Socher ⁴⁷,
A. Soffer ¹⁵⁵, D.A. Soh ¹⁵³, G. Sokhrannyi ⁷⁸, C.A. Solans Sanchez ³², M. Solar ¹³⁰, E.Yu. Soldatov ¹⁰⁰,
U. Soldevila ¹⁷⁰, A.A. Solodkov ¹³², A. Soloshenko ⁶⁸, O.V. Solovskyev ¹³², V. Solovyev ¹²⁵, P. Sommer ⁵¹,
H. Son ¹⁶⁵, H.Y. Song ^{36a,ar}, A. Sopczak ¹³⁰, V. Sorin ¹³, D. Sosa ^{60b}, C.L. Sotiropoulou ^{126a,126b},
R. Soualah ^{167a,167c}, A.M. Soukharev ^{111,d}, D. South ⁴⁵, B.C. Sowden ⁸⁰, S. Spagnolo ^{76a,76b},
M. Spalla ^{126a,126b}, M. Spangenberg ¹⁷³, F. Spanò ⁸⁰, D. Sperlich ¹⁷, F. Spettel ¹⁰³, T.M. Spieker ^{60a},
R. Spighi ^{22a}, G. Spigo ³², L.A. Spiller ⁹¹, M. Spousta ¹³¹, R.D. St. Denis ^{56,*}, A. Stabile ^{94a}, R. Stamen ^{60a},
S. Stamm ¹⁷, E. Stanecka ⁴², R.W. Stanek ⁶, C. Stanescu ^{136a}, M.M. Stanitzki ⁴⁵, S. Stapnes ¹²¹,
E.A. Starchenko ¹³², G.H. Stark ³³, J. Stark ⁵⁸, S.H. Stark ³⁹, P. Staroba ¹²⁹, P. Starovoitov ^{60a}, S. Stärz ³²,
R. Staszewski ⁴², P. Steinberg ²⁷, B. Stelzer ¹⁴⁴, H.J. Stelzer ³², O. Stelzer-Chilton ^{163a}, H. Stenzel ⁵⁵,
G.A. Stewart ⁵⁶, J.A. Stillings ²³, M.C. Stockton ⁹⁰, M. Stoebe ⁹⁰, G. Stoica ^{28b}, P. Stolte ⁵⁷, S. Stonjek ¹⁰³,
A.R. Stradling ⁸, A. Straessner ⁴⁷, M.E. Stramaglia ¹⁸, J. Strandberg ¹⁴⁹, S. Strandberg ^{148a,148b},
A. Strandlie ¹²¹, M. Strauss ¹¹⁵, P. Strizenec ^{146b}, R. Ströhmer ¹⁷⁷, D.M. Strom ¹¹⁸, R. Stroynowski ⁴³,
A. Strubig ¹⁰⁸, S.A. Stucci ²⁷, B. Stugu ¹⁵, N.A. Styles ⁴⁵, D. Su ¹⁴⁵, J. Su ¹²⁷, S. Suchek ^{60a}, Y. Sugaya ¹²⁰,
M. Suk ¹³⁰, V.V. Sulin ⁹⁸, S. Sultansoy ^{4c}, T. Sumida ⁷¹, S. Sun ⁵⁹, X. Sun ³, K. Suruliz ¹⁵¹, C.J.E. Suster ¹⁵²,
M.R. Sutton ¹⁵¹, S. Suzuki ⁶⁹, M. Svatos ¹²⁹, M. Swiatlowski ³³, S.P. Swift ², I. Sykora ^{146a}, T. Sykora ¹³¹,
D. Ta ⁵¹, K. Tackmann ⁴⁵, J. Taenzer ¹⁵⁵, A. Taffard ¹⁶⁶, R. Tafirout ^{163a}, N. Taiblum ¹⁵⁵, H. Takai ²⁷,
R. Takashima ⁷², T. Takeshita ¹⁴², Y. Takubo ⁶⁹, M. Talby ⁸⁸, A.A. Talyshev ^{111,d}, J. Tanaka ¹⁵⁷, M. Tanaka ¹⁵⁹,
R. Tanaka ¹¹⁹, S. Tanaka ⁶⁹, R. Tanioka ⁷⁰, B.B. Tannenwald ¹¹³, S. Tapia Araya ^{34b}, S. Tapprogge ⁸⁶,
S. Tarem ¹⁵⁴, G.F. Tartarelli ^{94a}, P. Tas ¹³¹, M. Tasevsky ¹²⁹, T. Tashiro ⁷¹, E. Tassi ^{40a,40b},
A. Tavares Delgado ^{128a,128b}, Y. Tayalati ^{137e}, A.C. Taylor ¹⁰⁷, G.N. Taylor ⁹¹, P.T.E. Taylor ⁹¹, W. Taylor ^{163b},
P. Teixeira-Dias ⁸⁰, D. Temple ¹⁴⁴, H. Ten Kate ³², P.K. Teng ¹⁵³, J.J. Teoh ¹²⁰, F. Tepel ¹⁷⁸, S. Terada ⁶⁹,
K. Terashi ¹⁵⁷, J. Terron ⁸⁵, S. Terzo ¹³, M. Testa ⁵⁰, R.J. Teuscher ^{161,p}, T. Theveneaux-Pelzer ⁸⁸,
J.P. Thomas ¹⁹, J. Thomas-Wilsker ⁸⁰, P.D. Thompson ¹⁹, A.S. Thompson ⁵⁶, L.A. Thomsen ¹⁷⁹,
E. Thomson ¹²⁴, M.J. Tibbetts ¹⁶, R.E. Ticse Torres ⁸⁸, V.O. Tikhomirov ^{98,as}, Yu.A. Tikhonov ^{111,d},
S. Timoshenko ¹⁰⁰, P. Tipton ¹⁷⁹, S. Tisserant ⁸⁸, K. Todome ¹⁵⁹, S. Todorova-Nova ⁵, J. Tojo ⁷³, S. Tokár ^{146a},
K. Tokushuku ⁶⁹, E. Tolley ⁵⁹, L. Tomlinson ⁸⁷, M. Tomoto ¹⁰⁵, L. Tompkins ^{145,at}, K. Toms ¹⁰⁷, B. Tong ⁵⁹,
P. Tornambe ⁵¹, E. Torrence ¹¹⁸, H. Torres ¹⁴⁴, E. Torró Pastor ¹⁴⁰, J. Toth ^{88,au}, F. Touchard ⁸⁸,
D.R. Tovey ¹⁴¹, C.J. Treado ¹¹², T. Trefzger ¹⁷⁷, A. Tricoli ²⁷, I.M. Trigger ^{163a}, S. Trincaz-Duvold ⁸³,
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M. Trovatelli ¹⁷², L. Truong ^{167a,167c}, M. Trzebinski ⁴², A. Trzupek ⁴², K.W. Tsang ^{62a}, J.-C.-L. Tseng ¹²²,
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