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Measurement of the fraction of jet longitudinal momentum carried by Λ_c^+ baryons in pp collisions

ALICE Collaboration*

Abstract

Recent measurements of charm-baryon production in hadronic collisions have questioned the universality of charm-quark fragmentation across different collision systems. In this work the fragmentation of charm quarks into charm baryons is probed, by presenting the first measurement of the longitudinal jet momentum fraction carried by Λ_c^+ baryons, $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$, in hadronic collisions. The results are obtained in proton–proton (pp) collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV at the LHC, with Λ_c^+ baryons and charged (track-based) jets reconstructed in the transverse momentum intervals of $3 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+} < 15$ GeV/ c and $7 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c , respectively. The $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution is compared to a measurement of D^0 -tagged charged jets in pp collisions as well as to PYTHIA 8 simulations. The data hints that the fragmentation of charm quarks into charm baryons is softer with respect to charm mesons, in the measured kinematic interval, as predicted by hadronisation models which include colour correlations beyond leading-colour in the string formation.

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*See Appendix A for the list of collaboration members

Heavy-flavour hadrons are produced in high-energy particle collisions through the fragmentation of heavy (charm and beauty) quarks, which typically originate in hard scattering processes in the early stages of the collisions. The most common theoretical approach to describe heavy-flavour production in hadronic collisions is based on the quantum chromodynamics (QCD) factorisation approach [1], and consists of a convolution of three independent terms: the parton distribution functions of the incoming hadrons, the cross sections of the partonic scattering producing the heavy quarks, and the fragmentation functions that parametrise the evolution of a heavy quark into given species of heavy-flavour hadrons. As the transition of quarks to hadrons cannot be described in perturbation theory, the fragmentation functions cannot be calculated and must be extracted from data.

Fragmentation functions of charm quarks to charm baryons and mesons have been constrained in e^+e^- [2–4] and e^-p [5, 6] collisions, using a variety of different observables, such as the hadron momentum as a fraction of its maximum possible momentum, as dictated by the centre-of-mass energy of the collision. Another method to probe the fragmentation of quarks to hadrons is to parametrise the hadron momentum in relation to the momentum of jets, which are collimated bunches of hadrons giving experimental access to the properties of the scattered quark. Recently, the production of charm mesons in jets, probed via the fractional longitudinal momentum of the jet carried by the D meson, was measured in pp collisions at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) [7–9] and appears consistent with Monte Carlo (MC) simulations tuned on e^+e^- data. These measurements support the assumption of fragmentation universality across collision systems in the charm-meson sector. This assumption underpins theoretical calculations describing the production of heavy-flavour hadrons in hadronic collisions, which make use of fragmentation functions tuned on e^+e^- and e^-p data.

Measurements of the production cross sections of baryons in pp collisions have questioned the hypothesis of fragmentation universality across collision systems [10]. In the charm sector, which provides a clean probe of hadronisation phenomena due to the large mass of the charm quark, recent measurements performed by the ALICE Collaboration [11–19] in pp collisions have shown that the ratio of the Λ_c^+ (and other charm baryons) and D^0 production cross sections measured at low p_T ($\lesssim 12$ GeV/ c) is significantly larger than the value expected from MC simulations in which the charm fragmentation is tuned on e^+e^- and e^-p measurements, such as PYTHIA 8 [20] with the Monash tune [21] or HERWIG 7 [22]. A recent measurement of the Λ_c^+/D^0 ratio in pp collisions, performed by the ALICE Collaboration in intervals of charged-particle multiplicity, also points to a substantial increase of the Λ_c^+/D^0 ratio with increasing multiplicity, with respect to e^+e^- collisions, starting at very low multiplicities [15].

The study of charm-baryon production in jets can provide more differential insights into hadronisation mechanisms in pp collisions, compared to p_T -differential cross sections and yield ratios of heavy-flavour hadrons, allowing for a more accurate study of the dynamical properties of baryon production. In this paper, the first measurement of the longitudinal momentum fraction of the jet carried by Λ_c^+ baryons, $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$, is presented. The measurement is performed in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV in the interval $0.4 \leq z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}} \leq 1.0$. The $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution, fully corrected to particle level, is presented for prompt (charm-quark initiated) Λ_c^+ -tagged jets with $7 \leq p_T^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c and $3 \leq p_T^{\Lambda_c^+} < 15$ GeV/ c . The results are then compared to PYTHIA 8 simulations [20, 23], including a version where mechanisms beyond the leading-colour approximation are considered in string formation processes during hadronisation [21], and to an analogous measurement of the $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of D^0 mesons, performed by the ALICE Collaboration [7].

A full description of the ALICE setup and apparatus can be found in Refs. 24, 25. The main detectors used in this analysis are the Inner Tracking System (ITS), which is used for vertex reconstruction and tracking; the Time Projection Chamber (TPC), which is used for tracking and particle identification (PID); and the Time-Of-Flight (TOF) detector, which is used for PID. These detectors cover a pseudorapidity interval of $|\eta| < 0.9$. The analysis was performed on pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV, collected using a minimum-bias (MB) trigger during the years 2016, 2017, and 2018. The trigger condition required

coincident signals in the two scintillator arrays of the V0 detector, with background events originating from beam–gas interactions removed offline using timing information from the V0. To mitigate against pile-up effects, events with multiple reconstructed primary vertices were rejected. To ensure uniform acceptance, only events with a primary-vertex position along the beam axis direction of $|z_{\text{vtx}}| < 10$ cm around the nominal interaction point were accepted. After the selections described above, the data sample consisted of 1.7×10^9 events, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of $\mathcal{L}_{\text{int}} = 29 \text{ nb}^{-1}$ [26].

The Λ_c^+ candidates and their charge conjugates were reconstructed via the hadronic $\Lambda_c^+ \rightarrow pK_S^0 \rightarrow p\pi^+\pi^-$ decay channel with a total branching ratio of $(1.10 \pm 0.06)\%$ [27], in the Λ_c^+ transverse-momentum interval of $3 \leq p_T^{\Lambda_c^+} < 15 \text{ GeV}/c$. Only tracks with $|\eta| < 0.8$ and $p_T > 0.4 \text{ GeV}/c$, which fulfilled the track quality selections described in Ref. 14, were considered for the Λ_c^+ reconstruction. The Λ_c^+ candidates themselves were reconstructed in the $|y^{\Lambda_c^+}| < 0.8$ rapidity interval. The Λ_c^+ -candidate selection was performed using a multivariate technique based on the Boosted Decision Tree (BDT) algorithm provided by the XGBoost package [28]. The features considered in the optimisation include the PID signal for the proton track, the invariant mass of the K_S^0 -meson candidate, and topological variables that exploit the kinematic properties of the displaced K_S^0 -meson decay vertex. The training was performed in intervals of Λ_c^+ -candidate p_T , considering prompt signal candidates from PYTHIA 8 events with the Monash tune [20, 21], transported through a realistic description of the detector geometry and material budget using GEANT 3 [29]. Background candidates were extracted from the sidebands of the invariant-mass distributions in data. The probability thresholds of the BDT selections were tuned, using MC simulations, to maximise the statistical significance for the signal. Further details on the Λ_c^+ -candidate reconstruction and machine learning procedure are provided in Ref. 15, where the same reconstruction and BDT model were employed.

For the events where at least one selected Λ_c^+ candidate was identified, a jet-finding procedure was performed, using the FastJet package [30]. Prior to jet clustering, the Λ_c^+ -candidate daughter tracks were replaced by the reconstructed Λ_c^+ -candidate four-momentum vector. Charged jet finding was carried out on charged tracks with $|\eta| < 0.9$ and $p_T > 0.15 \text{ GeV}/c$, using the anti- k_T algorithm [31], with a resolution parameter of $R = 0.4$. Tracks were combined using the E -scheme recombination [32], with the jet transverse momentum limited to the interval of $5 \leq p_T^{\text{jet ch}} < 35 \text{ GeV}/c$. The full jet cone was required to be within the ALICE central barrel acceptance, limiting the jet axis to the interval $|\eta_{\text{jet}}| < 0.5$. Only jets tagged via the presence of a reconstructed Λ_c^+ candidate amongst their constituents were considered for the analysis. For events where more than one Λ_c^+ candidate was found, the jet finding and tagging pass was performed independently for each candidate, with only the daughters of that particular candidate replaced by the corresponding Λ_c^+ four-vector each time. In mechanisms of hadronisation that include colour correlations beyond the leading-colour approximation [21], which have been shown to be relevant in hadronic collisions at LHC energies [10], hadrons can be formed in processes that combine quarks from the parton shower with those from the underlying event [33]. As such, the underlying event is not well defined with respect to the measured hadron distributions. Therefore no underlying event correction is implemented in this work.

The fragmentation of charm quarks to Λ_c^+ baryons is probed by measuring the fraction of the jet momentum carried by the Λ_c^+ along the direction of the jet axis, $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$. This is calculated for each jet using

$$z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}} = \frac{\mathbf{p}_{\text{jet}} \cdot \mathbf{p}_{\Lambda_c^+}}{\mathbf{p}_{\text{jet}} \cdot \mathbf{p}_{\text{jet}}}, \quad (1)$$

where \mathbf{p}_{jet} and $\mathbf{p}_{\Lambda_c^+}$ are the jet and Λ_c^+ three-momentum vectors, respectively.

The $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ distributions of true Λ_c^+ -tagged charged jets were extracted in intervals of Λ_c^+ p_T and $p_T^{\text{jet ch}}$ using a sideband subtraction procedure. To enact this subtraction, the invariant-mass (m_{inv}) distributions of Λ_c^+ candidates, obtained for each Λ_c^+ p_T and $p_T^{\text{jet ch}}$ interval, were fitted with a function comprising a Gaussian

for the signal and an exponential for the background. The fit parameters were then used to define signal (containing the majority of true signal candidates) and sideband (entirely composed of background candidates) regions, defined by $|m_{\text{inv}} - \mu_{\text{fit}}| < 2\sigma_{\text{fit}}$ and $4\sigma_{\text{fit}} < |m_{\text{inv}} - \mu_{\text{fit}}| < 9\sigma_{\text{fit}}$, respectively, where μ_{fit} and σ_{fit} represent the mean and sigma of the fitted Gaussian distributions. The $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}(p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}})$ distributions were extracted in the signal and sideband regions, with the sideband distribution scaled by the ratio of the background function integrals in the signal and sideband regions. The sideband distribution was then subtracted from the signal one, with the resulting distribution scaled to account for the fact that the $2\sigma_{\text{fit}}$ width of the signal region only encompasses approximately 95% of the total signal, to obtain the sideband subtracted $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ yield in each $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$ and $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ interval.

To account for the reconstruction and selection efficiency of the Λ_c^+ -tagged jet signal, the sideband subtracted $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ distributions in each $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$ and $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ interval, $N(z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}, p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}})$, were scaled by the reconstruction efficiency of prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jets, ϵ_{prompt} , and summed over the entire $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$ interval to obtain the efficiency-corrected $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ yield of Λ_c^+ -tagged jets, $N^{\text{corr}}(z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}})$, given by

$$N^{\text{corr}}(z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}) = \sum_{p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}} \frac{N(z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}, p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}})}{\epsilon_{\text{prompt}}(p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+})}. \quad (2)$$

The $\epsilon_{\text{prompt}}(p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+})$ efficiency is strongly dependent on $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$, ranging from about 20% at $3 < p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+} < 4$ GeV/ c to 40% at $12 < p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+} < 24$ GeV/ c , and was calculated using PYTHIA 8 simulations with the Monash tune containing prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jets, transported through the detector using GEANT 3. This efficiency does not exhibit a $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ dependence.

In order to isolate the $N^{\text{corr}}(z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}})$ distribution of prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jets, a feed-down subtraction was employed to remove the non-prompt (beauty-quark initiated) contribution. The non-prompt cross section was obtained from particle level POWHEG [34] + PYTHIA 6 [35] + EvtGen [36] simulations, as a function of $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$, $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$ and $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$, and was scaled according to the integrated luminosity of the analysed data sample and the branching ratio of the $\Lambda_c^+ \rightarrow \text{pK}_S^0 \rightarrow \text{p}\pi^+\pi^-$ decay channel. The resulting particle-level yield was multiplied by the ratio of the non-prompt to prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jet reconstruction and selection efficiency in intervals of $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$ and integrated over the $p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+}$ range. The simulated non-prompt results were then folded to reconstructed level, using a four-dimensional response matrix generated using non-prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jets in PYTHIA 8 with the Monash tune, transported through a simulation of the ALICE detector using GEANT 3. The response matrix was constructed as a function of $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ and $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ at generator and reconstruction levels. The folded results were then subtracted from the measured $N^{\text{corr}}(z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}, p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}})$ distribution in data, removing the non-prompt contribution. The estimated fraction of Λ_c^+ -tagged jets coming from b-quark fragmentation is found to be about 5%, with no significant $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ dependence.

A two-dimensional Bayesian unfolding procedure [37] was performed to correct for detector effects and obtain the $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution for prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jets at particle level. A four-dimensional response matrix as a function of $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ and $z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}}$, at generator and reconstruction levels, was populated with prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged jets, obtained with PYTHIA 8 simulations with the Monash tune, passed through a simulation of the ALICE detector using GEANT 3. The measured data and response matrix were provided in the intervals of $5 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 35$ GeV/ c and $0.4 \leq z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}} \leq 1.0$, with the final unfolded results reported in the intervals $7 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c and $0.4 \leq z_{\parallel}^{\text{ch}} \leq 1.0$. The extended $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ range includes two padding intervals for the unfolding from $5 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 7$ GeV/ c and $15 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 35$ GeV/ c , which allow the unfolding to account for migrations in and out of the reported $7 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c interval. Corrections accounting

for migrating entries in and out of the response matrix ranges, as modelled by the same MC simulation, were also applied. The corrected $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution is normalised to the total number of Λ_c^+ -tagged jets in the reported $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ and $p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}}$ interval.

The systematic uncertainties affecting the measurement were evaluated, in each $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ interval, by modifying the strategy adopted at various steps of the analysis procedure and assessing the impact on the unfolded $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution. The total systematic uncertainty includes contributions from multiple sources. The first considered source is the sideband subtraction procedure, whose contribution (ranging from 3.7% to 7.6% depending on the $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ interval) was estimated by varying the invariant-mass fit parameters as well as the invariant-mass intervals of the signal and sideband regions. The contribution from the BDT selection of Λ_c^+ candidates (from 7.3% to 19%) was estimated by varying the BDT probability thresholds to induce a 25% variation in the Λ_c^+ -tagged jet reconstruction and selection efficiency. The uncertainty from the jet energy resolution (from 4.5% to 19%) was estimated by recalculating the response matrix used for unfolding with a 4% reduced tracking efficiency. The reduction in the tracking efficiency was evaluated by varying the track-selection criteria and propagating the ITS–TPC track-matching efficiency uncertainty. The uncertainty on the feed-down subtraction (< 2%) was estimated by varying the choice of POWHEG parameters considered to generate the feed-down cross section, including the factorisation and renormalisation scales, as well as the mass of the beauty quark, which were varied according to theoretical prescriptions [38]. Finally the contribution from the unfolding procedure (from 1.1% to 2.7%) was estimated by altering the choice of prior, regularisation parameter, and ranges of the response matrix. For each of the aforementioned categories, several variations were made and the root-mean-square of the resulting distributions was considered. The exceptions are related to the contribution associated to the choice of parameters of the POWHEG calculations, where only the largest deviation from the central result, in each direction, was considered, as well as the uncertainty on the jet energy resolution where the variation with respect to the central result was taken as the uncertainty. All uncertainties (other than from the feed-down subtraction) were then symmetrised. The uncertainties were combined in quadrature to obtain the total systematic uncertainty on the measurement, which ranges from 13% to 28%.

The fully corrected $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of prompt Λ_c^+ -tagged charged jets in the intervals of $7 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c and $3 \leq p_{\text{T}}^{\Lambda_c^+} < 15$ GeV/ c is presented in the left-hand panel of Fig. 1 and compared to PYTHIA 8 simulations with two different tunes. In PYTHIA 8 the Lund string model of fragmentation is employed, where endpoints are confined by linear potentials encoded in strings. For the case of heavy quarks, the Lund fragmentation function is modified to account for the slower propagation of the massive endpoints compared to their massless counterparts. The Monash tune (red-dotted line) [20], in which the charm fragmentation is tuned on e^+e^- measurements, predicts a harder fragmentation than the measurement. An evaluation of the χ^2/ndf between the measured data points and the model was performed, combining the statistical and systematic uncertainties on the data in quadrature and assuming the uncertainties are uncorrelated across the $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ intervals. This exercise determines that there is a 0.4% probability that the model describes the data. A better agreement is achieved by PYTHIA 8 with the CR-BLC Mode 2 tune, which includes colour reconnection mechanisms beyond the leading-colour approximation [23] (green-dashed line). In this model, the minimisation of the string potential is implemented considering the SU(3) multiplet structure of QCD in a more realistic way than in the leading-colour approximation, allowing for the formation of “baryonic” configurations where for example two colours can combine coherently to form an anti-colour. The same χ^2/ndf approach results in a 78% probability that the model describes the data. The simulation with PYTHIA 8 with the CR-BLC Mode 2 tune also provides a much more accurate description of the Λ_c^+/D^0 cross section ratio, previously measured in pp collisions at the LHC [11–15, 39].

In the right-hand panel of Fig. 1, a comparison of the $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of Λ_c^+ -tagged jets and the $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution previously measured for D^0 -tagged jets [7] is presented. The latter is consistent with PYTHIA 8

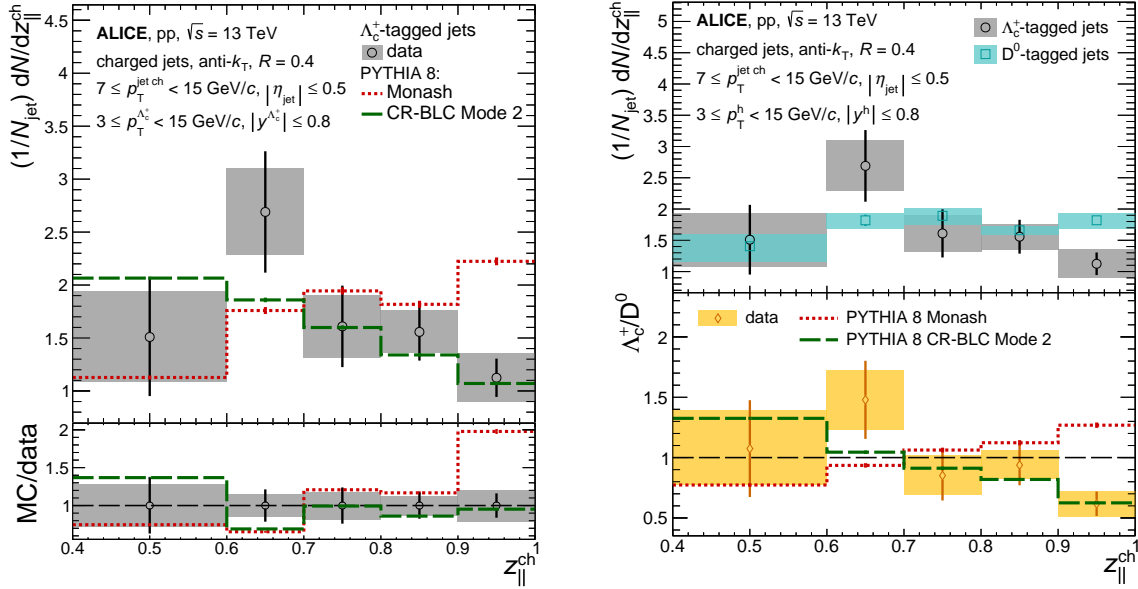


Figure 1: (Left) Fully corrected normalised $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of Λ_c^+ -tagged charged jets (black open circles) measured in the $7 \leq p_T^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c and $3 \leq p_T^{\Lambda_c^+} < 15$ GeV/ c intervals in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV, compared with predictions from different PYTHIA 8 tunes [20, 21, 23] (red-dotted and green-dashed lines). The ratios of the MC simulations to the data are shown in the bottom panel. (Right) Comparison of the measured $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of Λ_c^+ -tagged jets and the previously measured $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of D^0 -tagged jets [7], obtained in the same kinematic interval. The ratio of the $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ distribution of Λ_c^+ -tagged and D^0 -tagged jets is shown in the bottom panel for both the data and the different PYTHIA tunes.

simulations using both the Monash and CR-BLC Mode 2 tunes. The ratio of the two distributions is also presented in the bottom panel. The uncertainty from the jet energy resolution was considered to be correlated between the Λ_c^+ -tagged jet and D^0 -tagged jet measurements and was evaluated directly on the ratio of the distributions. The remaining uncertainties were considered uncorrelated when taking the ratio and were then combined in quadrature with the uncertainty of the jet energy resolution. The uncertainties were considered uncorrelated across the $z_{||}^{\text{ch}}$ intervals. The same χ^2/ndf exercise described above determines that there is a 12% probability that the measured ratio is described by a flat distribution at unity, hinting at a softer fragmentation of charm quarks into charm baryons than charm mesons. The ratio is better described by the PYTHIA 8 simulations with the CR-BLC Mode 2 compared to the ones with the Monash tune, with the former describing the data with 88% probability compared to a 0.03% probability for the latter.

In summary the first measurement in hadronic collisions of the longitudinal momentum fraction of the charged jet carried by Λ_c^+ baryons was presented for pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 13$ TeV. The result is fully corrected to particle level and obtained in the jet and Λ_c^+ transverse-momentum intervals of $7 \leq p_T^{\text{jet ch}} < 15$ GeV/ c and $3 \leq p_T^{\Lambda_c^+} < 15$ GeV/ c , respectively. The measurement presented in this paper hints that charm quarks have a softer fragmentation into Λ_c^+ baryons compared to D^0 mesons, in the measured kinematic interval. One possible explanation is that charm-baryon production is favoured in the presence of higher particle multiplicity originating from both the jet fragmentation and the underlying event, which could be tested with future measurements of the in-jet multiplicity of Λ_c^+ -tagged jets. The fragmentation of charm quarks into Λ_c^+ baryons in hadronic collisions exhibits tension with simulations tuned on e^+e^- data that employ a leading-colour formalism of hadronisation, such as in the Monash tune of PYTHIA 8. This occurs despite their successful description of the fragmentation of charm quarks into D^0 mesons. However, the inclusion of mechanisms sensitive to the surrounding partonic density that feature colour

reconnection beyond the leading-colour approximation results in a better agreement with data. This result also partially explains the p_T shape of the prompt Λ_c^+/D^0 cross section ratio [11–15, 39], which shows a peak at low p_T (≈ 3 GeV/ c) and is also described within uncertainties by PYTHIA 8 with the CR-BLC Mode 2 tune. The p_T trend of this ratio is driven by the fact that the Λ_c^+ baryons produced from the fragmenting charm quark carry a significantly lower fraction of the charm-quark transverse momentum than the D^0 mesons produced in a similar way.

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A The ALICE Collaboration

S. Acharya ¹²⁶, D. Adamová ⁸⁶, A. Adler⁷⁰, G. Aglieri Rinella ³², M. Agnello ²⁹, N. Agrawal ⁵¹, Z. Ahammed ¹³⁴, S. Ahmad ¹⁵, S.U. Ahn ⁷¹, I. Ahuja ³⁷, A. Akindinov ¹⁴⁰, M. Al-Turany ⁹⁷, D. Aleksandrov ¹⁴⁰, B. Alessandro ⁵⁶, H.M. Alfanda ⁶, R. Alfaro Molina ⁶⁷, B. Ali ¹⁵, A. Alici ²⁵, N. Alizadehvandchali ¹¹⁵, A. Alkin ³², J. Alme ²⁰, G. Alocco ⁵², T. Alt ⁶⁴, I. Altsybeev ¹⁴⁰, J.R. Alvarado ⁴⁴, M.N. Anaam ⁶, C. Andrei ⁴⁵, A. Andronic ¹²⁵, V. Anguelov ⁹⁴, F. Antinori ⁵⁴, P. Antonioli ⁵¹, N. Apadula ⁷⁴, L. Aphecetche ¹⁰³, H. Appelshäuser ⁶⁴, C. Arata ⁷³, S. Arcelli ²⁵, M. Aresti ⁵², R. Arnaldi ⁵⁶, J.G.M.C.A. Arneiro ¹¹⁰, I.C. Arsene ¹⁹, M. Arslandok ¹³⁷, A. Augustinus ³², R. Averbeck ⁹⁷, M.D. Azmi ¹⁵, A. Badalà ⁵³, J. Bae ¹⁰⁴, Y.W. Baek ⁴⁰, X. Bai ¹¹⁹, R. Bailhache ⁶⁴, Y. Bailung ⁴⁸, A. Balbino ²⁹, A. Baldisseri ¹²⁹, B. Balis ², D. Banerjee ⁴, Z. Banoo ⁹¹, R. Barbera ²⁶, F. Barile ³¹, L. Barioglio ⁹⁵, M. Barlou⁷⁸, G.G. Barnaföldi ⁴⁶, L.S. Barnby ⁸⁵, V. Barret ¹²⁶, L. Barreto ¹¹⁰, C. 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L. Gyulai ⁴⁶, M.K. Habib⁹⁷, C. Hadjidakis ¹³⁰, F.U. Haider ⁹¹, H. Hamagaki ⁷⁶, A. Hamdi ⁷⁴, M. Hamid⁶, Y. Han ¹³⁸, R. Hannigan ¹⁰⁸, M.R. Haque ¹³⁵, J.W. Harris ¹³⁷, A. Harton ⁹, H. Hassan ⁸⁷, D. Hatzifotiadou ⁵¹, P. Hauer ⁴², L.B. Havener ¹³⁷, S.T. Heckel ⁹⁵, E. Hellbär ⁹⁷, H. Helstrup ³⁴, M. Hemmer ⁶⁴, T. Herman ³⁵, G. Herrera Corral ⁸, F. Herrmann¹²⁵, S. Herrmann ¹²⁷, K.F. Hetland ³⁴, B. Heybeck ⁶⁴, H. Hillemanns ³², C. Hills ¹¹⁸, B. Hippolyte ¹²⁸, F.W. Hoffmann ⁷⁰, B. Hofman ⁵⁹, B. Hohlweger ⁸⁴, G.H. Hong ¹³⁸, M. Horst ⁹⁵, A. Horzyk ², Y. Hou ⁶, P. Hristov ³², C. Hughes ¹²¹, P. Huhn⁶⁴, L.M. Huhta ¹¹⁶, T.J. Humanic ⁸⁸, A. Hutson ¹¹⁵, D. Hutter ³⁸, J.P. Iddon ¹¹⁸, R. Ilkaev¹⁴⁰, H. Ilyas ¹³, M. Inaba ¹²⁴, G.M. Innocenti ³², M. Ippolitov ¹⁴⁰, A. Isakov ⁸⁶, T. Isidori ¹¹⁷, M.S. Islam ⁹⁹, M. Ivanov ⁹⁷, M. Ivanov¹², V. Ivanov ¹⁴⁰, M. Jablonski ², B. Jacak ⁷⁴, N. Jacazio ³², P.M. Jacobs ⁷⁴, S. Jadlovská¹⁰⁶, J. Jadlovsky¹⁰⁶, S. Jaelani ⁸², L. Jaffe³⁸, C. Jahnke ¹¹¹, M.J. Jakubowska ¹³⁵, M.A. Janik ¹³⁵, T. Janson⁷⁰, M. Jercic⁸⁹, S. Jia ¹⁰, A.A.P. Jimenez ⁶⁵, F. Jonas ^{87,125}, J.M. Jowett ^{32,97}, J. Jung ⁶⁴, M. Jung ⁶⁴, A. Junique ³², A. Jusko ¹⁰⁰, M.J. Kabus ^{32,135}, J. Kaewjai¹⁰⁵, P. Kalinak ⁶⁰, A.S. Kalteyer ⁹⁷, A. Kalweit ³², V. Kaplin ¹⁴⁰, A. Karasu Uysal ⁷², D. Karatovic ⁸⁹, O. Karavichev ¹⁴⁰, T. Karavicheva ¹⁴⁰, P. Karczmarczyk ¹³⁵, E. Karpechev ¹⁴⁰, U. Kebschull ⁷⁰, R. Keidel ¹³⁹, D.L.D. Keijdener⁵⁹, M. Keil ³², B. Ketzer ⁴², A.M. Khan ⁶, S. Khan ¹⁵, A. Khanzadeev ¹⁴⁰, Y. Kharlov ¹⁴⁰, A. Khatun ^{117,15}, A. Khuntia ¹⁰⁷, M.B. Kidson¹¹⁴, B. Kileng ³⁴, B. Kim ¹⁶, C. Kim ¹⁶, D.J. Kim ¹¹⁶, E.J. Kim ⁶⁹, J. Kim ¹³⁸, J.S. Kim ⁴⁰, J. Kim ⁶⁹, M. Kim ^{18,94}, S. Kim ¹⁷, T. Kim ¹³⁸, K. Kimura ⁹², S. Kirsch ⁶⁴, I. Kisel ³⁸, S. Kiselev ¹⁴⁰, A. Kisiel ¹³⁵, J.P. Kitowski ², J.L. Klay ⁵, J. Klein ³², S. Klein ⁷⁴, C. Klein-Bösing ¹²⁵, M. Kleiner ⁶⁴, T. Klemenz ⁹⁵, A. Kluge ³², A.G. Knospe ¹¹⁵, C. Kobdaj ¹⁰⁵, T. Kollegger⁹⁷, A. Kondratyev ¹⁴¹, N. Kondratyeva ¹⁴⁰, E. Kondratyuk ¹⁴⁰, J. Konig ⁶⁴, S.A. Konigstorfer ⁹⁵, P.J. Konopka ³², G. Kornakov ¹³⁵, M. Korwieser ⁹⁵, S.D. Koryciak ², A. Kotliarov ⁸⁶, V. Kovalenko ¹⁴⁰, M. Kowalski ¹⁰⁷, V. Kozuharov ³⁶, I. Králik ⁶⁰, A. Kravčáková ³⁷, L. Kreis⁹⁷, M. Krivda ^{100,60}, F. Krizek ⁸⁶, K. Krizkova Gajdosova ³⁵, M. Kroesen ⁹⁴, M. Krüger ⁶⁴, D.M. Krupova ³⁵, E. Kryshen ¹⁴⁰, V. Kučera ³², C. Kuhn ¹²⁸, P.G. Kuijer ⁸⁴, T. Kumaoka¹²⁴, D. Kumar¹³⁴, L. Kumar ⁹⁰, N. Kumar⁹⁰, S. Kumar ³¹, S. Kundu ³², P. Kurashvili ⁷⁹, A. Kurepin ¹⁴⁰, A.B. Kurepin ¹⁴⁰, A. Kuryakin ¹⁴⁰, S. Kushpil ⁸⁶, J. Kvapil ¹⁰⁰, M.J. Kweon ⁵⁸, J.Y. Kwon ⁵⁸, Y. Kwon ¹³⁸, S.L. La Pointe ³⁸, P. La Rocca ²⁶, Y.S. Lai⁷⁴, A. Lakrathok¹⁰⁵, M. Lamanna ³², R. Langoy ¹²⁰, P. Larionov ³², E. Laudi ³², L. Lautner ^{32,95}, R. Lavicka ¹⁰², T. Lazareva ¹⁴⁰, R. Lea ^{133,55}, H. Lee ¹⁰⁴, G. Legras ¹²⁵, J. Lehrbach ³⁸, R.C. Lemmon ⁸⁵, I. León Monzón ¹⁰⁹, M.M. Lesch ⁹⁵, E.D. Lesser ¹⁸, M. Lettrich⁹⁵, P. Lévai ⁴⁶, X. Li¹⁰, X.L. Li⁶, J. Lien ¹²⁰, R. Lietava ¹⁰⁰, I. Likmeta ¹¹⁵, B. Lim ^{24,16}, S.H. Lim ¹⁶, V. Lindenstruth ³⁸, A. Lindner⁴⁵, C. Lippmann ⁹⁷, A. Liu ¹⁸, D.H. Liu ⁶, J. Liu ¹¹⁸, I.M. Lofnes ²⁰, C. Loizides ⁸⁷, S. Lokos ¹⁰⁷, J. Lömker ⁵⁹, P. Loncar ³³, J.A. Lopez ⁹⁴, X. Lopez ¹²⁶, E. López Torres ⁷, P. Lu ^{97,119}, J.R. Luhder ¹²⁵, M. Lunardon ²⁷, G. Luparello ⁵⁷, Y.G. Ma ³⁹, A. Maevskaya¹⁴⁰, M. Mager ³², T. Mahmoud⁴², A. Maire ¹²⁸, M.V. Makariev ³⁶, M. Malaev ¹⁴⁰, G. Malfattore ²⁵, N.M. Malik ⁹¹, Q.W. Malik¹⁹, S.K. Malik ⁹¹, L. Malinina ^{I,VII,141}, D. Mal'Kevich ¹⁴⁰, D. Mallick ⁸⁰, N. Mallick ⁴⁸, G. Mandaglio ^{30,53}, V. Manko ¹⁴⁰, F. Manso ¹²⁶, V. Manzari ⁵⁰, Y. Mao ⁶, G.V. Margagliotti ²³, A. Margotti ⁵¹, A. Marín ⁹⁷, C. Markert ¹⁰⁸, P. Martinengo ³², J.L. Martinez¹¹⁵, M.I. Martínez ⁴⁴, G. Martínez García ¹⁰³, S. Masciocchi ⁹⁷, M. Masera ²⁴, A. Masoni ⁵², L. Massacrier ¹³⁰, A. Mastroserio ^{131,50}, O. Matonoha ⁷⁵, P.F.T. Matuoka¹¹⁰, A. Matyja ¹⁰⁷, C. Mayer ¹⁰⁷, A.L. Mazuecos ³², F. Mazzaschi ²⁴, M. Mazzilli ³², J.E. Mdhului ¹²², A.F. Mechler⁶⁴, Y. Melikyan ^{43,140}, A. Menchaca-Rocha ⁶⁷, E. Meninno ¹⁰², A.S. Menon ¹¹⁵, M. Meres ¹², S. Mhlanga^{114,68}, Y. Miake¹²⁴, L. Micheletti ⁵⁶, L.C. Migliorin¹²⁷, D.L. Mihaylov ⁹⁵, K. Mikhaylov ^{141,140}, A.N. Mishra ⁴⁶, D. Miśkowiec ⁹⁷, A. Modak ⁴, A.P. Mohanty ⁵⁹, B. Mohanty⁸⁰, M. Mohisin Khan ^{V,15}, M.A. Molander ⁴³, Z. Moravcova ⁸³, C. Mordasini ⁹⁵, D.A. Moreira De Godoy ¹²⁵, I. Morozov ¹⁴⁰, A. Morsch ³², T. Mrnjavac ³², V. Muccifora ⁴⁹, S. Muhuri ¹³⁴, J.D. Mulligan ⁷⁴, A. Mulliri²², M.G. Munhoz ¹¹⁰, R.H. Munzer ⁶⁴, H. Murakami ¹²³, S. Murray ¹¹⁴, L. Musa ³², J. Musinsky ⁶⁰, J.W. Myrcha ¹³⁵, B. Naik ¹²², A.I. Nambrath ¹⁸, B.K. Nandi ⁴⁷, R. Nania ⁵¹, E. Nappi ⁵⁰, A.F. Nassirpour ⁷⁵, A. Nath ⁹⁴, C. Nattrass ¹²¹, M.N. Naydenov ³⁶, A. Neagu¹⁹, A. Negru¹¹³, L. Nellen ⁶⁵, S.V. Nesbo³⁴, G. Neskovic ³⁸, D. Nesterov ¹⁴⁰, B.S. Nielsen ⁸³, E.G. Nielsen ⁸³, S. Nikolaev ¹⁴⁰, S. Nikulin ¹⁴⁰, V. Nikulin ¹⁴⁰, F. Noferini ⁵¹, S. Noh ¹¹, P. Nomokonov ¹⁴¹, J. Norman ¹¹⁸, N. Novitzky ¹²⁴, P. Nowakowski ¹³⁵, A. Nyanin ¹⁴⁰, J. Nystrand ²⁰, M. Ogino ⁷⁶, A. Ohlson ⁷⁵, V.A. Okorokov ¹⁴⁰, J. Oleniacz ¹³⁵, A.C. Oliveira Da Silva ¹²¹, M.H. Oliver ¹³⁷, A. Onnerstad ¹¹⁶, C. Oppedisano ⁵⁶, A. Ortiz Velasquez ⁶⁵, J. Otwinowski ¹⁰⁷, M. Oya⁹², K. Oyama ⁷⁶, Y. Pachmayer ⁹⁴, S. Padhan ⁴⁷, D. Pagano ^{133,55}, G. Paić ⁶⁵, S. Paisano-Guzmán ⁴⁴, A. Palasciano ⁵⁰, S. Panebianco ¹²⁹, H. Park ¹²⁴, H. Park ¹⁰⁴, J. Park ⁵⁸, J.E. Parkkila ³², R.N. Patra⁹¹, B. Paul ²²,

H. Pei ⁶, T. Peitzmann ⁵⁹, X. Peng ⁶, M. Pennisi ²⁴, L.G. Pereira ⁶⁶, D. Peresunko ¹⁴⁰, G.M. Perez ⁷, S. Perrin ¹²⁹, Y. Pestov ¹⁴⁰, V. Petráček ³⁵, V. Petrov ¹⁴⁰, M. Petrovici ⁴⁵, R.P. Pezzi ^{103,66}, S. Piano ⁵⁷, M. Pikna ¹², P. Pillot ¹⁰³, O. Pinazza ^{51,32}, L. Pinsky ¹¹⁵, C. Pinto ⁹⁵, S. Pisano ⁴⁹, M. Płoskoń ⁷⁴, M. Planinic ⁸⁹, F. Pliquett ⁶⁴, M.G. Poghosyan ⁸⁷, B. Polichtchouk ¹⁴⁰, S. Politano ²⁹, N. Poljak ⁸⁹, A. Pop ⁴⁵, S. Porteboeuf-Houssais ¹²⁶, V. Pozdniakov ¹⁴¹, K.K. Pradhan ⁴⁸, S.K. Prasad ⁴, S. Prasad ⁴⁸, R. Preghenella ⁵¹, F. Prino ⁵⁶, C.A. Pruneau ¹³⁶, I. Pshenichnov ¹⁴⁰, M. Puccio ³², S. Pucillo ²⁴, Z. Pugelova ¹⁰⁶, S. Qiu ⁸⁴, L. Quaglia ²⁴, R.E. Quishpe ¹¹⁵, S. Ragoni ^{14,100}, A. Rakotozafindrabe ¹²⁹, L. Ramello ^{132,56}, F. Rami ¹²⁸, T.A. Rancien ⁷³, M. Rasa ²⁶, S.S. Räsänen ⁴³, R. Rath ⁵¹, M.P. Rauch ²⁰, I. Ravasenga ⁸⁴, K.F. Read ^{87,121}, C. Reckziegel ¹¹², A.R. Redelbach ³⁸, K. Redlich ^{VI,79}, C.A. Reetz ⁹⁷, H.D. Regules-Medel ⁴⁴, A. Rehman ²⁰, F. Reidt ³², H.A. Reme-Ness ³⁴, Z. Rescakova ³⁷, K. Reygers ⁹⁴, A. Riabov ¹⁴⁰, V. Riabov ¹⁴⁰, R. Ricci ²⁸, M. Richter ¹⁹, A.A. Riedel ⁹⁵, W. Riegler ³², C. Ristea ⁶³, M. Rodríguez Cahuantzi ⁴⁴, S.A. Rodríguez Ramírez ⁴⁴, K. Røed ¹⁹, R. Rogalev ¹⁴⁰, E. Rogochaya ¹⁴¹, T.S. Rogoschinski ⁶⁴, D. Rohr ³², D. Röhrich ²⁰, P.F. Rojas ⁴⁴, S. Rojas Torres ³⁵, P.S. Rokita ¹³⁵, G. Romanenko ¹⁴¹, F. Ronchetti ⁴⁹, A. Rosano ^{30,53}, E.D. Rosas ⁶⁵, K. Roslon ¹³⁵, A. Rossi ⁵⁴, A. Roy ⁴⁸, S. Roy ⁴⁷, N. Rubini ²⁵, D. Ruggiano ¹³⁵, R. Rui ²³, B. Rumyantsev ¹⁴¹, P.G. Russek ², R. Russo ⁸⁴, A. Rustamov ⁸¹, E. Ryabinkin ¹⁴⁰, Y. Ryabov ¹⁴⁰, A. Rybicki ¹⁰⁷, H. Ryttonen ¹¹⁶, W. Rzesza ¹³⁵, O.A.M. Saarimaki ⁴³, R. Sadek ¹⁰³, S. Sadhu ³¹, S. Sadovsky ¹⁴⁰, J. Saetre ²⁰, K. Šafařík ³⁵, S.K. Saha ⁴, S. Saha ⁸⁰, B. Sahoo ⁴⁷, R. Sahoo ⁴⁸, S. Sahoo ⁶¹, D. Sahu ⁴⁸, P.K. Sahu ⁶¹, J. Saini ¹³⁴, K. Sajdakova ³⁷, S. Sakai ¹²⁴, M.P. Salvan ⁹⁷, S. Sambyal ⁹¹, I. Sanna ^{32,95}, T.B. Saramela ¹¹⁰, D. Sarkar ¹³⁶, N. Sarkar ¹³⁴, P. Sarma ⁴¹, V. Sarritzu ²², V.M. Sarti ⁹⁵, M.H.P. Sas ¹³⁷, J. Schambach ⁸⁷, H.S. Scheid ⁶⁴, C. Schiaua ⁴⁵, R. Schicker ⁹⁴, A. Schmäh ⁹⁴, C. Schmidt ⁹⁷, H.R. Schmidt ⁹³, M.O. Schmidt ³², M. Schmidt ⁹³, N.V. Schmidt ⁸⁷, A.R. Schmier ¹²¹, R. Schotter ¹²⁸, A. Schröter ³⁸, J. Schukraft ³², K. Schwarz ⁹⁷, K. Schweda ⁹⁷, G. Scioli ²⁵, E. Scomparin ⁵⁶, J.E. Seger ¹⁴, Y. Sekiguchi ¹²³, D. Sekihata ¹²³, I. Selyuzhenkov ^{97,140}, S. Senyukov ¹²⁸, J.J. Seo ⁵⁸, D. Serebryakov ¹⁴⁰, L. Šerkšnytė ⁹⁵, A. Sevcenco ⁶³, T.J. Shaba ⁶⁸, A. Shabetai ¹⁰³, R. Shahoyan ³², A. Shangaraev ¹⁴⁰, A. Sharma ⁹⁰, B. Sharma ⁹¹, D. Sharma ⁴⁷, H. Sharma ¹⁰⁷, M. Sharma ⁹¹, S. Sharma ⁷⁶, S. Sharma ⁹¹, U. Sharma ⁹¹, A. Shatat ¹³⁰, O. Sheibani ¹¹⁵, K. Shigaki ⁹², M. Shimomura ⁷⁷, J. Shin ¹¹, S. Shirinkin ¹⁴⁰, Q. Shou ³⁹, Y. Sibiriak ¹⁴⁰, S. Siddhanta ⁵², T. Siemiarczuk ⁷⁹, T.F. Silva ¹¹⁰, D. Silvermyr ⁷⁵, T. Simantathammakul ¹⁰⁵, R. Simeonov ³⁶, B. Singh ⁹¹, B. Singh ⁹⁵, R. Singh ⁸⁰, R. Singh ⁹¹, R. Singh ⁴⁸, S. Singh ¹⁵, V.K. Singh ¹³⁴, V. Singhal ¹³⁴, T. Sinha ⁹⁹, B. Sitar ¹², M. Sitta ^{132,56}, T.B. Skaali ¹⁹, G. Skorodumovs ⁹⁴, M. Slupecki ⁴³, N. Smirnov ¹³⁷, R.J.M. Snellings ⁵⁹, E.H. Solheim ¹⁹, J. Song ¹¹⁵, A. Songmoonak ¹⁰⁵, F. Soramel ²⁷, R. Spijkers ⁸⁴, I. Sputowska ¹⁰⁷, J. Staa ⁷⁵, J. Stachel ⁹⁴, I. Stan ⁶³, P.J. Steffanic ¹²¹, S.F. Stiefelmaier ⁹⁴, D. Stocco ¹⁰³, I. Storehaug ¹⁹, P. Stratmann ¹²⁵, S. Strazzi ²⁵, C.P. Stylianidis ⁸⁴, A.A.P. Suaide ¹¹⁰, C. Suire ¹³⁰, M. Sukhanov ¹⁴⁰, M. Suljic ³², R. Sultanov ¹⁴⁰, V. Sumberia ⁹¹, S. Sumowidagdo ⁸², S. Swain ⁶¹, I. Szarka ¹², M. Szymkowski ¹³⁵, S.F. Taghavi ⁹⁵, G. Taillepie ⁹⁷, J. Takahashi ¹¹¹, G.J. Tambave ²⁰, S. Tang ^{126,6}, Z. Tang ¹¹⁹, J.D. Tapia Takaki ¹¹⁷, N. Tapus ¹¹³, L.A. Tarasovicova ¹²⁵, M.G. Tarczila ⁴⁵, G.F. Tassielli ³¹, A. Tauro ³², G. Tejeda Muñoz ⁴⁴, A. Telesca ³², L. Terlizzi ²⁴, C. Terrevoli ¹¹⁵, G. Tersimonov ³, S. Thakur ⁴, D. Thomas ¹⁰⁸, A. Tikhonov ¹⁴⁰, A.R. Timmins ¹¹⁵, M. Tkacik ¹⁰⁶, T. Tkacik ¹⁰⁶, A. Toia ⁶⁴, R. Tokumoto ⁹², N. Topilskaya ¹⁴⁰, M. Toppi ⁴⁹, F. Torales-Acosta ¹⁸, T. Tork ¹³⁰, A.G. Torres Ramos ³¹, A. Trifiró ^{30,53}, A.S. Triolo ^{30,53}, S. Tripathy ⁵¹, T. Tripathy ⁴⁷, S. Trogolo ³², V. Trubnikov ³, W.H. Trzaska ¹¹⁶, T.P. Trzcinski ¹³⁵, A. Tumkin ¹⁴⁰, R. Turrisi ⁵⁴, T.S. Tveter ¹⁹, K. Ullaland ²⁰, B. Ulukutlu ⁹⁵, A. Uras ¹²⁷, M. Urioni ^{55,133}, G.L. Usai ²², M. Vala ³⁷, N. Valle ²¹, L.V.R. van Doremalen ⁵⁹, C. Van Hulse ¹³⁰, M. van Leeuwen ⁸⁴, C.A. van Veen ⁹⁴, R.J.G. van Weelden ⁸⁴, P. Vande Vyvre ³², D. Varga ⁴⁶, Z. Varga ⁴⁶, M. Vasileiou ⁷⁸, A. Vasiliev ¹⁴⁰, O. Vázquez Doce ⁴⁹, O. Vazquez Rueda ^{115,75}, V. Vechernin ¹⁴⁰, E. Vercellin ²⁴, S. Vergara Limón ⁴⁴, L. Vermunt ⁹⁷, R. Vértesi ⁴⁶, M. Verweij ⁵⁹, L. Vickovic ³³, Z. Vilakazi ¹²², O. Villalobos Baillie ¹⁰⁰, A. Villani ²³, G. Vino ⁵⁰, A. Vinogradov ¹⁴⁰, T. Virgili ²⁸, V. Vislavicius ⁷⁵, A. Vodopyanov ¹⁴¹, B. Volkel ³², M.A. Völkl ⁹⁴, K. Voloshin ¹⁴⁰, S.A. Voloshin ¹³⁶, G. Volpe ³¹, B. von Haller ³², I. Vorobyev ⁹⁵, N. Vozniuk ¹⁴⁰, J. Vrláková ³⁷, C. Wang ³⁹, D. Wang ³⁹, Y. Wang ³⁹, A. Wegrzynek ³², F.T. Weiglhofer ³⁸, S.C. Wenzel ³², J.P. Wessels ¹²⁵, J. Wiechula ⁶⁴, J. Wikne ¹⁹, G. Wilk ⁷⁹, J. Wilkinson ⁹⁷, G.A. Willems ¹²⁵, B. Windelband ⁹⁴, M. Winn ¹²⁹, J.R. Wright ¹⁰⁸, W. Wu ³⁹, Y. Wu ¹¹⁹, R. Xu ⁶, A. Yadav ⁴², A.K. Yadav ¹³⁴, S. Yalcin ⁷², Y. Yamaguchi ⁹², S. Yang ²⁰, S. Yano ⁹², Z. Yin ⁶, I.-K. Yoo ¹⁶, J.H. Yoon ⁵⁸, S. Yuan ²⁰, A. Yuncu ⁹⁴, V. Zaccolo ²³, C. Zampolli ³², F. Zanone ⁹⁴, N. Zardoshti ^{32,100}, A. Zarochentsev ¹⁴⁰, P. Závada ⁶², N. Zaviyalov ¹⁴⁰, M. Zhalov ¹⁴⁰, B. Zhang ⁶, L. Zhang ³⁹, S. Zhang ³⁹, X. Zhang ⁶, Y. Zhang ¹¹⁹, Z. Zhang ⁶, M. Zhao ¹⁰, V. Zherebchevskii ¹⁴⁰,

Y. Zhi¹⁰, D. Zhou⁶, Y. Zhou⁸³, J. Zhu^{97,6}, Y. Zhu⁶, S.C. Zugravel⁵⁶, N. Zurlo^{133,55}

Affiliation Notes

^I Deceased

^{II} Also at: Max-Planck-Institut für Physik, Munich, Germany

^{III} Also at: Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA), Bologna, Italy

^{IV} Also at: Dipartimento DET del Politecnico di Torino, Turin, Italy

^V Also at: Department of Applied Physics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

^{VI} Also at: Institute of Theoretical Physics, University of Wrocław, Poland

^{VII} Also at: An institution covered by a cooperation agreement with CERN

Collaboration Institutes

¹ A.I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute) Foundation, Yerevan, Armenia

² AGH University of Krakow, Cracow, Poland

³ Bogolyubov Institute for Theoretical Physics, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine

⁴ Bose Institute, Department of Physics and Centre for Astroparticle Physics and Space Science (CAPSS), Kolkata, India

⁵ California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California, United States

⁶ Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China

⁷ Centro de Aplicaciones Tecnológicas y Desarrollo Nuclear (CEADEN), Havana, Cuba

⁸ Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados (CINVESTAV), Mexico City and Mérida, Mexico

⁹ Chicago State University, Chicago, Illinois, United States

¹⁰ China Institute of Atomic Energy, Beijing, China

¹¹ Chungbuk National University, Cheongju, Republic of Korea

¹² Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Informatics, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

¹³ COMSATS University Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan

¹⁴ Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, United States

¹⁵ Department of Physics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

¹⁶ Department of Physics, Pusan National University, Pusan, Republic of Korea

¹⁷ Department of Physics, Sejong University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

¹⁸ Department of Physics, University of California, Berkeley, California, United States

¹⁹ Department of Physics, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

²⁰ Department of Physics and Technology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

²¹ Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Pavia, Pavia, Italy

²² Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Cagliari, Italy

²³ Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Trieste, Italy

²⁴ Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Turin, Italy

²⁵ Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Bologna, Italy

²⁶ Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Catania, Italy

²⁷ Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Padova, Italy

²⁸ Dipartimento di Fisica 'E.R. Caianiello' dell'Università and Gruppo Collegato INFN, Salerno, Italy

²⁹ Dipartimento DISAT del Politecnico and Sezione INFN, Turin, Italy

³⁰ Dipartimento di Scienze MIFT, Università di Messina, Messina, Italy

³¹ Dipartimento Interateneo di Fisica 'M. Merlin' and Sezione INFN, Bari, Italy

³² European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Geneva, Switzerland

³³ Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture, University of Split, Split, Croatia

³⁴ Faculty of Engineering and Science, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen, Norway

³⁵ Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic

³⁶ Faculty of Physics, Sofia University, Sofia, Bulgaria

³⁷ Faculty of Science, P.J. Šafárik University, Košice, Slovak Republic

³⁸ Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany

- ³⁹ Fudan University, Shanghai, China
⁴⁰ Gangneung-Wonju National University, Gangneung, Republic of Korea
⁴¹ Gauhati University, Department of Physics, Guwahati, India
⁴² Helmholtz-Institut für Strahlen- und Kernphysik, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Bonn, Germany
⁴³ Helsinki Institute of Physics (HIP), Helsinki, Finland
⁴⁴ High Energy Physics Group, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Puebla, Mexico
⁴⁵ Horia Hulubei National Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering, Bucharest, Romania
⁴⁶ HUN-REN Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary
⁴⁷ Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT), Mumbai, India
⁴⁸ Indian Institute of Technology Indore, Indore, India
⁴⁹ INFN, Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Frascati, Italy
⁵⁰ INFN, Sezione di Bari, Bari, Italy
⁵¹ INFN, Sezione di Bologna, Bologna, Italy
⁵² INFN, Sezione di Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy
⁵³ INFN, Sezione di Catania, Catania, Italy
⁵⁴ INFN, Sezione di Padova, Padova, Italy
⁵⁵ INFN, Sezione di Pavia, Pavia, Italy
⁵⁶ INFN, Sezione di Torino, Turin, Italy
⁵⁷ INFN, Sezione di Trieste, Trieste, Italy
⁵⁸ Inha University, Incheon, Republic of Korea
⁵⁹ Institute for Gravitational and Subatomic Physics (GRASP), Utrecht University/Nikhef, Utrecht, Netherlands
⁶⁰ Institute of Experimental Physics, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice, Slovak Republic
⁶¹ Institute of Physics, Homi Bhabha National Institute, Bhubaneswar, India
⁶² Institute of Physics of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic
⁶³ Institute of Space Science (ISS), Bucharest, Romania
⁶⁴ Institut für Kernphysik, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany
⁶⁵ Instituto de Ciencias Nucleares, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico
⁶⁶ Instituto de Física, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre, Brazil
⁶⁷ Instituto de Física, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico
⁶⁸ iThemba LABS, National Research Foundation, Somerset West, South Africa
⁶⁹ Jeonbuk National University, Jeonju, Republic of Korea
⁷⁰ Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe Universität Frankfurt Institut für Informatik, Fachbereich Informatik und Mathematik, Frankfurt, Germany
⁷¹ Korea Institute of Science and Technology Information, Daejeon, Republic of Korea
⁷² KTO Karatay University, Konya, Turkey
⁷³ Laboratoire de Physique Subatomique et de Cosmologie, Université Grenoble-Alpes, CNRS-IN2P3, Grenoble, France
⁷⁴ Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, California, United States
⁷⁵ Lund University Department of Physics, Division of Particle Physics, Lund, Sweden
⁷⁶ Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science, Nagasaki, Japan
⁷⁷ Nara Women's University (NWU), Nara, Japan
⁷⁸ National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, School of Science, Department of Physics, Athens, Greece
⁷⁹ National Centre for Nuclear Research, Warsaw, Poland
⁸⁰ National Institute of Science Education and Research, Homi Bhabha National Institute, Jatni, India
⁸¹ National Nuclear Research Center, Baku, Azerbaijan
⁸² National Research and Innovation Agency - BRIN, Jakarta, Indonesia
⁸³ Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark
⁸⁴ Nikhef, National institute for subatomic physics, Amsterdam, Netherlands
⁸⁵ Nuclear Physics Group, STFC Daresbury Laboratory, Daresbury, United Kingdom
⁸⁶ Nuclear Physics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Husinec-Řež, Czech Republic
⁸⁷ Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, United States
⁸⁸ Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, United States
⁸⁹ Physics department, Faculty of science, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia
⁹⁰ Physics Department, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India
⁹¹ Physics Department, University of Jammu, Jammu, India

- ⁹² Physics Program and International Institute for Sustainability with Knotted Chiral Meta Matter (SKCM2), Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan
- ⁹³ Physikalisches Institut, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
- ⁹⁴ Physikalisches Institut, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany
- ⁹⁵ Physik Department, Technische Universität München, Munich, Germany
- ⁹⁶ Politecnico di Bari and Sezione INFN, Bari, Italy
- ⁹⁷ Research Division and ExtreMe Matter Institute EMMI, GSI Helmholtzzentrum für Schwerionenforschung GmbH, Darmstadt, Germany
- ⁹⁸ Saga University, Saga, Japan
- ⁹⁹ Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Homi Bhabha National Institute, Kolkata, India
- ¹⁰⁰ School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom
- ¹⁰¹ Sección Física, Departamento de Ciencias, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Peru
- ¹⁰² Stefan Meyer Institut für Subatomare Physik (SMI), Vienna, Austria
- ¹⁰³ SUBATECH, IMT Atlantique, Nantes Université, CNRS-IN2P3, Nantes, France
- ¹⁰⁴ Sungkyunkwan University, Suwon City, Republic of Korea
- ¹⁰⁵ Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand
- ¹⁰⁶ Technical University of Košice, Košice, Slovak Republic
- ¹⁰⁷ The Henryk Niewodniczanski Institute of Nuclear Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Cracow, Poland
- ¹⁰⁸ The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, United States
- ¹⁰⁹ Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, Culiacán, Mexico
- ¹¹⁰ Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo, Brazil
- ¹¹¹ Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas, Brazil
- ¹¹² Universidade Federal do ABC, Santo Andre, Brazil
- ¹¹³ Universitatea Nationala de Stiinta si Tehnologie Politehnica Bucuresti, Bucharest, Romania
- ¹¹⁴ University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
- ¹¹⁵ University of Houston, Houston, Texas, United States
- ¹¹⁶ University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland
- ¹¹⁷ University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, United States
- ¹¹⁸ University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom
- ¹¹⁹ University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, China
- ¹²⁰ University of South-Eastern Norway, Kongsberg, Norway
- ¹²¹ University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, United States
- ¹²² University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- ¹²³ University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
- ¹²⁴ University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan
- ¹²⁵ Universität Münster, Institut für Kernphysik, Münster, Germany
- ¹²⁶ Université Clermont Auvergne, CNRS/IN2P3, LPC, Clermont-Ferrand, France
- ¹²⁷ Université de Lyon, CNRS/IN2P3, Institut de Physique des 2 Infinis de Lyon, Lyon, France
- ¹²⁸ Université de Strasbourg, CNRS, IPHC UMR 7178, F-67000 Strasbourg, France, Strasbourg, France
- ¹²⁹ Université Paris-Saclay, Centre d'Etudes de Saclay (CEA), IRFU, Département de Physique Nucléaire (DPhN), Saclay, France
- ¹³⁰ Université Paris-Saclay, CNRS/IN2P3, IJCLab, Orsay, France
- ¹³¹ Università degli Studi di Foggia, Foggia, Italy
- ¹³² Università del Piemonte Orientale, Vercelli, Italy
- ¹³³ Università di Brescia, Brescia, Italy
- ¹³⁴ Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre, Homi Bhabha National Institute, Kolkata, India
- ¹³⁵ Warsaw University of Technology, Warsaw, Poland
- ¹³⁶ Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, United States
- ¹³⁷ Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, United States
- ¹³⁸ Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea
- ¹³⁹ Zentrum für Technologie und Transfer (ZTT), Worms, Germany
- ¹⁴⁰ Affiliated with an institute covered by a cooperation agreement with CERN
- ¹⁴¹ Affiliated with an international laboratory covered by a cooperation agreement with CERN.