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(ALICE Collaboration) Adam, J.; ...; Antičić, Tome; ...; Erhardt, Filip; ...; Gotovac, Sven; ...; Mudnić, Eugen; ...; ...

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## Measurement of an Excess in the Yield of $J/\psi$ at Very Low $p_T$ in Pb–Pb Collisions at $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$ TeV

J. Adam *et al.*\*

(ALICE Collaboration)

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We report on the first measurement of an excess in the yield of  $J/\psi$  at very low transverse momentum ( $p_T < 0.3$  GeV/ $c$ ) in peripheral hadronic Pb-Pb collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV, performed by ALICE at the CERN LHC. Remarkably, the measured nuclear modification factor of  $J/\psi$  in the rapidity range  $2.5 < y < 4$  reaches about 7 (2) in the  $p_T$  range 0–0.3 GeV/ $c$  in the 70%–90% (50%–70%) centrality class. The  $J/\psi$  production cross section associated with the observed excess is obtained under the hypothesis that coherent photoproduction of  $J/\psi$  is the underlying physics mechanism. If confirmed, the observation of  $J/\psi$  coherent photoproduction in Pb-Pb collisions at impact parameters smaller than twice the nuclear radius opens new theoretical and experimental challenges and opportunities. In particular, coherent photoproduction accompanying hadronic collisions may provide insight into the dynamics of photoproduction and nuclear reactions, as well as become a novel probe of the quark-gluon plasma.

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The aim of experiments with ultrarelativistic heavy-ion collisions is the study of nuclear matter at high temperature and pressure, where quantum chromodynamics (QCD) predicts the existence of a deconfined state of hadronic matter, the quark-gluon plasma (QGP). Heavy quarks are expected to be produced in the primary partonic scatterings and to interact with this partonic matter, making them ideal probes of the QGP. According to the color screening mechanism [1], quarkonium states are suppressed in the QGP, with different dissociation probabilities for the various states depending on the temperature of the medium. On the other hand, regeneration models predict charmonium production via the (re)combination of charm quarks during [2–4] or at the end [5,6] of the deconfined phase. ALICE measurements of the  $J/\psi$  nuclear modification factor ( $R_{AA}$ ) [7–10] and elliptic flow [11] in Pb-Pb collisions at a center-of-mass energy of  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV, as well as the comparison of the  $J/\psi$  nuclear modification factor in  $p$ -Pb collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 5.02$  TeV [12,13] with that in Pb-Pb, support the regeneration scenario.

In this Letter, we report on the measurement of  $J/\psi$  production in hadronic Pb-Pb collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV at very low  $p_T$  ( $p_T < 0.3$  GeV/ $c$ ). We find an excess in the yield of  $J/\psi$  with respect to expectations from hadroproduction. A plausible explanation is that the excess is caused by coherent

photoproduction of  $J/\psi$ . In this process, quasireal photons coherently produced by the strong electromagnetic field of one of the lead nuclei interact, also coherently, with the gluon field of the other nucleus, to produce a  $J/\psi$ . This process proceeds, at leading order in perturbative QCD, through the interchange of two gluons in a singlet color state, probing thus the square of the gluon distribution in the target. The coherence conditions impose a maximum transverse momentum for the produced  $J/\psi$  of the order of one over the nuclear radius, so the production occurs at very low  $p_T$ . The study of  $J/\psi$  photoproduction processes in hadron colliders is known in ultraperipheral collisions (UPCs) and several results are already available in this field at RHIC [14] and at the LHC [15,16]. These measurements give insight into the gluon distribution of the incoming Pb nuclei over a broad range of Bjorken- $x$  values, providing information complementary to the study of  $J/\psi$  hadroproduction in  $p$ -Pb and Pb-Pb collisions. However, coherent  $J/\psi$  photoproduction has never been observed in nuclear collisions with impact parameters smaller than twice the radius of the nuclei. Although the extension to interactions where the nuclei interact hadronically raises several questions, e.g., how the breakup of the nuclei affects the coherence requirement, we find no other convincing explanation. Assuming, therefore, this mechanism causes the observed excess, we obtain the corresponding cross section in the 30%–50%, 50%–70%, and 70%–90% centrality classes.

The ALICE detector is described in Refs. [17,18]. At forward rapidity ( $2.5 < y < 4$ ) the production of quarkonium states is measured via their  $\mu^+\mu^-$  decay channel in the muon spectrometer down to  $p_T = 0$ . The silicon pixel detector (SPD), the scintillator arrays (V0) and the zero degree calorimeters (ZDCs) were also used in this analysis.

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

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The SPD is located in the central barrel of ALICE, while the V0 and ZDCs are located on both sides of the interaction point. The pseudorapidity coverages of these detectors are  $|\eta| < 2$  (first SPD layer),  $|\eta| < 1.4$  (second SPD layer),  $2.8 < \eta < 5.1$  (V0A),  $-3.7 < \eta < -1.7$  (V0C) and  $|\eta| > 8.7$  (ZDCs). The SPD provides the coordinates of the primary interaction vertex. The minimum bias (MB) trigger required a signal in the V0 detectors at forward and backward rapidity. In addition to the MB condition, the dimuon opposite-sign trigger ( $\mu\mu$ MB), used in this analysis, required at least one pair of opposite-sign track segments detected in the muon spectrometer triggering system, each with a  $p_T$  above the 1 GeV/ $c$  threshold of the online trigger algorithm. The background induced by the beam and electromagnetic processes was further reduced by the V0 and ZDCs timing information and by requiring a minimum energy deposited in the two neutron ZDCs (ZNA and ZNC, positioned on opposite sides with respect to the interaction point) [19]. The energy thresholds were  $\sim 450$  GeV for ZNA and  $\sim 500$  GeV for ZNC and were placed approximately 3 standard deviations below the energy deposition of a 1.38 TeV neutron. The data sample used for this analysis amounts to about  $17 \times 10^6$   $\mu\mu$ MB triggered Pb-Pb collisions, corresponding to an integrated luminosity  $\mathcal{L}_{\text{int}} \approx 70 \mu\text{b}^{-1}$ . The centrality determination was based on a fit of the V0 amplitude distribution as described in Ref. [20]. A selection corresponding to the 90% most central collisions was applied; for these events the MB trigger was fully efficient. In each centrality class,

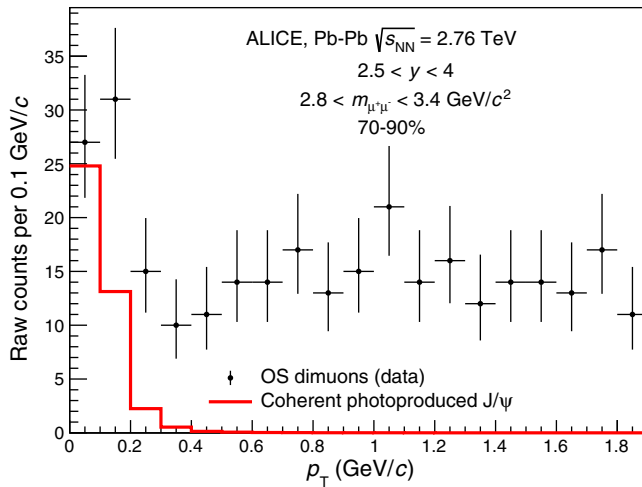


FIG. 1. Raw OS dimuon  $p_T$  distribution for the invariant mass range  $2.8 < m_{\mu^+\mu^-} < 3.4$  GeV/ $c^2$  and centrality class 70%–90%. Vertical error bars are the statistical uncertainties. The red line represents the  $p_T$  distribution of coherently photoproduced  $J/\psi$  as predicted by the STARLIGHT MC generator [22] in Pb-Pb ultraperipheral collisions and convoluted with the response function of the muon spectrometer. The normalization of the red line is given by the measured number of  $J/\psi$  in excess reported in Table I after correction for the  $\psi(2S)$  feed-down and incoherent contributions (see text).

the average number of participant nucleons  $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$  and average value of the nuclear overlap function were derived from a Glauber model calculation [21].

$J/\psi$  candidates were formed by combining pairs of opposite-sign (OS) tracks reconstructed in the geometrical acceptance of the muon spectrometer and matching a track segment above the 1 GeV/ $c$   $p_T$  threshold in the trigger chambers [10]. In Fig. 1, the  $p_T$  distribution of OS dimuons, without combinatorial background subtraction, is shown for the invariant mass range  $2.8 < m_{\mu^+\mu^-} < 3.4$  GeV/ $c^2$  in the centrality class 70%–90%. A remarkable excess of dimuons is observed at very low  $p_T$  in this centrality class. Such an excess has not been observed in the like-sign dimuon  $p_T$  distribution, nor reported in previous measurements in proton-proton collisions [23–28].

The raw number of  $J/\psi$  in five centrality classes (0%–10%, 10%–30%, 30%–50%, 50%–70%, and 70%–90%) and three  $p_T$  ranges (0–0.3, 0.3–1, 1–8 GeV/ $c$ ) was extracted by fitting the OS dimuon invariant mass distribution using a binned likelihood approach. Two functions were considered to describe the  $J/\psi$  signal shape: a Crystal Ball function [29] and a pseudo-Gaussian function [30]. The tails of the  $J/\psi$  signal

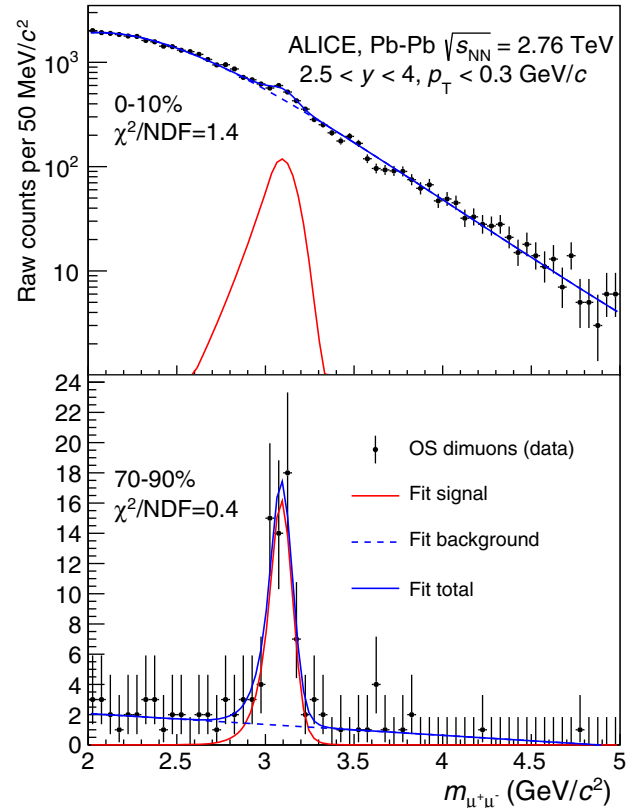


FIG. 2. Invariant mass distributions of OS dimuons in the  $p_T$  range 0–0.3 GeV/ $c$ . The centrality classes are 0%–10% (top) and 70%–90% (bottom). Vertical error bars are the statistical uncertainties.

TABLE I. Raw number of  $J/\psi$  ( $N_{AA}^{J/\psi}$ ), expected raw number of hadronic  $J/\psi$  ( $N_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$ ), and measured excess in the number of  $J/\psi$  ( $N_{AA}^{\text{excess}J/\psi}$ ), all three numbers in the  $p_T$  range (0–0.3) GeV/c, and  $J/\psi$  coherent photoproduction cross section in Pb-Pb collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV, with their statistical and uncorrelated systematic uncertainties. A correlated systematic uncertainty also applies to the cross section. In the most central classes, an upper limit (95% C.L.) on the  $J/\psi$  yield excess and on the cross section is given.

Cent. (%)	$N_{AA}^{J/\psi}$	$N_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$	$N_{AA}^{\text{excess}J/\psi}$	$d\sigma_{J/\psi}^{\text{coh}}/dy$ ( $\mu\text{b}$ )
0–10	$339 \pm 85 \pm 78$	$406 \pm 14 \pm 55$	$< 251$	$< 318$
10–30	$373 \pm 87 \pm 75$	$397 \pm 10 \pm 61$	$< 237$	$< 290$
30–50	$187 \pm 37 \pm 15$	$126 \pm 4 \pm 15$	$62 \pm 37 \pm 21$	$73 \pm 44_{-27}^{+26} \pm 10$
50–70	$89 \pm 13 \pm 2$	$39 \pm 2 \pm 5$	$50 \pm 14 \pm 5$	$58 \pm 16_{-10}^{+8} \pm 8$
70–90	$59 \pm 9 \pm 3$	$8 \pm 1 \pm 1$	$51 \pm 9 \pm 3$	$59 \pm 11_{-10}^{+7} \pm 8$

functions were fixed using Monte Carlo (MC) simulations for both hadronic [8] and photoproduction hypotheses [15]. Depending on the  $p_T$  range and centrality class under study, two or three functional forms were used to describe the background under the  $J/\psi$  signal peak. In addition, the fit range was varied. It has also been checked that changing the invariant mass bin width does not significantly modify the results. Figure 2 shows typical fits in the  $p_T$  range 0–0.3 GeV/c for the 0%–10% and 70%–90% centrality classes. The extracted  $J/\psi$  signals are the average of the results obtained making all the combinations of signal shapes, background shapes, and fitting ranges, while the systematic uncertainties are given by the rms of the results. The extracted  $J/\psi$  signals and the corresponding statistical and systematic uncertainties are quoted in the second column of Table I for the very low  $p_T$  range.

In each centrality class and  $p_T$  range, the  $R_{AA}$  was obtained from the measured number of  $J/\psi$  ( $N_{AA}^{J/\psi}$ ) corrected for acceptance and efficiency— $(\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon)_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$ —(assuming pure hadroproduction with no polarization), branching ratio ( $\text{BR}_{J/\psi \rightarrow l^+l^-}$ ), and normalized to the equivalent number of MB events ( $N_{\text{events}}$ ), average nuclear overlap function ( $\langle T_{AA} \rangle$ ), and proton-proton inclusive  $J/\psi$  production cross section ( $\sigma_{pp}^{hJ/\psi}$ ), as detailed in Ref. [8] and shown in Eq. (1):

$$R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi} = \frac{N_{AA}^{J/\psi}}{\text{BR}_{J/\psi \rightarrow l^+l^-} \times N_{\text{events}} \times (\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon)_{AA}^{hJ/\psi} \times \langle T_{AA} \rangle \times \sigma_{pp}^{hJ/\psi}}. \quad (1)$$

In the  $p_T$  range 1–8 GeV/c, the  $J/\psi$  cross section in  $pp$  collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 2.76$  TeV was directly extracted from the ALICE measurement [26], while in the  $p_T$  ranges 0–0.3 and 0.3–1 GeV/c, due to limited statistics, it was obtained by fitting the measured  $p_T$  distribution with the following parametrization [31]:

$$\frac{d^2\sigma_{pp}^{hJ/\psi}}{dp_T dy} = \frac{c \times \sigma_{J/\psi} \times p_T}{1.5 \times \langle p_T \rangle^2} \left( 1 + a^2 \left( \frac{p_T}{\langle p_T \rangle} \right)^2 \right)^{-n}, \quad (2)$$

where  $a = \Gamma(3/2)\Gamma(n-3/2)/\Gamma(n-1)$ ,  $c = 2a^2(n-1)$ , and  $\sigma_{J/\psi}$ ,  $\langle p_T \rangle$  and  $n$  are free parameters of the fit. A Lévy-Tsallis function [32,33] and UA1 function [34] were also used to fit the data in order to assess systematic uncertainties. In addition, the validity of the procedure was confirmed using the  $J/\psi$  data sample in  $pp$  collisions at 7 TeV [23], where the larger statistics at very low  $p_T$  allow for a direct measurement of the cross sections: the values obtained with this procedure in the  $p_T$  ranges 0–0.3 and 0.3–1 GeV/c agree within 11% ( $1.2\sigma$ ) and 4% ( $0.6\sigma$ ), respectively, with the measured cross sections.

The procedures for the determination of the various systematic uncertainties are the same as those followed in Ref. [8], apart from the reference  $pp$  cross section in the  $p_T$  ranges 0–0.3 and 0.3–1 GeV/c, which incorporate the uncertainties of the fitting procedure described above. In Fig. 3, systematic uncertainties were separated into four

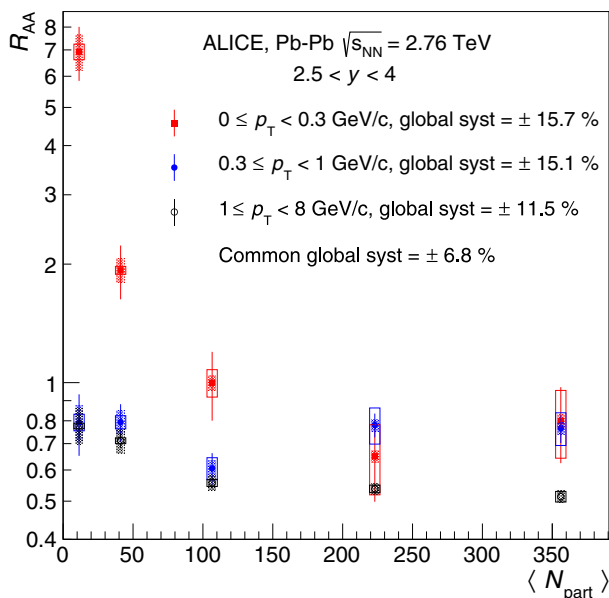


FIG. 3.  $J/\psi R_{AA}$  as a function of  $\langle N_{\text{part}} \rangle$  for 3  $p_T$  ranges in Pb-Pb collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{NN}} = 2.76$  TeV. See text for details on uncertainties. When assuming full transverse polarization of the  $J/\psi$  in Pb-Pb collisions, as expected if  $J/\psi$  are coherently photoproduced, the  $R_{AA}$  values increase by about 21% in the range  $0 < p_T < 0.3$  GeV/c.

categories according to their degree of correlation with centrality and  $p_T$ : uncorrelated in  $p_T$  and centrality (open boxes), which contain the systematic uncertainties of the signal extraction in Pb-Pb (1%–23%); fully correlated as a function of  $p_T$  but not as a function of centrality (shaded areas), which contain the uncertainties of the nuclear overlap function (3.2%–7%), of the determination of the centrality classes (0.7%–7.7%), and of the centrality dependence of the tracking (0%–1%) and trigger efficiencies (0%–1%); fully correlated as a function of centrality but not as a function of  $p_T$  (quoted as global systematics in the legend), which contain the uncertainties of the  $J/\psi$  cross section from  $pp$  collisions [statistical (3.6%–6.9%) and uncorrelated systematic (3.2%–8.0%)], of the MC input parametrization (0.5%–2%) and of the tracking (10%–11%), trigger (2.2%–3.6%), and matching efficiencies (1%); and fully correlated in  $p_T$  and centrality (quoted as common global systematics), which contain the correlated systematic uncertainty of the  $pp$  reference cross section (5.8%) and the uncertainty of the number of equivalent minimum bias events (3.5%).

The  $J/\psi R_{AA}$  shown in Fig. 3 exhibits a strong increase in the  $p_T$  range 0–0.3 GeV/ $c$  for the most peripheral Pb-Pb collisions. This observation is surprising and none of the transport models [2,3] that well describe the previous measurements [7,8,10] predict such a pattern at LHC energies.

To quantify the excess of  $J/\psi$  at very low  $p_T$ , we subtracted the number of  $J/\psi$  expected from hadroproduction in Pb-Pb collisions. The following parametrization of the number of hadronic  $J/\psi$  ( $N_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$ ) as a function of  $p_T$  in a given centrality class was used:

$$\frac{dN_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}}{dp_T} = \mathcal{N} \times \frac{d\sigma_{pp}^{hJ/\psi}}{dp_T} \times R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi} \times (\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon)_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}. \quad (3)$$

The factor  $\mathcal{N}$  is fixed by normalizing the integral of Eq. (3) in the  $p_T$  range 1–8 GeV/ $c$  to the number of  $J/\psi$  measured in the same range, where the hadroproduction component is dominant. The second term is given by the fit of the  $J/\psi p_T$ -differential cross section measured in  $pp$  collisions [26] using Eq. (2). The third term is a parametrization of the  $R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$  as a function of  $p_T$  from the ALICE measurements in Pb-Pb collisions at 2.76 TeV [8,10]. These measurements are available in three centrality classes (0%–20%, 20%–40%, 40%–90%). To calculate the hadroproduction component in the 10%–30% (30%–50%) centrality class, parameterizations obtained in both 0%–20% and 20%–40% (20%–40% and 40%–90%) were considered. A Woods-Saxon like parametrization, which describes the prediction of transport models on  $J/\psi$  production in heavy-ion collisions at low  $p_T$  [2,3], was used in all the centrality classes:

$$R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}(p_T) = R_{AA}^0 + \frac{\Delta_{R_{AA}}}{1 + \exp\left(\frac{p_T - p_T^0}{\sigma_{p_T}}\right)}. \quad (4)$$

$R_{AA}^0$ ,  $\sigma_{p_T}$ , and  $\Delta_{R_{AA}}$  are free parameters of the fit while the  $p_T^0$  parameter was either unconstrained or fixed to  $M_{J/\psi}$  to force an evolution of  $R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$  at very low  $p_T$  in agreement with the predictions of the transport models [2,3]. In addition, a first order polynomial and a constant were used in the most peripheral class. Two fitting ranges in  $p_T$  were considered, either 0–8 or 1–8 GeV/ $c$  since the first bin could be biased by the presence of the very low  $p_T$   $J/\psi$  excess. Finally, the last term in Eq. (3) is a parametrization of the acceptance times efficiency of hadronic  $J/\psi$  [ $(\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon)_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$ ]—determined from MC simulations of the muon spectrometer response function—with either a third-order polynomial or the ratio of two Lévy–Tsallis functions. Simulations were performed with an embedding technique where MC  $J/\psi$  particles are injected into real events and then reconstructed [8]. The results of the various parameterizations are averaged in a given range in  $p_T$  and centrality and the rms of the results is included in the systematic uncertainty of the expected number of hadronic  $J/\psi$ .

The excess in the number of  $J/\psi$  measured in the  $p_T$  range 0–0.3 GeV/ $c$  after subtracting the hadronic component is given in the fourth column of Table I. The statistical uncertainty is the quadratic sum of the uncertainties of the measured number of  $J/\psi$  in the  $p_T$  ranges 0–0.3 and 1–8 GeV/ $c$ . The latter is used in the normalization factor of Eq. (3). The systematic uncertainty is the quadratic sum of the uncertainties of the signal extraction in 0–0.3 GeV/ $c$  (see Table I) and of the parametrization of the hadronic component (13.0%, 12.5%, and 12% in the 70%–90%, 50%–70%, and 30%–50% centrality classes, respectively, see Table I). The significance of the excess is  $5.4\sigma$ ,  $3.4\sigma$ , and  $1.4\sigma$  in the 70%–90%, 50%–70%, and 30%–50% centrality classes, respectively. For the two central classes, only the 95% confidence level limit could be computed. To cross-check the robustness of these results, the excess was reevaluated assuming a rough parametrization of the  $R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}$  based on two extreme cases: (i) a constant suppression independent of  $p_T$  ( $R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}(p_T < 0.3 \text{ GeV}/c) = R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}[1 < p_T < 8 \text{ GeV}/c]$ ), which minimizes the hadronic contribution, and (ii) no suppression at all at low  $p_T$  [ $R_{AA}^{hJ/\psi}(p_T < 0.3 \text{ GeV}/c) = 1$ ], which gives the maximum possible hadronic contribution. Even with these simplified and extreme assumptions, the  $J/\psi$  excess remains significant and compatible with the results reported in Table I within less than 1 (3) times the quoted systematic uncertainty for the 70%–90% (50%–70%) centrality class.

A plausible explanation of the measured excess is  $J/\psi$  photoproduction. The cross section for this process increases with energy and at the LHC becomes comparable to the  $J/\psi$  hadronic cross section. Moreover, the shape of the  $p_T$  distribution in the region of the observed excess is

similar to that of a coherently photoproduced  $J/\psi$  [15], where the photon is emitted by the electromagnetic field of the source nucleus, and then the target nucleus interacts coherently with the photon to produce the  $J/\psi$ , like in Pb-Pb ultraperipheral collisions. The average transverse momentum of coherently photoproduced  $J/\psi$  is around 0.055 GeV/ $c$ . Detailed MC simulations show that detector effects widen reconstructed distribution by approximately a factor of 2 (see red line in Fig. 1) and that 98% of coherently photoproduced  $J/\psi$  are contained in the  $p_T$  interval [0, 0.3] GeV/ $c$ .

Assuming that coherent photoproduction causes the excess at very low  $p_T$ , the corresponding cross section can be obtained as described in Ref. [15]. The fraction of processes where the coherently emitted photon couples only to a single nucleon, so-called incoherent photoproduction of  $J/\psi$ , and passed the data selection is  $f_I = 0.14^{+0.16}_{-0.05}$ , while the contribution of coherently produced  $\psi(2S)$  with a  $J/\psi$  among the decay products which passes the data selection is  $f_D = 0.10 \pm 0.06$ . Both fractions are used to correct the found excess to extract the number of coherent  $J/\psi$ . This number was then corrected for the acceptance times efficiency ( $\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon = 11.31 \pm 0.04\%$ ) taking into account that photoproduced  $J/\psi$  are expected to be transversally polarized, for the branching ratio, and normalized to the integrated luminosity and the width of the rapidity range. For the 70%–90% centrality class, the cross section per unit of rapidity amounts to  $59 \pm 11(\text{stat})_{-10}^{+7}$  (uncor. syst)  $\pm 8$  (cor. syst)  $\mu\text{b}$  (see Table I, where the values for the other centrality classes are also reported). The uncorrelated centrality dependent systematic uncertainties contain, in addition to the one of the measured excess, the uncertainties of the incoherent and  $\psi(2S)$  feed-down contributions (see above), of the determination of the centrality classes (0.7%–7.7%), of the trigger efficiency (0%–1%), of the tracking efficiency (0%–1%), and of the tracking and trigger efficiency loss as a function of centrality (0%–3%). The correlated systematic uncertainties contain the uncertainty of the branching ratio (1%), of the luminosity ( $(^{+7.8}_{-6.5}\%)$ ), of the tracking (11%), trigger (3.6%), and matching efficiencies (1%), and of the MC input parameterization (3%).

In the UPC of lead nuclei at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 2.76$  TeV one expects the incoherent yield in the  $p_T$  range 0.3–1 GeV/ $c$  to be about 30% of the coherent yield in the  $p_T$  range 0–0.3 GeV/ $c$  [15]. Assuming the same behavior in peripheral collisions, one would expect a 23% (4%) contribution of incoherent  $J/\psi$  to the total number of  $J/\psi$  measured in the 70%–90% (50%–70%) centrality class in the  $p_T$  range 0.3–1 GeV/ $c$ . The significance of the present data sample is not sufficient to confirm the presence of incoherent photoproduction in this  $p_T$  range.

The probability of a random coincidence of a MB collision and a coherent production of a  $J/\psi$  in a UPC

satisfying the dimuon trigger, in the same bunch crossing, has been evaluated. In the overall data sample, only one random coincidence is expected for the full centrality range, corresponding to 0.6 coincidences in the 30%–90% centrality class.

To our knowledge there is no numerical prediction for the cross section of coherent photoproduction of  $J/\psi$  in peripheral collisions. Given that the nuclei also undergo a hadronic interaction, it is not clear how to incorporate the coherence conditions. To have a rough estimate, we considered the extreme assumption that all the charges in the source and all the nucleons in the target contribute to the photonuclear cross section as in coherent UPCs (see also Ref. [35]). The photon flux, see, e.g. Ref. [36], was obtained integrating in the impact parameter range corresponding to the centrality class. We used two different approaches: the vector dominance model of Ref. [37], normalized to the measured UPC data [15,16], and the perturbative QCD model of Ref. [36] with the parameterization of Ref. [38]. In both cases we obtain a cross section in the 70%–90% centrality class of about 40  $\mu\text{b}$ , which is of the same order of magnitude as our measurement. Note that the most peripheral class corresponds to the hadronic interaction of just a few nucleons ( $N_{\text{part}} \approx 11$ ), so the interaction is close to the ultraperipheral case and the comparison to the estimate seems reasonable. Another interesting hypothesis, not considered, would be that only the spectators in the target are the ones that interact coherently with the photon. In this case, the  $p_T$  distribution of the excess would get wider as the centrality increases, providing an experimental tool to discriminate among potential models. Indeed, as the size of the spectator region decreases with centrality, the maximum  $p_T$ , given by the coherence condition and the uncertainty principle, would increase.

In summary, we reported on the ALICE measurement of  $J/\psi$  production at very low  $p_T$  and forward rapidity in Pb-Pb collisions at  $\sqrt{s_{\text{NN}}} = 2.76$  TeV. A strong increase of the  $J/\psi R_{\text{AA}}$  is observed in the range  $0 \leq p_T < 0.3$  GeV/ $c$  for the 70%–90% (50%–70%) centrality class, where  $R_{\text{AA}}$  reaches a value of about 7 (2). The excess has been quantified with a significance of 5.4 (3.4) $\sigma$  assuming a smooth evolution of the  $J/\psi$  hadroproduction at low  $p_T$ . Coherent photoproduction of  $J/\psi$  is a plausible physics mechanism at the origin of this excess. Following this assumption, the coherent photoproduction cross section has been extracted for the centrality classes 30%–50%, 50%–70%, and 70%–90% while an upper limit is given for 0%–10% and 10%–30%. It would be very challenging for existing theoretical models, which only include hadronic processes, to explain this excess. The survival of an electromagnetically produced charmonium in a nuclear collision merits theoretical investigation. In addition, coherent photoproduced  $J/\psi$  may be formed in the initial stage of the collisions and could therefore interact with the QGP,

resulting in a modification of the measured cross section with respect to the expectation of theoretical models. In particular, one expects a partial suppression of photo-produced  $J/\psi$  due to color screening of the heavy quark potential in the QGP. The regenerated  $J/\psi$  in the QGP exhibit a wider  $p_T$  distribution and do not contribute to the measured excess, making this measurement a potentially powerful tool to constrain the suppression or regeneration components in the models. Experimentally, the increase of the LHC heavy ion luminosity during run 2 will lead to a factor 10 larger data sample, thus improving the precision of the present measurement and opening the possibility to determine whether the  $J/\psi$  excess at very low  $p_T$  is also present in the most central collisions.

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M. Arslandok,<sup>53</sup> B. Audurier,<sup>113</sup> A. Augustinus,<sup>36</sup> R. Averbeck,<sup>97</sup> M. D. Azmi,<sup>19</sup> A. Badalà,<sup>106</sup> Y. W. Baek,<sup>67</sup> S. Bagnasco,<sup>110</sup> R. Bailhache,<sup>53</sup> R. Bala,<sup>91</sup> A. Baldisseri,<sup>15</sup> R. C. Baral,<sup>61</sup> A. M. Barbano,<sup>27</sup> R. Barbera,<sup>29</sup> F. Barile,<sup>33</sup> G. G. Barnaföldi,<sup>135</sup> L. S. Barnby,<sup>101</sup> V. Barret,<sup>70</sup> P. Bartalini,<sup>7</sup> K. Barth,<sup>36</sup> J. Bartke,<sup>117</sup> E. Bartsch,<sup>53</sup> M. Basile,<sup>28</sup> N. Bastid,<sup>70</sup> S. Basu,<sup>132</sup> B. Bathen,<sup>54</sup> G. Batigne,<sup>113</sup> A. Batista Camejo,<sup>70</sup> B. Batyunya,<sup>66</sup> P. C. Batzing,<sup>22</sup> I. G. Bearden,<sup>81</sup> H. Beck,<sup>53</sup> C. Bedda,<sup>110</sup> N. K. Behera,<sup>50</sup> I. Belikov,<sup>55</sup> F. Bellini,<sup>28</sup> H. Bello Martinez,<sup>2</sup> R. Bellwied,<sup>122</sup> R. 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Corrales Morales,<sup>110</sup> I. Cortés Maldonado,<sup>2</sup> P. Cortese,<sup>32</sup> M. R. Cosentino,<sup>120</sup> F. Costa,<sup>36</sup> P. Crochet,<sup>70</sup> R. Cruz Albino,<sup>11</sup> E. Cuautele,<sup>63</sup> L. Cunqueiro,<sup>36</sup> T. Dahms,<sup>93,37</sup> A. Dainese,<sup>107</sup> A. Danu,<sup>62</sup> D. Das,<sup>100</sup> I. Das,<sup>51,100</sup> S. Das,<sup>4</sup> A. Dash,<sup>121,79</sup> S. Dash,<sup>48</sup> S. De,<sup>120</sup> A. De Caro,<sup>31,12</sup> G. de Cataldo,<sup>103</sup> C. de Conti,<sup>120</sup> J. de Cuveland,<sup>43</sup> A. De Falco,<sup>25</sup> D. De Gruttola,<sup>12,31</sup> N. De Marco,<sup>110</sup> S. De Pasquale,<sup>31</sup> A. Deisting,<sup>97,94</sup> A. Deloff,<sup>77</sup> E. Dénes,<sup>135,†</sup> C. Deplano,<sup>82</sup> P. Dhankher,<sup>48</sup> D. Di Bari,<sup>33</sup> A. Di Mauro,<sup>36</sup> P. Di Nezza,<sup>72</sup> M. A. Diaz Corchero,<sup>10</sup> T. Dietel,<sup>90</sup> P. Dillenseger,<sup>53</sup> R. Divià,<sup>36</sup> Ø. Djuvsland,<sup>18</sup> A. Dobrin,<sup>57,82</sup> D. Domenicis Gimenez,<sup>120</sup> B. Dönigus,<sup>53</sup> O. Dordic,<sup>22</sup> T. Drozhzhova,<sup>53</sup> A. K. Dubey,<sup>132</sup> A. Dubla,<sup>57</sup> L. Ducroux,<sup>130</sup> P. Dupieux,<sup>70</sup> R. J. Ehlers,<sup>136</sup> D. Elia,<sup>103</sup> H. Engel,<sup>52</sup> E. Eppe,<sup>136</sup> B. Erasmus,<sup>113</sup> I. Erdemir,<sup>53</sup> F. Erhardt,<sup>129</sup> B. Espagnon,<sup>51</sup> M. Estienne,<sup>113</sup> S. Esumi,<sup>128</sup> J. Eum,<sup>96</sup> D. Evans,<sup>101</sup> S. Evdokimov,<sup>111</sup> G. Eyyubova,<sup>40</sup> L. Fabbietti,<sup>93,37</sup> D. Fabris,<sup>107</sup> J. Faivre,<sup>71</sup> A. Fantoni,<sup>72</sup> M. Fasel,<sup>74</sup> L. Feldkamp,<sup>54</sup> A. Feliciello,<sup>110</sup> G. Feofilov,<sup>131</sup> J. Ferencei,<sup>84</sup> A. Fernández Téllez,<sup>2</sup> E. G. Ferreira,<sup>17</sup> A. Ferretti,<sup>27</sup> A. Festanti,<sup>30</sup> V. J. G. Feuillard,<sup>15,70</sup> J. Figiel,<sup>117</sup> M. A. S. Figueredo,<sup>124,120</sup> S. Filchagin,<sup>99</sup> D. Finogeev,<sup>56</sup> F. M. Fionda,<sup>25</sup> E. M. Fiore,<sup>33</sup> M. G. Fleck,<sup>94</sup> M. Floris,<sup>36</sup> S. Foertsch,<sup>65</sup> P. Foka,<sup>97</sup> S. Fokin,<sup>80</sup> E. Fragiaco,<sup>109</sup> A. Francescon,<sup>30,36</sup> U. Frankenfeld,<sup>97</sup> U. Fuchs,<sup>36</sup> C. Furget,<sup>71</sup> A. Furs,<sup>56</sup> M. Fusco Girard,<sup>31</sup> J. J. Gaardhøje,<sup>81</sup> M. Gagliardi,<sup>27</sup> A. M. Gago,<sup>102</sup> M. Gallio,<sup>27</sup> D. R. Gangadharan,<sup>74</sup> P. Ganoti,<sup>36,89</sup> C. Gao,<sup>7</sup> C. Garabatos,<sup>97</sup> E. Garcia-Solis,<sup>13</sup> C. Gargiulo,<sup>36</sup> P. Gasik,<sup>37,93</sup> E. F. Gauger,<sup>118</sup> M. Germain,<sup>113</sup> A. Gheata,<sup>36</sup> M. Gheata,<sup>62,36</sup> P. Ghosh,<sup>132</sup> S. K. Ghosh,<sup>4</sup> P. Gianotti,<sup>72</sup> P. 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S. Kiselev,<sup>58</sup> A. Kisiel,<sup>133</sup> G. Kiss,<sup>135</sup> J. L. Klay,<sup>6</sup> C. Klein,<sup>53</sup> J. Klein,<sup>36,94</sup> C. Klein-Bösing,<sup>54</sup> S. Klewin,<sup>94</sup> A. Kluge,<sup>36</sup> M. L. Knichel,<sup>94</sup> A. G. Knospe,<sup>118</sup> T. Kobayashi,<sup>128</sup> C. Kobdaj,<sup>114</sup> M. Kofarago,<sup>36</sup> T. Kollegger,<sup>97,43</sup> A. Kolojvari,<sup>131</sup> V. Kondratiev,<sup>131</sup> N. Kondratyeva,<sup>75</sup> E. Kondratyuk,<sup>111</sup> A. Konevskikh,<sup>56</sup> M. Kopcik,<sup>115</sup> M. Kour,<sup>91</sup> C. Kouzinopoulos,<sup>36</sup> O. Kovalenko,<sup>77</sup> V. Kovalenko,<sup>131</sup> M. Kowalski,<sup>117</sup> G. Koyithatta Meethalevedu,<sup>48</sup> I. Králik,<sup>59</sup> A. Kravčáková,<sup>41</sup> M. Kretz,<sup>43</sup> M. Krivda,<sup>101,59</sup> F. Krizek,<sup>84</sup> E. Kryshen,<sup>36</sup> M. Krzewicki,<sup>43</sup> A. M. Kubera,<sup>20</sup> V. Kučera,<sup>84</sup> C. Kuhn,<sup>55</sup> P. G. Kuijjer,<sup>82</sup> A. Kumar,<sup>91</sup> J. Kumar,<sup>48</sup> L. Kumar,<sup>88</sup> S. Kumar,<sup>48</sup> P. Kurashvili,<sup>77</sup> A. Kurepin,<sup>56</sup> A. B. Kurepin,<sup>56</sup> A. Kuryakin,<sup>99</sup> M. J. Kweon,<sup>50</sup> Y. Kwon,<sup>137</sup> S. L. La Pointe,<sup>110</sup> P. La Rocca,<sup>29</sup> P. Ladron de Guevara,<sup>11</sup> C. Lagana Fernandes,<sup>120</sup> I. Lakomov,<sup>36</sup> R. Langoy,<sup>42</sup> C. Lara,<sup>52</sup> A. Lardeux,<sup>15</sup> A. Lattuca,<sup>27</sup> E. Laudi,<sup>36</sup> R. Lea,<sup>26</sup> L. Leardini,<sup>94</sup> G. R. Lee,<sup>101</sup> S. Lee,<sup>137</sup> F. Lehas,<sup>82</sup> R. C. Lemmon,<sup>83</sup> V. Lenti,<sup>103</sup> E. Leogrande,<sup>57</sup> I. León Monzón,<sup>119</sup> H. León Vargas,<sup>64</sup> M. Leoncino,<sup>27</sup> P. Lévai,<sup>135</sup> S. Li,<sup>70,7</sup> X. Li,<sup>14</sup> J. Lien,<sup>42</sup> R. Lietava,<sup>101</sup> S. Lindal,<sup>22</sup> V. Lindenstruth,<sup>43</sup> C. Lippmann,<sup>97</sup> M. A. Lisa,<sup>20</sup> H. M. Ljunggren,<sup>34</sup> D. F. Lodato,<sup>57</sup> P. I. Loenne,<sup>18</sup> V. Loginov,<sup>75</sup> C. Loizides,<sup>74</sup> X. Lopez,<sup>70</sup> E. López Torres,<sup>9</sup> A. Lowe,<sup>135</sup> P. Luetig,<sup>53</sup> M. Lunardon,<sup>30</sup> G. Luparello,<sup>26</sup> A. Maevskaya,<sup>56</sup> M. Mager,<sup>36</sup> S. Mahajan,<sup>91</sup> S. M. Mahmood,<sup>22</sup> A. Maire,<sup>55</sup> R. D. Majka,<sup>136</sup> M. Malaev,<sup>86</sup> I. Maldonado Cervantes,<sup>63</sup> L. Malinina,<sup>66,c</sup> D. Mal'Kevich,<sup>58</sup> P. Malzacher,<sup>97</sup> A. Mamonov,<sup>99</sup> V. Manko,<sup>80</sup> F. Manso,<sup>70</sup> V. Manzari,<sup>36,103</sup> M. Marchisone,<sup>126,27,65</sup> J. Mareš,<sup>60</sup> G. V. Margagliotti,<sup>26</sup> A. Margotti,<sup>104</sup> J. Margutti,<sup>57</sup> A. Marín,<sup>97</sup> C. Markert,<sup>118</sup> M. Marquard,<sup>53</sup> N. A. Martin,<sup>97</sup> J. Martin Blanco,<sup>113</sup> P. Martinengo,<sup>36</sup> M. I. Martínez,<sup>2</sup> G. Martínez García,<sup>113</sup> M. Martinez Pedreira,<sup>36</sup> A. Mas,<sup>120</sup> S. Masciocchi,<sup>97</sup> M. Maserà,<sup>27</sup> A. Masoni,<sup>105</sup> L. Massacrier,<sup>113</sup> A. Mastroserio,<sup>33</sup> A. Matyja,<sup>117</sup> C. Mayer,<sup>117</sup> J. Mazer,<sup>125</sup> M. A. Mazzoni,<sup>108</sup> D. McDonald,<sup>122</sup> F. Meddi,<sup>24</sup> Y. Melikyan,<sup>75</sup> A. Menchaca-Rocha,<sup>64</sup> E. Meninno,<sup>31</sup> J. Mercado Pérez,<sup>94</sup> M. Meres,<sup>39</sup> Y. Miake,<sup>128</sup> M. M. Mieskolainen,<sup>46</sup> K. Mikhaylov,<sup>58,66</sup> L. Milano,<sup>36,74</sup> J. Milosevic,<sup>22</sup> L. M. Minervini,<sup>103,23</sup> A. Mischke,<sup>57</sup> A. N. Mishra,<sup>49</sup> D. Miśkowiec,<sup>97</sup> J. Mitra,<sup>132</sup> C. M. Mitu,<sup>62</sup> N. Mohammadi,<sup>57</sup> B. Mohanty,<sup>132,79</sup> L. Molnar,<sup>113,55</sup> L. 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Nikulin,<sup>80</sup> V. Nikulin,<sup>86</sup> F. Noferini,<sup>12,104</sup> P. Nomokonov,<sup>66</sup> G. Nooren,<sup>57</sup> J. C. C. Noris,<sup>2</sup> J. Norman,<sup>124</sup> A. Nyanin,<sup>80</sup> J. Nystrand,<sup>18</sup> H. Oeschler,<sup>94</sup> S. Oh,<sup>136</sup> S. K. Oh,<sup>67</sup> A. Ohlson,<sup>36</sup> A. Okatan,<sup>69</sup> T. Okubo,<sup>47</sup> L. Olah,<sup>135</sup> J. Oleniacz,<sup>133</sup> A. C. Oliveira Da Silva,<sup>120</sup> M. H. Oliver,<sup>136</sup> J. Onderwaater,<sup>97</sup> C. Oppedisano,<sup>110</sup> R. Orava,<sup>46</sup> A. Ortiz Velasquez,<sup>63</sup> A. Oskarsson,<sup>34</sup> J. Otwinowski,<sup>117</sup> K. Oyama,<sup>94,76</sup> M. Ozdemir,<sup>53</sup> Y. Pachmayer,<sup>94</sup> P. Pagano,<sup>31</sup> G. Paić,<sup>63</sup> S. K. Pal,<sup>132</sup> J. Pan,<sup>134</sup> A. K. Pandey,<sup>48</sup> P. Papcun,<sup>115</sup> V. Papikyan,<sup>1</sup> G. S. Pappalardo,<sup>106</sup> P. Pareek,<sup>49</sup> W. J. Park,<sup>97</sup> S. 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Richert,<sup>34</sup> M. Richter,<sup>22</sup> P. Riedler,<sup>36</sup> W. Riegler,<sup>36</sup> F. Riggi,<sup>29</sup> C. Ristea,<sup>62</sup> E. Rocco,<sup>57</sup> M. Rodríguez Cahuantzi,<sup>2,11</sup> A. Rodríguez Manso,<sup>82</sup> K. Røed,<sup>22</sup> E. Rogochaya,<sup>66</sup> D. Rohr,<sup>43</sup> D. Röhrich,<sup>18</sup> R. Romita,<sup>124</sup> F. Ronchetti,<sup>72,36</sup> L. Ronflette,<sup>113</sup> P. Rosnet,<sup>70</sup> A. Rossi,<sup>30,36</sup> F. Roukoutakis,<sup>89</sup> A. Roy,<sup>49</sup> C. Roy,<sup>55</sup> P. Roy,<sup>100</sup> A. J. Rubio Montero,<sup>10</sup> R. Rui,<sup>26</sup> R. Russo,<sup>27</sup> E. Ryabinkin,<sup>80</sup> Y. Ryabov,<sup>86</sup> A. Rybicki,<sup>117</sup> S. Sadovsky,<sup>111</sup> K. Šafařík,<sup>36</sup> B. Sahlmuller,<sup>53</sup> P. Sahoo,<sup>49</sup> R. Sahoo,<sup>49</sup> S. Sahoo,<sup>61</sup> P. K. Sahu,<sup>61</sup> J. Saini,<sup>132</sup> S. Sakai,<sup>72</sup> M. A. Saleh,<sup>134</sup> J. Salzwedel,<sup>20</sup> S. Sambyal,<sup>91</sup> V. Samsonov,<sup>86</sup> L. Šándor,<sup>59</sup> A. Sandoval,<sup>64</sup> M. Sano,<sup>128</sup> D. Sarkar,<sup>132</sup> E. Scapparone,<sup>104</sup> F. Scarlassara,<sup>30</sup> C. Schiaua,<sup>78</sup> R. Schicker,<sup>94</sup> C. Schmidt,<sup>97</sup> H. R. Schmidt,<sup>35</sup> S. Schuchmann,<sup>53</sup> J. Schukraft,<sup>36</sup> M. Schulc,<sup>40</sup> T. Schuster,<sup>136</sup> Y. Schutz,<sup>36,113</sup> K. Schwarz,<sup>97</sup> K. Schweda,<sup>97</sup> G. Scioli,<sup>28</sup> E. Scomparin,<sup>110</sup> R. Scott,<sup>125</sup> M. Šefčík,<sup>41</sup> J. E. Seger,<sup>87</sup> Y. Sekiguchi,<sup>127</sup> D. Sekihata,<sup>47</sup> I. Selyuzhenkov,<sup>97</sup> K. Senosi,<sup>65</sup> S. Senyukov,<sup>3,36</sup> E. Serradilla,<sup>10,64</sup> A. Sevcenco,<sup>62</sup> A. Shabanov,<sup>56</sup> A. Shabetai,<sup>113</sup> O. Shadura,<sup>3</sup> R. Shahoyan,<sup>36</sup>

A. Shangaraev,<sup>111</sup> A. Sharma,<sup>91</sup> M. Sharma,<sup>91</sup> M. Sharma,<sup>91</sup> N. Sharma,<sup>125</sup> K. Shigaki,<sup>47</sup> K. Shtejer,<sup>9,27</sup> Y. Sibiriak,<sup>80</sup> S. Siddhanta,<sup>105</sup> K. M. Sielewicz,<sup>36</sup> T. Siemiarczuk,<sup>77</sup> D. Silvermyr,<sup>34,85</sup> C. Silvestre,<sup>71</sup> G. Simatovic,<sup>129</sup> G. Simonetti,<sup>36</sup> R. Singaraju,<sup>132</sup> R. Singh,<sup>79</sup> S. Singha,<sup>79,132</sup> V. Singhal,<sup>132</sup> B. C. Sinha,<sup>132</sup> T. Sinha,<sup>100</sup> B. Sitar,<sup>39</sup> M. Sitta,<sup>32</sup> T. B. Skaali,<sup>22</sup> M. Slupecki,<sup>123</sup> N. Smirnov,<sup>136</sup> R. J. M. Snellings,<sup>57</sup> T. W. Snellman,<sup>123</sup> C. Sogaard,<sup>34</sup> J. Song,<sup>96</sup> M. Song,<sup>137</sup> Z. Song,<sup>7</sup> F. Soramel,<sup>30</sup> S. Sorensen,<sup>125</sup> F. Sozzi,<sup>97</sup> M. Spacek,<sup>40</sup> E. Spiriti,<sup>72</sup> I. Sputowska,<sup>117</sup> M. Spyropoulou-Stassinaki,<sup>89</sup> J. Stachel,<sup>94</sup> I. Stan,<sup>62</sup> G. Stefanek,<sup>77</sup> E. Stenlund,<sup>34</sup> G. Steyn,<sup>65</sup> J. H. Stiller,<sup>94</sup> D. Stocco,<sup>113</sup> P. Strmen,<sup>39</sup> A. A. P. Suaide,<sup>120</sup> T. Sugitate,<sup>47</sup> C. Suire,<sup>51</sup> M. Suleymanov,<sup>16</sup> M. Suljic,<sup>26,†</sup> R. Sultanov,<sup>58</sup> M. Šumbera,<sup>84</sup> A. Szabo,<sup>39</sup> A. Szanto de Toledo,<sup>120,†</sup> I. Szarka,<sup>39</sup> A. Szczepankiewicz,<sup>36</sup> M. Szymanski,<sup>133</sup> U. Tabassam,<sup>16</sup> J. Takahashi,<sup>121</sup> G. J. Tambave,<sup>18</sup> N. Tanaka,<sup>128</sup> M. A. Tangaro,<sup>33</sup> M. Tarhini,<sup>51</sup> M. Tariq,<sup>19</sup> M. G. Tarzila,<sup>78</sup> A. Tauro,<sup>36</sup> G. Tejada Muñoz,<sup>2</sup> A. Telesca,<sup>36</sup> K. Terasaki,<sup>127</sup> C. Terrevoli,<sup>30</sup> B. Teyssier,<sup>130</sup> J. Thäder,<sup>74</sup> D. Thomas,<sup>118</sup> R. Tieulent,<sup>130</sup> A. R. Timmins,<sup>122</sup> A. Toia,<sup>53</sup> S. Trogolo,<sup>27</sup> G. Trombetta,<sup>33</sup> V. Trubnikov,<sup>3</sup> W. H. Trzaska,<sup>123</sup> T. Tsuji,<sup>127</sup> A. Tumkin,<sup>99</sup> R. Turrisi,<sup>107</sup> T. S. Tveter,<sup>22</sup> K. Ullaland,<sup>18</sup> A. Uras,<sup>130</sup> G. L. Usai,<sup>25</sup> A. Utrobicic,<sup>129</sup> M. Vajzer,<sup>84</sup> M. Vala,<sup>59</sup> L. Valencia Palomo,<sup>70</sup> S. Vallero,<sup>27</sup> J. Van Der Maarel,<sup>57</sup> J. W. Van Hoorne,<sup>36</sup> M. van Leeuwen,<sup>57</sup> T. Vanat,<sup>84</sup> P. Vande Vyvre,<sup>36</sup> D. Varga,<sup>135</sup> A. Vargas,<sup>2</sup> M. Vargyas,<sup>123</sup> R. Varma,<sup>48</sup> M. Vasileiou,<sup>89</sup> A. Vasiliev,<sup>80</sup> A. Vauthier,<sup>71</sup> V. Vechemin,<sup>131</sup> A. M. Veen,<sup>57</sup> M. Veldhoen,<sup>57</sup> A. Velure,<sup>18</sup> M. Venaruzzo,<sup>73</sup> E. Vercellin,<sup>27</sup> S. Vergara Limón,<sup>2</sup> R. Vernet,<sup>8</sup> M. Verweij,<sup>134</sup> L. Vickovic,<sup>116</sup> G. Viesti,<sup>30,†</sup> J. Viinikainen,<sup>123</sup> Z. Vilakazi,<sup>126</sup> O. Villalobos Baillie,<sup>101</sup> A. Villatoro Tello,<sup>2</sup> A. Vinogradov,<sup>80</sup> L. Vinogradov,<sup>131</sup> Y. Vinogradov,<sup>99,†</sup> T. Virgili,<sup>31</sup> V. Vislavicius,<sup>34</sup> Y. P. Viyogi,<sup>132</sup> A. Vodopyanov,<sup>66</sup> M. A. Völkl,<sup>94</sup> K. Voloshin,<sup>58</sup> S. A. Voloshin,<sup>134</sup> G. Volpe,<sup>135</sup> B. von Haller,<sup>36</sup> I. Vorobyev,<sup>37,93</sup> D. Vranic,<sup>97,36</sup> J. Vrláková,<sup>41</sup> B. Vulpescu,<sup>70</sup> A. Vyushin,<sup>99</sup> B. Wagner,<sup>18</sup> J. Wagner,<sup>97</sup> H. Wang,<sup>57</sup> M. Wang,<sup>7,113</sup> D. Watanabe,<sup>128</sup> Y. Watanabe,<sup>127</sup> M. Weber,<sup>112,36</sup> S. G. Weber,<sup>97</sup> D. F. Weiser,<sup>94</sup> J. P. Wessels,<sup>54</sup> U. Westerhoff,<sup>54</sup> A. M. Whitehead,<sup>90</sup> J. Wiechula,<sup>35</sup> J. Wikne,<sup>22</sup> M. Wilde,<sup>54</sup> G. Wilk,<sup>77</sup> J. Wilkinson,<sup>94</sup> M. C. S. Williams,<sup>104</sup> B. Windelband,<sup>94</sup> M. Winn,<sup>94</sup> C. G. Yaldo,<sup>134</sup> H. Yang,<sup>57</sup> P. Yang,<sup>7</sup> S. Yano,<sup>47</sup> C. Yasar,<sup>69</sup> Z. Yin,<sup>7</sup> H. Yokoyama,<sup>128</sup> I.-K. Yoo,<sup>96</sup> J. H. Yoon,<sup>50</sup> V. Yurchenko,<sup>3</sup> I. Yushmanov,<sup>80</sup> A. Zaborowska,<sup>133</sup> V. Zaccolo,<sup>81</sup> A. Zaman,<sup>16</sup> C. Zampolli,<sup>104</sup> H. J. C. Zanoli,<sup>120</sup> S. Zaporozhets,<sup>66</sup> N. Zardoshti,<sup>101</sup> A. Zarochentsev,<sup>131</sup> P. Závada,<sup>60</sup> N. Zaviyalov,<sup>99</sup> H. Zbroszczyk,<sup>133</sup> I. S. Zgura,<sup>62</sup> M. Zhalov,<sup>86</sup> H. Zhang,<sup>18</sup> X. Zhang,<sup>74</sup> Y. Zhang,<sup>7</sup> C. Zhang,<sup>57</sup> Z. Zhang,<sup>7</sup> C. Zhao,<sup>22</sup> N. Zhigareva,<sup>58</sup> D. Zhou,<sup>7</sup> Y. Zhou,<sup>81</sup> Z. Zhou,<sup>18</sup> H. Zhu,<sup>18</sup> J. Zhu,<sup>113,7</sup> A. Zichichi,<sup>28,12</sup> A. Zimmermann,<sup>94</sup> M. B. Zimmermann,<sup>36,54</sup> G. Zinovjev,<sup>3</sup> and M. Zyzak<sup>43</sup>

(ALICE Collaboration)

<sup>1</sup>A. I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Physics Institute) Foundation, Yerevan, Armenia<sup>2</sup>Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Puebla, Mexico<sup>3</sup>Bogolyubov Institute for Theoretical Physics, Kiev, Ukraine<sup>4</sup>Bose Institute, Department of Physics and Centre for Astroparticle Physics and Space Science (CAPSS), Kolkata, India<sup>5</sup>Budker Institute for Nuclear Physics, Novosibirsk, Russia<sup>6</sup>California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California, USA<sup>7</sup>Central China Normal University, Wuhan, China<sup>8</sup>Centre de Calcul de l'IN2P3, Villeurbanne, France<sup>9</sup>Centro de Aplicaciones Tecnológicas y Desarrollo Nuclear (CEADEN), Havana, Cuba<sup>10</sup>Centro de Investigaciones Energéticas Medioambientales y Tecnológicas (CIEMAT), Madrid, Spain<sup>11</sup>Centro de Investigación y de Estudios Avanzados (CINVESTAV), Mexico City and Mérida, Mexico<sup>12</sup>Centro Fermi—Museo Storico della Fisica e Centro Studi e Ricerche “Enrico Fermi,” Rome, Italy<sup>13</sup>Chicago State University, Chicago, Illinois, USA<sup>14</sup>China Institute of Atomic Energy, Beijing, China<sup>15</sup>Commissariat à l’Energie Atomique, IRFU, Saclay, France<sup>16</sup>COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Islamabad, Pakistan<sup>17</sup>Departamento de Física de Partículas and IGFAE, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Santiago de Compostela, Spain<sup>18</sup>Department of Physics and Technology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway<sup>19</sup>Department of Physics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India<sup>20</sup>Department of Physics, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA<sup>21</sup>Department of Physics, Sejong University, Seoul, South Korea<sup>22</sup>Department of Physics, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway<sup>23</sup>Dipartimento di Elettrotecnica ed Elettronica del Politecnico, Bari, Italy

- <sup>24</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università 'La Sapienza' and Sezione INFN, Rome, Italy*
- <sup>25</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Cagliari, Italy*
- <sup>26</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Trieste, Italy*
- <sup>27</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Turin, Italy*
- <sup>28</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Bologna, Italy*
- <sup>29</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Catania, Italy*
- <sup>30</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia dell'Università and Sezione INFN, Padova, Italy*
- <sup>31</sup>*Dipartimento di Fisica "E.R. Caianiello" dell'Università and Gruppo Collegato INFN, Salerno, Italy*
- <sup>32</sup>*Dipartimento di Scienze e Innovazione Tecnologica dell'Università del Piemonte Orientale and Gruppo Collegato INFN, Alessandria, Italy*
- <sup>33</sup>*Dipartimento Interateneo di Fisica "M. Merlin" and Sezione INFN, Bari, Italy*
- <sup>34</sup>*Division of Experimental High Energy Physics, University of Lund, Lund, Sweden*
- <sup>35</sup>*Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany*
- <sup>36</sup>*European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), Geneva, Switzerland*
- <sup>37</sup>*Excellence Cluster Universe, Technische Universität München, Munich, Germany*
- <sup>38</sup>*Faculty of Engineering, Bergen University College, Bergen, Norway*
- <sup>39</sup>*Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Informatics, Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia*
- <sup>40</sup>*Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering, Czech Technical University in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic*
- <sup>41</sup>*Faculty of Science, P.J. Šafárik University, Košice, Slovakia*
- <sup>42</sup>*Faculty of Technology, Buskerud and Vestfold University College, Vestfold, Norway*
- <sup>43</sup>*Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany*
- <sup>44</sup>*Gangneung-Wonju National University, Gangneung, South Korea*
- <sup>45</sup>*Gauhati University, Department of Physics, Guwahati, India*
- <sup>46</sup>*Helsinki Institute of Physics (HIP), Helsinki, Finland*
- <sup>47</sup>*Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan*
- <sup>48</sup>*Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT), Mumbai, India*
- <sup>49</sup>*Indian Institute of Technology Indore, Indore (IITI), India*
- <sup>50</sup>*Inha University, Incheon, South Korea*
- <sup>51</sup>*Institut de Physique Nucléaire d'Orsay (IPNO), Université Paris-Sud, CNRS-IN2P3, Orsay, France*
- <sup>52</sup>*Institut für Informatik, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany*
- <sup>53</sup>*Institut für Kernphysik, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany*
- <sup>54</sup>*Institut für Kernphysik, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Münster, Germany*
- <sup>55</sup>*Institut Pluridisciplinaire Hubert Curien (IPHC), Université de Strasbourg, CNRS-IN2P3, Strasbourg, France*
- <sup>56</sup>*Institute for Nuclear Research, Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia*
- <sup>57</sup>*Institute for Subatomic Physics of Utrecht University, Utrecht, Netherlands*
- <sup>58</sup>*Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics, Moscow, Russia*
- <sup>59</sup>*Institute of Experimental Physics, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Košice, Slovakia*
- <sup>60</sup>*Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic*
- <sup>61</sup>*Institute of Physics, Bhubaneswar, India*
- <sup>62</sup>*Institute of Space Science (ISS), Bucharest, Romania*
- <sup>63</sup>*Instituto de Ciencias Nucleares, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico*
- <sup>64</sup>*Instituto de Física, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico*
- <sup>65</sup>*iThemba LABS, National Research Foundation, Somerset West, South Africa*
- <sup>66</sup>*Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (JINR), Dubna, Russia*
- <sup>67</sup>*Konkuk University, Seoul, South Korea*
- <sup>68</sup>*Korea Institute of Science and Technology Information, Daejeon, South Korea*
- <sup>69</sup>*KTO Karatay University, Konya, Turkey*
- <sup>70</sup>*Laboratoire de Physique Corpusculaire (LPC), Clermont Université, Université Blaise Pascal, CNRS-IN2P3, Clermont-Ferrand, France*
- <sup>71</sup>*Laboratoire de Physique Subatomique et de Cosmologie, Université Grenoble-Alpes, CNRS-IN2P3, Grenoble, France*
- <sup>72</sup>*Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, INFN, Frascati, Italy*
- <sup>73</sup>*Laboratori Nazionali di Legnaro, INFN, Legnaro, Italy*
- <sup>74</sup>*Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, California, USA*
- <sup>75</sup>*Moscow Engineering Physics Institute, Moscow, Russia*
- <sup>76</sup>*Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science, Nagasaki, Japan*
- <sup>77</sup>*National Centre for Nuclear Studies, Warsaw, Poland*
- <sup>78</sup>*National Institute for Physics and Nuclear Engineering, Bucharest, Romania*

- <sup>79</sup>National Institute of Science Education and Research, Bhubaneswar, India  
<sup>80</sup>National Research Centre Kurchatov Institute, Moscow, Russia  
<sup>81</sup>Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark  
<sup>82</sup>Nikhef, Nationaal instituut voor subatomaire fysica, Amsterdam, Netherlands  
<sup>83</sup>Nuclear Physics Group, STFC Daresbury Laboratory, Daresbury, United Kingdom  
<sup>84</sup>Nuclear Physics Institute, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Řež u Prahy, Czech Republic  
<sup>85</sup>Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, USA  
<sup>86</sup>Petersburg Nuclear Physics Institute, Gatchina, Russia  
<sup>87</sup>Physics Department, Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, USA  
<sup>88</sup>Physics Department, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India  
<sup>89</sup>Physics Department, University of Athens, Athens, Greece  
<sup>90</sup>Physics Department, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa  
<sup>91</sup>Physics Department, University of Jammu, Jammu, India  
<sup>92</sup>Physics Department, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India  
<sup>93</sup>Physik Department, Technische Universität München, Munich, Germany  
<sup>94</sup>Physikalisches Institut, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany  
<sup>95</sup>Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA  
<sup>96</sup>Pusan National University, Pusan, South Korea  
<sup>97</sup>Research Division and ExtreMe Matter Institute EMMI, GSI Helmholtzzentrum für Schwerionenforschung, Darmstadt, Germany  
<sup>98</sup>Rudjer Bošković Institute, Zagreb, Croatia  
<sup>99</sup>Russian Federal Nuclear Center (VNIIEF), Sarov, Russia  
<sup>100</sup>Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata, India  
<sup>101</sup>School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom  
<sup>102</sup>Sección Física, Departamento de Ciencias, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Peru  
<sup>103</sup>Sezione INFN, Bari, Italy  
<sup>104</sup>Sezione INFN, Bologna, Italy  
<sup>105</sup>Sezione INFN, Cagliari, Italy  
<sup>106</sup>Sezione INFN, Catania, Italy  
<sup>107</sup>Sezione INFN, Padova, Italy  
<sup>108</sup>Sezione INFN, Rome, Italy  
<sup>109</sup>Sezione INFN, Trieste, Italy  
<sup>110</sup>Sezione INFN, Turin, Italy  
<sup>111</sup>SSC IHEP of NRC Kurchatov institute, Protvino, Russia  
<sup>112</sup>Stefan Meyer Institut für Subatomare Physik (SMI), Vienna, Austria  
<sup>113</sup>SUBATECH, Ecole des Mines de Nantes, Université de Nantes, CNRS-IN2P3, Nantes, France  
<sup>114</sup>Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand  
<sup>115</sup>Technical University of Košice, Košice, Slovakia  
<sup>116</sup>Technical University of Split FESB, Split, Croatia  
<sup>117</sup>The Henryk Niewodniczanski Institute of Nuclear Physics, Polish Academy of Sciences, Cracow, Poland  
<sup>118</sup>The University of Texas at Austin, Physics Department, Austin, Texas, USA  
<sup>119</sup>Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, Culiacán, Mexico  
<sup>120</sup>Universidade de São Paulo (USP), São Paulo, Brazil  
<sup>121</sup>Universidade Estadual de Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas, Brazil  
<sup>122</sup>University of Houston, Houston, Texas, USA  
<sup>123</sup>University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland  
<sup>124</sup>University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom  
<sup>125</sup>University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, USA  
<sup>126</sup>University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa  
<sup>127</sup>University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan  
<sup>128</sup>University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan  
<sup>129</sup>University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia  
<sup>130</sup>Université de Lyon, Université Lyon 1, CNRS/IN2P3, IPN-Lyon, Villeurbanne, France  
<sup>131</sup>V. Fock Institute for Physics, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia  
<sup>132</sup>Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre, Kolkata, India  
<sup>133</sup>Warsaw University of Technology, Warsaw, Poland  
<sup>134</sup>Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, USA  
<sup>135</sup>Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary  
<sup>136</sup>Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA  
<sup>137</sup>Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

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<sup>138</sup>*Zentrum für Technologietransfer und Telekommunikation (ZTT), Fachhochschule Worms,  
Worms, Germany*

<sup>†</sup>Deceased.

<sup>a</sup>Also at Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

<sup>b</sup>Also at Department of Applied Physics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India.

<sup>c</sup>Also at M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, D.V. Skobeltsyn Institute of Nuclear, Physics, Moscow, Russia.