Detector R&D Effort in Belgium for HEP and Beyond-HEP Applications

This talk covers:

- ☐ Selected (still) ongoing R&D for CMS
- R&D for Future Colliders
 - Calorimetry with T-SDHCAL
 - Vertex Detector with MAPS
- Beyond-HEP Applications
 - Muon Radiography
 - Flash Dosimetry
- ☐ Concluding remarks
- (Belgium in DRD collaborations)



- ☐ CMS Phase-2 Upgrade
 - Silicon Strip Tracker
 - Muon System (RPC/GEM)
- □ NA62/Ship
- MilliQan/Formosa
- ☐ IceCube/RNO-G/AUGER/JUNO
- **...**





Many thanks to all colleagues for providing input

Michael Tytgat RECFA Visit to Belgium September 12, 2025

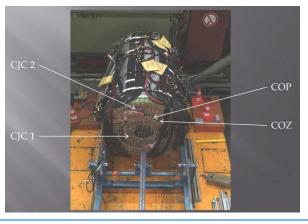
(Examples of) Past R&D in Belgium

a)





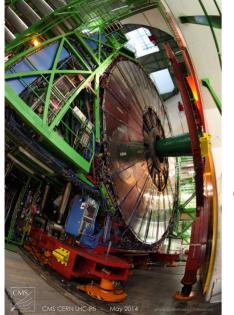
b)

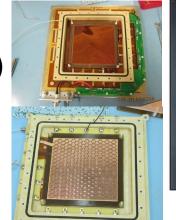


Belgium has a long tradition in R&D of gaseous detectors

- mid-80's: Drift chambers for the Muon system of Delphi
- mid-90's: COP (Central Outer Proportional chamber) of H1
- end of 90's: MSGC (Micro-Strip Gas Chambers) and their variants as option for CMS Tracker
- 2000's-now: Resistive Plate Chambers (RPC) for CMS Muon
- 2009-now: Gas Electron Multipliers (GEMs) for CMS Muon







GE1/1-I **GE1/1-II**









d)

(2010)

(2011)

GE1/1-III (2012)

GE1/1-IV (2013)

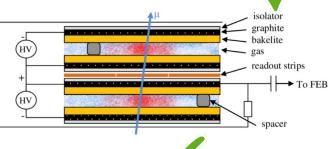
GE1/1-V-S (2014)

GE1/1-VI-L (2015)

From CMS to the future ...

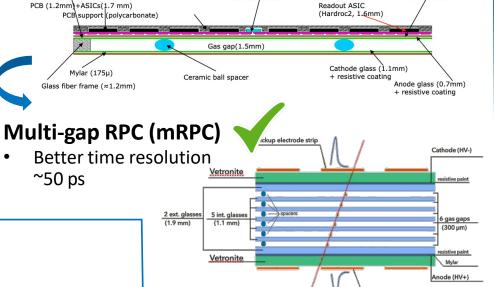
Readout pads

CMS standard Bakelite RPC



glass RPC (gRPC)

- Excellent surface quality, i.e. no electrode oiling or humidified gas needed
- Simplified gap assembly procedure
- Higher rate capability (with e.g. doped glass)

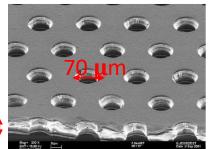


R&D for Future
Colliders and BeyondHEP applications

Michael Tytgat - RECFA visits Belgium

CMS Standard GEM

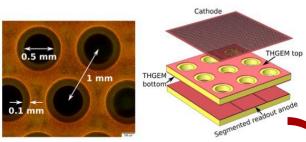
- Thin (50 μm) Kapton foil
- Chemical etching to create the holes



50 μm

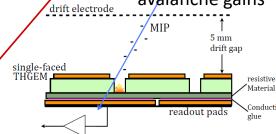
Thick GEM (TGEM)

 Printed Circuit Board (PCB) with mechanically drilled holes



Resistive MPGD, e.g. RPWELL

Discharge-free operation at high gasavalanche gains



Sep. 12 2025

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Selected ongoing R&D for CMS

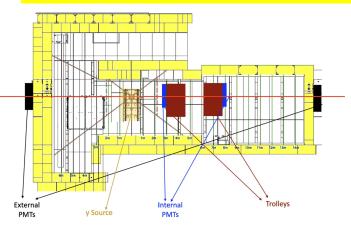
(CMS Muon-)RPC: ecogas studies

- Standard RPC gas $C_2H_2F_4$ (~95%)/ C_4H_{10} / $SF_6 \rightarrow$ F-gases, high Green Warming Potential (GWP)
- 2013: global phase-down in EU of F-gases → huge cost increase & reduced availability in Europe
- > Search for alternative, low GWP, low toxicity, non-flammable gases, yielding RPC performance similar to standard RPC mixture (and compatible with current RPC electronics and HV @ LHC)
- > Study ageing effects to ensure long-term stable operation

RPC Ecogas@GIF++ Collaboration (2019-...)

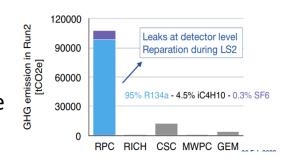
- Long-term RPC ageing tests with alternative eco-friendly gas mixtures under LHC irradiation conditions @ CERN GIF++ (12.5 TBq ¹³⁷Cs source + 150 GeV/c muon test beam facility)
- RPCs with different technical layouts (CMS, ATLAS, ALICE, LHCb/Ship, CERN EDPT)
- \triangleright Currently testing: replacing $C_2H_2F_4$ by $C_3H_2F_4$ ze + CO_2

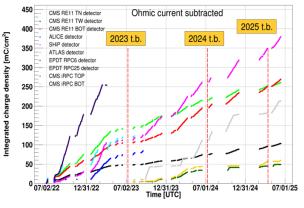
VUB (past:UGent); activity supported by AIDAinnova (WP7) H2020 project (2021-2025); embedded in DRD1

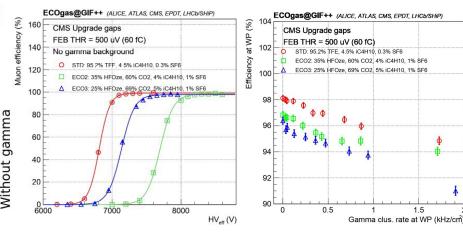




	R134-a (%)	HFO-1234ze (%)	CO ₂ (%)	i-C ₄ H ₁₀ (%)	SF ₆ (%)	GWP _{MIX}
GWP	1430	7	1	3	22800	
Density (g/L)	4.68	5.26	1.98	2.69	6.61	
STD	95.2			4.5	0.3	1486
ECO2		35	60	4	1	476
ECO3		25	69	5	1	527







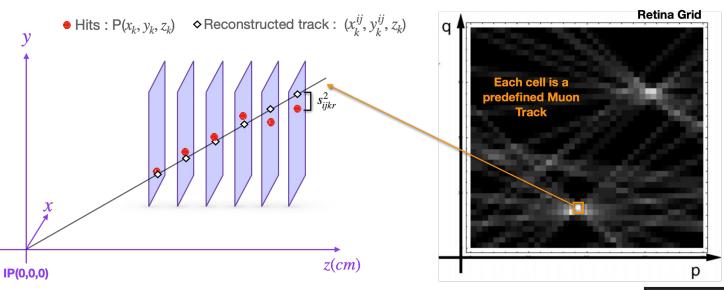
[M. Abresscia et al., Performance and long-term aging studies on Eco-Friendly Resistive Plate Chamber detectors, NIM-A 1080 (2025) 170624]

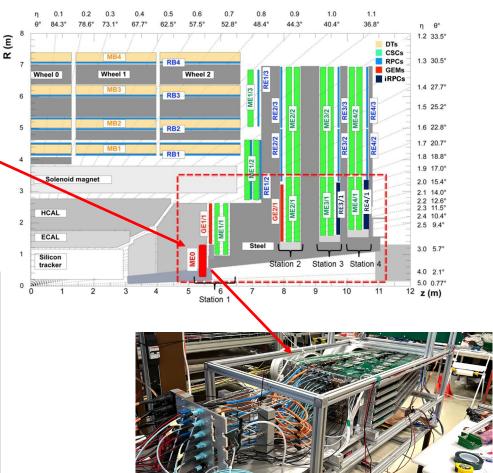
CMS Muon-GEM: MEO retina algorithm



MEO:

- 6 layers of triple-GEM chambers at $2.0 < |\eta| < 2.8$
- Retina algorithm for track reconstruction
 - inspired by visual mechanism in mammals
 - highly parallelized → suitable for FPGA
 - robust to background hits
 - ME0 geometry is perfectly suitable





$$R_{ij} = \sum_{k,r} \exp\left(-\frac{s_{ijkr}^2}{2\sigma^2}\right) \longrightarrow s_{ijkr} = x_r^{(k)} - y_k(p_i, q_j)$$

$$\longrightarrow \text{Width of response function}$$

CMS Tracker: Digi-morphing for HLT



Significant radiation damage is expected in the remainder of Run 3 for silicon sensors in the CMS pixel detector

- Decrease of charge collection efficiency → loss of pixels
 - Pixels missing inside clusters → split or broken clusters
 - Pixels missing at end of clusters → shorter clusters

➤ Consequence of cluster splitting: more off-track clusters, fake/duplicate tracks, reduced resolution, and large hit position bias

Un-irradiated cluster

Re-weighted, irradiated cluster

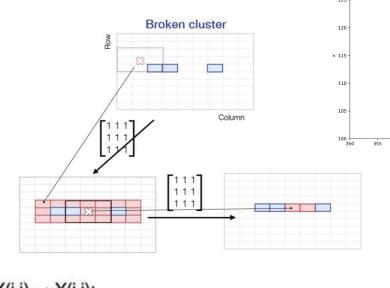
Pixels in cluster with threshold thr1

Pixel in clusters with threshold thr2

Pixels in cluster with threshold thr3

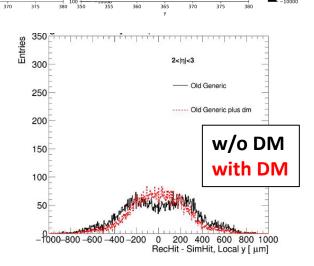
➤ Solution: An image morphing-based "closing" technique to reconnect fragmented clusters

- ➤ Algorithm operates directly at pixel (Digi) level; offline and High-Level Trigger (HLT) versions (GPU)
- Employ convolution operations using dilate + erode kernels to insert "extra pixels" into broken pixel clusters



• dilate: $X(i,j) \rightarrow Y(i,j)$: $Y(i,j) = \max X(i+k,j+l)$ for all (k,l) where M(k,l)!=0 in a kernel M

→ erode: same, but "min" instead of "max"



Future Colliders

I. RPC-based calorimeter

The Semi-Digital HCAL (SDHCAL) is

- a gaseous detector-based, highly-granular option for an HCAL based on PFA
- part of the International Large Detector (ILD) baseline detector option, originally proposed for ILC/CEPC, and now also submitted to FCCee

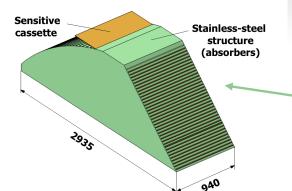
SDHCAL structure:

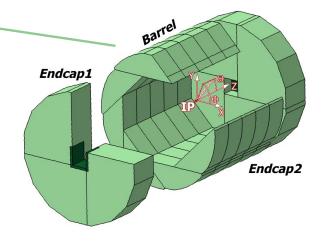
- very compact with negligible dead zones
- eliminates projective cracks
- minimizes barrel / endcap separation (services leaving from the outer radius)

SDHCAL technological prototype aimed to be as close as possible to ILD modules, with ability to study **hadronic showers**;

challenges include:

- Homogeneity for large surfaces (up to 3m length)
- Thickness of a few mms only
- Lateral segmentation of 1 cm x 1 cm
- Services from one side
- Embedded (power-cycled) electronics
- Self-supporting mechanical structure





VUB in ILD

SDHCAL prototype

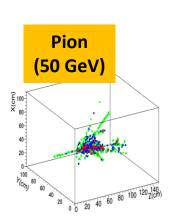
UGent in CALICE (2009-2023); supported by FWO project

SDHCAL was developed inside CALICE Collaboration:

- sampling calorimeter, i.e. stainless steel absorber alternated with single-gap glass resistive plate chambers
- 48-50 layers $(-6\lambda_1)$; ~1.3m³ prototype
- 1 cm x 1 cm readout granularity with pads; ~450k channels (more than full CMS calorimeter system already ...)
- 3-threshold readout with 64-ch HARDROC ASICs (144 ASICs or 9k ch/m²)
- Triggerless DAQ system using power-pulsing scheme tailored to ILC (to be modified for FCCee)
- Self-supporting mechanical structure made with stainless steel plates
- Collaborators mainly from France, Spain, Belgium, Korea, China

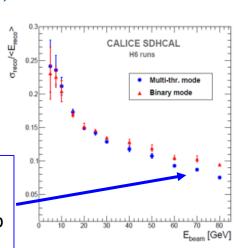
Initial beam tests with small gRPCs in 2009

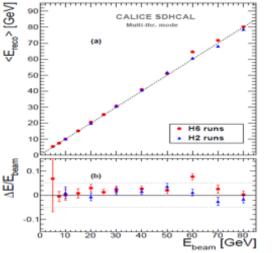
SDHCAL prototype was exposed to beam particles at CERN PS, SPS in 2012, 2015, 2017,2018 and 2022



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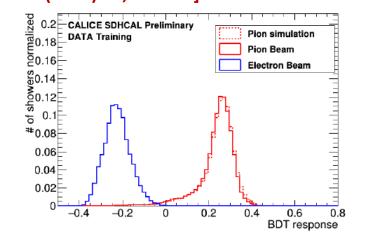
multi-threshold mode (semidigital) does help at high energy!





[G. Baulieu et al., Construction and commissioning of a technological prototype of a high-granularity semi-digital hadronic calorimeter,

JINST 10 (2015) 10, P10039]



[D. Boumediene et al., Energy reconstruction of hadronic showers at the CERN PS and SPS using the Semi-Digital Hadronic Calorimeter, JINST 17 (2022) 07, P07017]

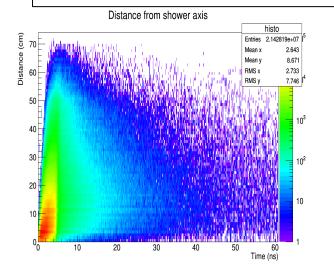
Timing-SDHCAL

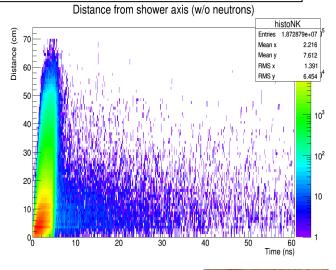
Next step: Timing-SDHCAL (5D calorimetry), i.e. timing capabilities of calorimeter systems open up new possibilities for TOF, LLP, shower reconstruction ...; hadronic showers show a complex time structure, with late components connected to neutron-induced processes; e.g. 100ps timing precision could aid in shower energy reconstruction and shower separation

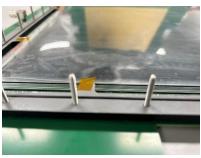
- → replace single-gap RPCs in SDHCAL with advanced 100ps multi-gap RPCs; R&D on:
- large-area detectors for ILD-like concept
- optimization of timing precision, rate capability (new materials ?)
- new front-end electronics, i.e. high time precision + continuous readout for circular colliders
 - → baseline: Petiroc ASIC future: LIROC ASIC + PicoTDC
- new detector cooling system

[M. Tytgat et al., *Towards the T-SDHCAL hadronic calorimeter for a future Higgs factory*, NIM-A 1077 (2025) 170520]

Separate delayed neutrons for better energy reconstruction

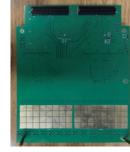






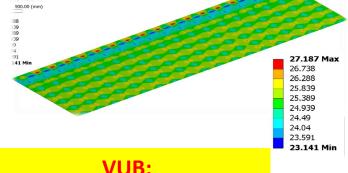












embedded in DRD6/DRD1

II. MAPS-based vertex detector

Higgs and heavy flavor physics @ FCC-ee imposes stringent performance requirements for vertex detectors:

- 3 μm point resolution and 20 ns timing resolution
- sensor thickness smaller than 50 μm and material budget of $\lesssim 0.3~\%$ of X_0
- Power consumption ≤ 50 mW cm⁻² to allow for air-cooling
- few 10¹³cm⁻²n_{eq}/year fluence per year
- 100 kGy/year total ionizing dose
- O(100MHz cm⁻²) highest particle hit rate for the innermost layer at a radius of 1.37 cm
- Acceptance up to $|\cos \theta| < 0.99$ for all layers

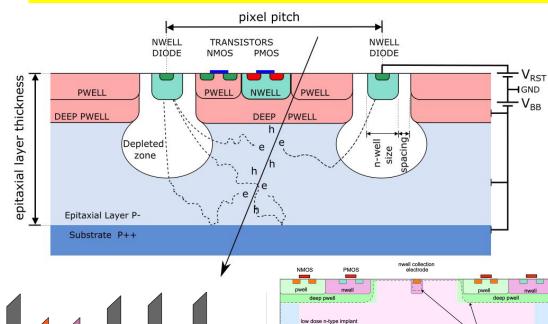
CMOS Monolithic Active Pixel Sensors (MAPS) are ideal candidates for FCC-ee vertex detectors thanks to

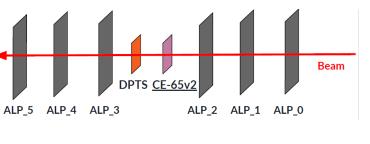
- possibility of thinning them to small thicknesses
- feasibility of achieving a small pitch and low-power dissipation

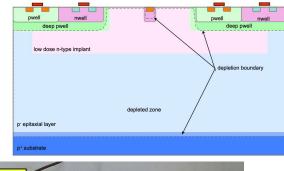
→ R&D is needed to fulfill all requirements at the same time:

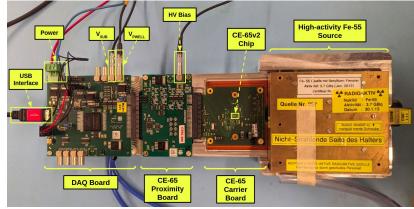
- 65nm TPSCo CMOS technology
- Lab tests with ⁵⁵Fe radioactive source (UZH)
- Beam tests with 120 GeV hadrons at CERN SPS

VUB; supported by SNSF-FWO Weave project (UZH-VUB)









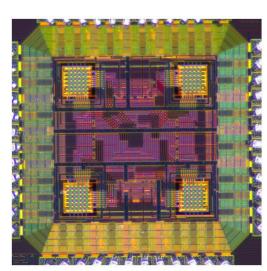
MAPS R&D

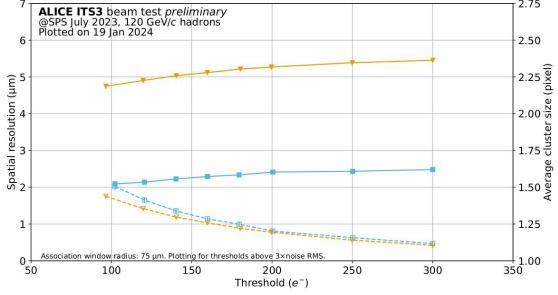
ALICE ITS3-like Analogue Pixel Test Structure multiplexer for performance characterization of MAPS in 65nm CMOS

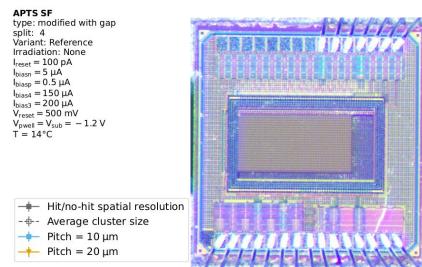
- 6x6 pixel matrix
- Direct analog readout of central 4x4 pixels
- Pitch: 10, 15, 20, 25 μm
- Readout: source-follower, in-pixel amplifier + source-follower
- Coupling: DC, AC
- Process: Standard, Modified, Modified with Gap
- Pixel Geometry: four variants

CE-65 "Circuit Exploratoire"

- Developed by IPHC Strasbourg in 65nm TPSCo CMOS
- Two generations: CE-65v1 (MLR1), CE-65v2 (ER1)
- Four exploration axes:
 - Amplification scheme: AC-amp., DC-amp., SF
 - Process: Standard, Modified, Modified w/Gap
 - Pitch variation: 15 μm, 18 μm, 22.5 μm
 - Matrix geometry: square vs staggered







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[K. Gautam et al., Characterisation of analogue MAPS fabricated in 65 nm technology for the ALICE ITS3, NIM-A 1068 (2024) 169787]

[E. Ploerer et al., Characterisation of analogue MAPS produced in the 65 nm TPSCo process, JINST 20 (2025) 01, C01019]

Beyond-HEP Applications

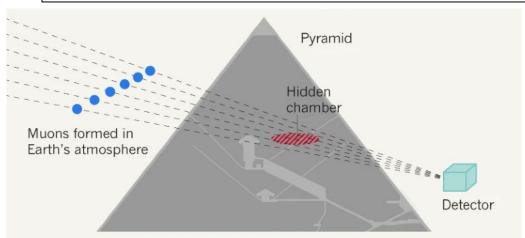
I. Muon Radiography

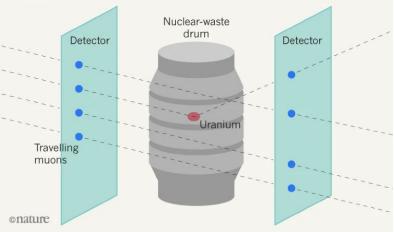
An imaging technique that utilizes naturally occurring cosmic-ray muons to probe the internal structure of large-scale objects

Absorption/transmission muography

VS.

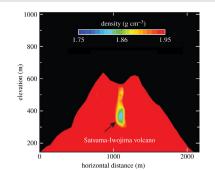
scattering muography

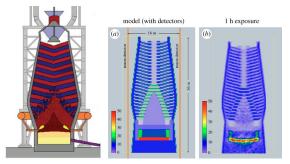




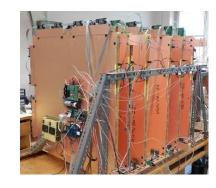
- Common detector technologies for muography:
- Plastic scintillators
- Nuclear emulsions
- Gaseous detectors (MWPC, Micromegas, RPC ...)

- sensitive to density
- 2D image, also 3D with multiple viewpoints
- applicable to very large targets
- relies on knowledge of incident muon flux





- sensitive to atomic number
- 3D image
- small to medium size targets
- high position resolution, large area detectors



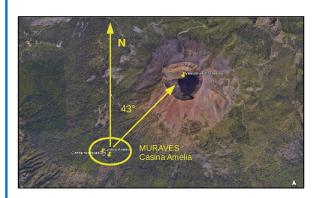
➤ HEP technology for interdisciplinary scientific research (geoscience, archaeology ...), industrial applications, nuclear safety ...

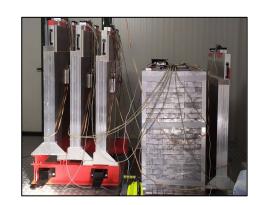
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Muraves and ScIDEP projects

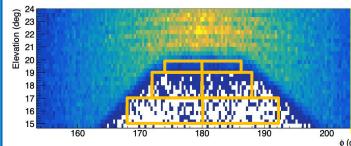
Plastic scintillator based muon telescopes for absorption muography studies of

Mt. Vesuvius, Italy (Muraves)









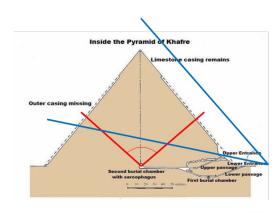
Sep. 12 2025

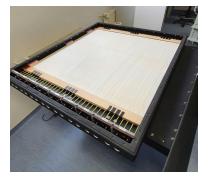
Italy + UCLouvain & VUB; data taking since 2019; supported by FNRS-FWO Weave project

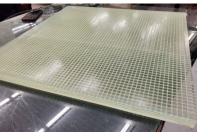
[Y. Hong et al., *Updates on MURAVES Project at Mt. Vesuvius*. J.Appl.Phys. 138 (2025) 6. 064906]

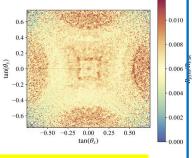
Pyramids at Giza, Egypt (ScIDEP)

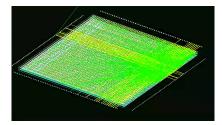












Egypt, USA, Romania + VUB detector R&D since 2020

[M. Gamal et al., The ScIDEP muon radiography project at the Egyptian Pyramid of Khafre, J.Appl.Phys. 138 (2025) 4, 044901]

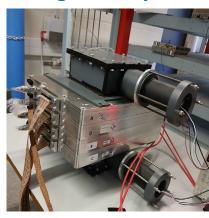
Vesuvius, J.Appl.Phys. 138 (2025) 6, 064906] Michael Tytgat - RECLA visits Belgium

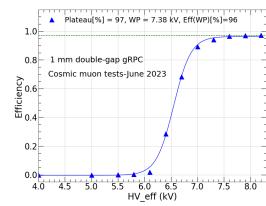
Portable Muoscope Project

R&D of a general-purpose, portable gaseous detector based muon telescope for muography applications in confined/remote environments (geology, archaeology, civil engineering, and industrial safety ...):

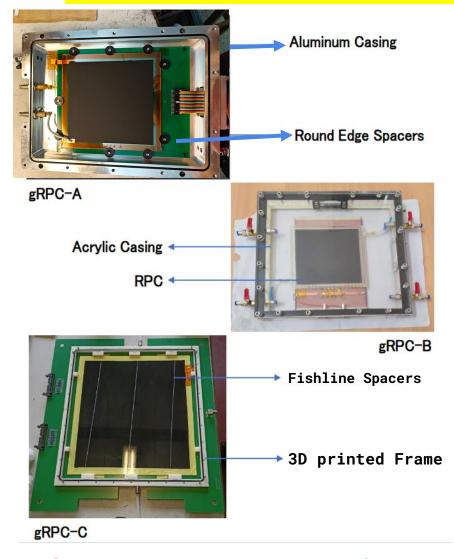
- single/double-gap glass-RPC based muon telescope
- design featured by compactness, portability, robustness, autonomous operation, low power & gas consumption, modular geometry ...

Detector	Α	В	С			
Institute	UCLouvain	NISER	UGent/VUB			
Size	16 × 16 cm ²	16 × 16 cm ²	$28 \times 28 \text{ cm}^2$			
Outer Casing	Aluminum casing	Standalone RPC housed in acrylic casing	Closed with top and bottom PCBs			
Readout Strips	16-1D	16 × 16 – 2D	32 × 32 – 2D			
Strip Pitch	1 cm	1 cm	0.8 cm			
Gas mixture	95.2% Freon, 0.3% SF6, 4.5% isobutane					
Gas Gap	1 mm Single gap	2 mm Single gap	1 mm Double gap			
Thickness of Electrodes	1.1 mm	3.0 mm	1.1 mm			
Resistive Coating	Serigraphy (~ 4 M Ω / \square) and Hand-painted (0.5-1.0 M Ω / \square)	Spray gun (~ 1 MΩ/□)	Spray gun (~ 1.5 MΩ/□)			
DAQ	NIM + CEAN integrated / custom made and ASIC + FPGA					
Portability	Yes	Yes (Currently operating in gas flow mode)	Yes (Currently operating in gas flow mode)			





UCLouvain, VUB (past: UGent) + India; embedded in DRD1



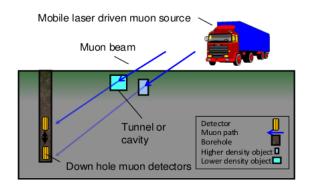
[S. Ikram et al., Development and Performance
Analysis of Glass-Based Gas-Tight RPCs for Muography
Applications, arxiv: 2504.08146 [physics.ins-det]]

Portable Muoscope @ ELI Laser-Driven Muon Source



Compact (<100m²) GeV muon production driven by laser electron acceleration at ELI (Extreme Light Infrastructure) Beamlines laser centre (near Prague, Czech Republic)



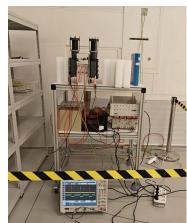


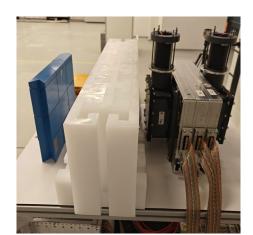
Multi-PW lasers can produce >GeV e- beams, yielding 10³⁻⁴ μ/shot

- Controllable Energy: control over the energy of the beam
 → wide energy cosmic muon spectrum
- **Known Directionality**: well-defined beam direction ↔ random directions of cosmic muons

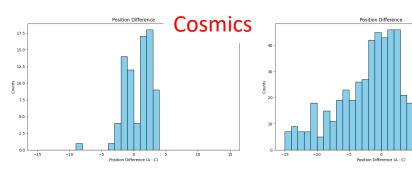


Sep. 12 2025





First muon source users at ELI, now in 2025! Data taking with portable RPC muoscope in April-May and August 2025; data analysis ongoing



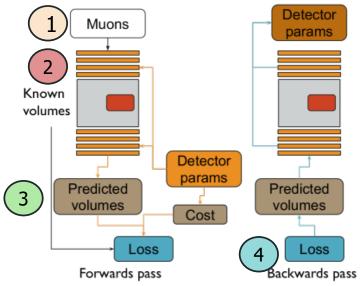
Beam

TomOpt & Silentborder

Muon scattering Optimisation
Tomography



- Optimisation of scattering muography detector design with differentiable programming
- End-to-end, differentiable wrt. detector design parameters



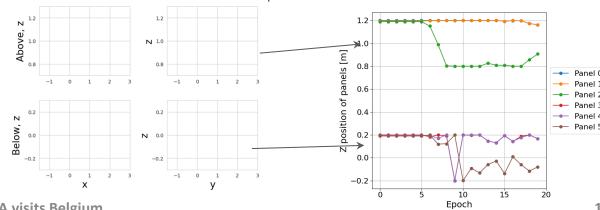
- Muon generation
- 2 Hit recording and propagation
- 3 Inference
- 4 Loss calc. & backpropagation





SilentBorder: identification of hidden hazardous and illegal goods in trucks and sea containers using scattering muography

- Optimize detector design with TomOpt, i.e. minimal gap (electronics, PMT channels, protecting case) between detector modules; separation of inner sensitive panels in each detector module
- Inference-agnostic approach: optimizing tracking angular resolution



II. Dosimetry for Proton Flash Therapy

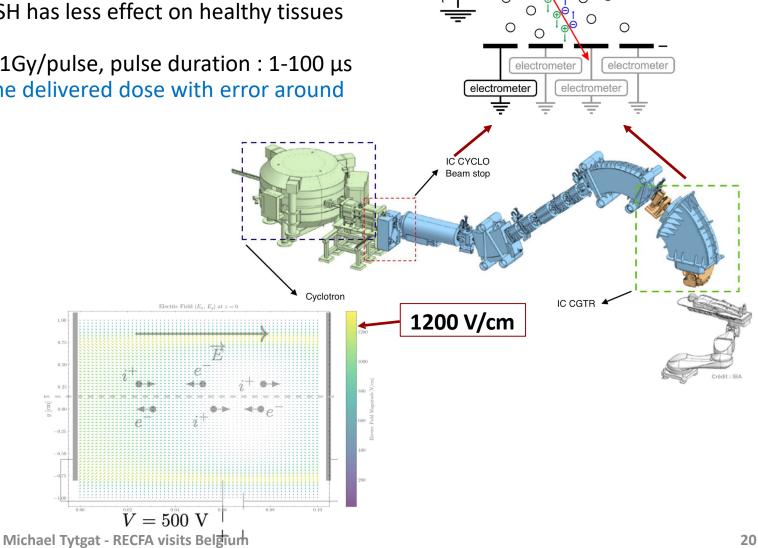
ULB; collaboration with IBA; supported by ProtherWal project

Flash proton radiotherapy

- Deliver high doses (>40 Gy/s) within a few milliseconds (10X higher than conventional proton therapy ...)
- Biological effect Studies have shown that FLASH has less effect on healthy tissues around the tumor
- Specifications for pulsed beams: dose/pulse ~ 1Gy/pulse, pulse duration: 1-100 μs
- Requires accurate real-time measurement of the delivered dose with error around <0.5% and around <10% for dose rates

Dose monitoring of Proteus One

- 230 MeV proton beam intercepted by air-filled Ionization Chambers (IC) measuring current (charge)
- In Flash proton-therapy, up to 100 pC/pulse, ie. released charge is so high that there are issues with recombinations & space charge screening effects, distorting linearity
- Corrections for ion recombination via Boag models, but no good agreement was found between data for flash doses
- > Detailed simulations needed, i.e. Garfield++ and dynamic electric field computations



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PSQUAD - Patient Specific QUality Assurance Dosimetry







DELTATEC UCLouvain Cenaero





Geant4 Simulation

- · Geant4 Simulation via proton pencil beam scanning (PBS)
- •Simulating IBA Razor diode
- Performing Irradiation measurements at the Proton Therapy Center in

IBA Razor DetectorTM Irradiation test with PBS

IBA Razor Detector

Characterization

A semiconductor-based flat panel detector for radiotherapy and proton FLASH therapy

- · Acquiring an a-Si TFT pixel array and performing electronic and irradiation characterization.
- Probing results show low leakage current in dark conditions and stable current with light exposure

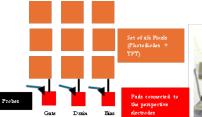


Figure 8: Illustrating how the probing measurements were taken using the PM8PS Semiconductor Probing Device

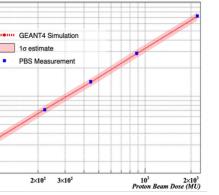


Figure 1: Measurement results showing pristine charge linearity and simulation agreement with <1% offset

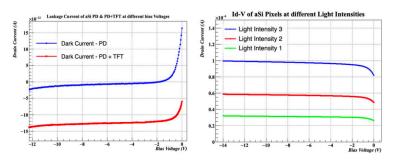
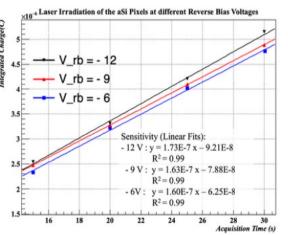


Figure 9: Drain Current measured in dark(a) and light conditions (b) to assess charge stability at different reverse bias voltages.

Laser Measurements

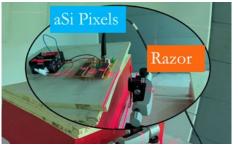
- Using a high-power green laser, the proper functionality of the bonded test board can be tested (Figure 10).
- The detector's charge sensitivity was measured for different reverse-bias voltages, showing slight sensitivity changes.





Proton Irradiation

- Irradiating the IBA Razor diode along with the a-Si Pixels.
- •Both Detectors showed pristine chargelinearity
- Further plans for irradiating under ultra-high-dose-rate conditions



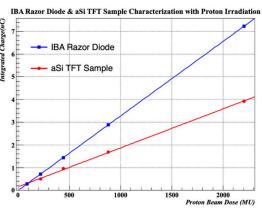


Figure 14: a-Si pixels (red) and RAZOR (blue) Detectors' charge acquisition vs. proton beam dose (MU)

Concluding Remarks

Funding for R&D projects

Current funding for detector R&D projects remains relatively limited; the past few years mainly yielded:

- Muography:
 - 3 European H2020 projects: typical large consortia result in minimal budget per partner
 - 1 FNRS-FWO Weave project: scientific personnel plus a small amount of equipment
- Dosimetry: support from ProtherWal and Region Wallonne
- Future Colliders: 1 FWO research project: mainly personnel
- Equipment:
 - Small amounts from FNRS/FWO/university funds

Some issues we experience

- Funding is mostly "physics" or application-driven, i.e. generic R&D that pushes technology boundaries (à la DRD collaborations) is difficult to sell
- HEP R&D projects sometimes get ping-pong'ed between fundamental and applied physics/engineering committees
- R&D projects are typically long-term, and require dedicated, often custom-made infrastructure at the start, i.e. long before one gets to the possible construction and application phase
- Securing technical/engineering staff, which is essential for these projects, remains a challenge

Concluding remarks

The **Belgian HEP community has a rich history in detector R&D**, with contributions to essentially all of our projects in

- Collider physics @ CERN/LHC
- Astroparticle/neutrino physics experiments
- Gravitational waves
- Future Colliders
- Beyond-HEP applications (muography, dosimetry)

Belgium is a major contributor to the CMS Phase-2 upgrade, in particular Outer Strip Tracker and Muon-RPC/GEM systems, where both projects moved from R&D to the construction/installation/commissioning phase

The LHC post-LS3 phase may open room for increased detector R&D activity towards future colliders; the global direction of the Belgian collider community is yet to be determined

Belgium has a clear "spin-off" **detector R&D program for Beyond-HEP applications**, i.e. muon radiography and medical applications

Detector R&D forms the basis of any HEP-ex project, and in addition leads to opportunities for knowledge transfer to other science branches, industry, and society, i.e. long-term support of such projects (with dedicated PD/PhD positions, equipment, engineers, technicians ...) will be essential to secure the future of our field, and to keep Belgium being great

Belgium in the DRD Collaborations

DRD1- Gaseous Detectors

Belgian members:

UCLouvain, UGent, ULB, and VUB

Specific activities:

- WG1: Technological Aspects and Developments of New Detector Structures, Common Characterization and Physics Issues → general interest to all
- WG2: Applications / Work Packages
 - → Trackers/hodoscopes/large area systems (VUB: RPC)
 - → Calorimetry (VUB: large area systems, timing)
 - → Timing detectors (VUB: MRPC)
 - → Beyond-HEP in muography, medical applications ...
 (VUB, UCLouvain: outdoor detectors, portability ...)
- WG3: Gas and Material studies
 - → gas properties, gas systems, novel materials ... (UGent: RPC; VUB: EcoGas@GIF++)
- WG4: Detector physics, simulation and software tools
 → Garfield++ (UGent: running on GPU)
- WG5: Electronics for Gaseous Detectors→ ULB
- WG7: Collaboration Laboratories and Facilities



DRDT 1.1 Improve time and spatial resolution for gaseous detectors with long-term stability

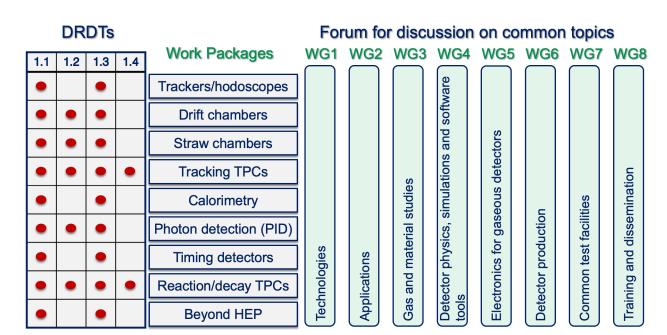
DRDT 1.2 Achieve tracking in gaseous detectors with dE/dx and dN/dx capability in large volumes with very low material budget and different read-out schemes

DRDT 1.3 Develop environmentally friendly gaseous detectors for very large areas with high-rate capability

DRDT 1.4 Achieve high sensitivity in both low and high-pressure TPCs

Management:

- M. Tytgat:
 - member of Management Board and Scientific Coordination Board
 - Co-convenor of WG1



DRD6 - Calorimetry

Calorimetry

DRDT 6.1 Develop radiation-hard calorimeters with enhanced electromagnetic energy and timing resolution

DRDT 6.2 Develop high-granular calorimeters with multi-dimensional readout for optimised use of particle flow methods

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DRDT 6.3 Develop calorimeters for extreme radiation, rate and pile-up environments

Belgian members: VUB

Specific activities:

- WP1 on Sandwich calorimeters with fully embedded electronics
 - Highly pixelized electromagnetic section
 - Hadronic section with optical tiles
 - Hadronic section with gaseous readout

→ T-SDHCAL

Management:

 M. Tytgat: member of WP1 Steering Board (T-SDHCAL representative)

