First measurement of electron antineutrino disappearance using the JUNO experiment

DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE: MARCOS DRACOS
IPHC, 23, RUE DU LOESS, 67037 STRASBOURG
PHONE: 03 88 10 63 70; E-MAIL: MARCOS.DRACOS@IN2P3.FR

The Standard Model of Particle Physics is the theory describing the behaviour of the elementary particles that constitute all known matter. While the Standard Model has been extremely successful to describe nature, there is one phenomenon that was not foreseen in this theory: Neutrino Oscillations. Indeed neutrinos, which are elementary particles in the Standard Model, were expected not to have a mass, and, without a mass, neutrinos cannot oscillate between flavours. However, at the turn of the last century neutrinos were discovered to oscillate, which proves that neutrinos have masses. Since this discovery, several experiments have studied this phenomenon. However, there are still some parameters that haven't been measured yet. One of these unknowns is the neutrino mass ordering, that is which of the neutrinos is the lightest. The determination of this ordering could be essential to understand by which mechanism neutrinos get their mass and also to check expansion models of the Universe. Answering that question is the main goal of JUNO experiment [1] in preparation in China. JUNO is expected to reach a sensitivity to measure the neutrino mass ordering of more than 3σ after 6 years of data taking using reactor neutrinos. With this data, JUNO will also make it possible to precisely measure several parameters. In addition to reactor neutrinos, JUNO will also perform measurements on solar, atmospheric, and supernovae neutrinos, among others.

JUNO is an international collaboration, regrouping 77 institutions all around the world. For the determination of the neutrino mass ordering, the experiment will use neutrinos from many nuclear power plants with a total power of 36 GW. The detector will be at ~53 km from the cores of the reactors. The target will be made of a liquid scintillator making it possible for us to detect electron antineutrinos emitted by the reactor cores through the inverse beta decay reaction. The scintillation light will be collected by about 18k 20” photomultiplier tubes (PMT) and 26k 3” PMTs. The central detector, composed of the liquid scintillator inside an acrylic sphere, will be surrounded by a water pool, which will also be equipped with PMTs to make it possible the detection of atmospheric muons via their Cherenkov light to control the cosmogenic background. An additional detector, the Top Tracker (TT), will be installed above the water pool to further identify atmospheric muons. The construction of the experimental hall in southern China is close to being completed, and data taking is expected to start end of 2022.

The IPHC group is one of the main responsible groups for the TT, which is already built and sent to China. A prototype of the TT in Strasbourg is used to test the new electronics and track reconstruction software.

A successful Ph.D. student starting in 2021 is expected to take part in the final steps of the installation of the detector. The student also will be heavily involved in the beginning of the data taking with JUNO up to the first results produced by the experiment. The student will be expected to perform the first determination of the cosmogenic background in JUNO using TT data, and to participate in the first measurements of neutrino oscillation parameters produced by JUNO using reactor electron antineutrinos.

[1] F. An et al. [JUNO Collaboration], J. Phys. G 43 (2016) no.3, 030401 [arXiv:1507.05613].