

# **Sensitivity studies for searches for electroweak supersymmetry during run-II of the LHC**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

High Energy Physics (HEP) is a branch of physics that studies subatomic particles. The main way of studying physics experimentally at subatomic level is using particle accelerators. Specific particles are accelerated to high speeds and directed to collide with each other producing an array of other particles that are then registered by detectors and studied by physicists. The largest currently functioning HEP experiment is the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. Since 2015 it is able to accelerate protons and creates collisions at a centre-of-mass energy of 13 TeV. These collisions happen at two sites where main particle detectors are situated. These experiments are ATLAS (A Toroidal LHC Apparatus) and CMS (Compact Muon Solenoid). Such high energy conditions of collisions emulate the state of the universe very shortly after the Big Bang and thus allow creation of particles that don't exist at normal conditions.

The underlying theory of modern HEP is the Standard Model and it has been very successful in describing subatomic particles and the interactions between them. It is a very robust theory that has been proved correct through a plethora of experiments at colliders. The most prominent success of previous LHC runs at 7 and 8 TeV centre-of-mass energy was the discovery of the Higgs particle, which was the final SM particle whose existence was proven experimentally.

However, there are limitations to SM and there are a number of theories that try address these shortcomings. Collectively they are known as Beyond-the-Standard-Model (BSM) theories and present new theoretical frameworks aiming to explain physical world at a deeper level. One of the major BSM theories is Supersymmetry. It has a mathematically effective and elegant representation and, most importantly, overcomes some critical SM limitations.

Searches for evidence of supersymmetry are performed at LHC along with other particle experiments. After runs at 7 and 8 TeV no significant evidence was found and

limits on masses of hypothetical supersymmetric particles have been placed. Higher energy collisions present a better chance of finding evidence of supersymmetry. The research presented in this thesis focuses on trying to find signal regions in run-II (13 TeV) data that are sensitive to particular SUSY scenarios that feature electroweak production and decay. For that purpose a set of kinematic and topological variables is investigated as candidates for search criteria.

## CHAPTER II

# Background information (provisional title)

## 2.1 The Standard Model

### 2.1.1 The Standard Model overview

The underlying theory of modern High Energy Physics is the Standard Model (SM). This theory has been developed in the second half of the 20th century with contributions from many scientists and it is a very successful representation of the world on subatomic level. SM classifies all known subatomic particles into specific categories and provides the description of the interactions between them.

In SM there are two main types of fermions (1/2-spin particles) known as quarks and leptons. Each family has three generations with each consecutive generation being heavier than the previous. The lightest fermions (up & down quarks + electron) are stable and constitute ordinary matter. The interactions between fermions are mediated through the exchange of force carrier particles known as gauge bosons (see Tab. 2.1). The final piece in SM is the Higgs boson and it gives mass to other fundamental particles. All bosons possess and integer spin [1].

The mathematical representation of SM is built within the broader frame of Group Theory. SM has the symmetry group  $U(1)_Y \times SU(2)_L \times SU(3)$ . The  $SU(3)$  symmetry group generates strong interactions, that describe processes involving quarks and

Fermion	Generations			Bosons
Leptons	$e$	$\mu$	$\tau$	$Z$
	$\nu_e$	$\nu_\mu$	$\nu_\tau$	$W^\pm$
Quarks	$u$	$c$	$t$	photon
	$d$	$s$	$b$	gluon

Table 2.1: The Standard Model particles

gluons. The  $U(1)_Y \times SU(2)_L$  generates electroweak interactions. At the energies below 100 GeV, however, the single electroweak interaction is broken into the weak and electromagnetic varieties with the symmetry group  $U(1)_{\text{em}}$ . The unification of these two types was the result of efforts by Glashow, Weinberg and Salam [2, 3, 4]. The weak interaction processes involve fermions and are mediated by electrically charged  $W^\pm$  for charged processes and chargeless  $Z$  gauge bosons for neutral ones. Electromagnetic force is mediated by photons and only involves electrically charged particles.

Above the unification energy of 100 GeV, and thus before the spontaneous electroweak symmetry breaking through Higgs mechanism [5, 6], the gauge bosons are different. There are three  $W$  bosons, denoted  $W^1, W^2, W^3$  corresponding to  $SU(2)_L$  part of the group and one  $B$  boson corresponding to  $U(1)_Y$ . All the electroweak bosons are massless, and acquire mass by coupling to the Higgs field in the process of symmetry breaking.

### 2.1.2 The Standard Model limitations

The SM predictions have been successfully tested in particle accelerator experiments, and the final confirmation came with the discovery of the Higgs boson in 2012 - a true scientific breakthrough [7][8]. This was the last missing piece of experimental evidence needed for the full validation of SM. The experiments that led to this discovery were conducted at CERNs Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in run-1 proton-proton collisions at centre-of-mass energy  $\sqrt{s} = 7$  and the later upgrade to 8 TeV. Despite the fact that SM has proven to be an extremely precise and successful theory there are some caveats for which it does not provide adequate solutions.

One of the inconsistencies within SM is the so-called Hierarchy problem [9]. One of the ways it reveals itself is through the large discrepancy between the Planck mass and the mass of the Higgs particle. The former is about  $10^{17}$  times bigger than the latter and current representation of particle physics cannot explain such a big difference. Quantum effects start manifesting themselves at the Plank mass threshold and such a vast difference between these two values is yet unaccounted for.

Another prominent problem is that SM does not explain dark matter. While ordinary matter only constitutes about 5% in the total mass-energy content of the universe, it is dark matter and dark energy that account for the rest [10]. SM does not provide a candidate particle for dark matter and thus is only able to describe ordinary matter and energy.

One of the main challenges of modern physics is the unification of forces. This is part of the ongoing attempts to reach the ultimate goal - a "theory of everything".

Such a theory would have to account for all physical aspects of the universe and include the most fundamental structures and interactions. The first step was made with the unification of electromagnetic and weak forces. The next step is to achieve the unification of electromagnetic, weak, and strong interaction forces this step is called the Grand Unification. The ultimate step is to combine all four fundamental forces together, which means adding gravity, in what is called Super Unification (see Fig. 2.1). Thus far quantum field theory and general relativity are able to describe phenomena on their respective scale of action with remarkable precision, but are fundamentally incompatible.

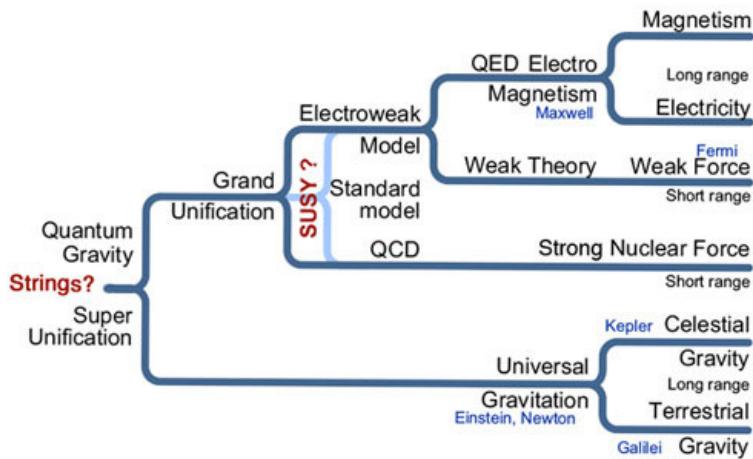


Figure 2.1: Various stages in the unification of forces [11]

Within the confines of the Standard Model even the Grand Unification is not possible, and this prompts the search for new theories that account for this and other shortcomings of SM. Collectively they are called Beyond-Standard-Model (BSM) theories. Among these there are theories that include extra-dimensions, composite Higgs boson models, etc. Theoretical and experimental search for BSM physics is the current frontier in high energy physics and one of the most important questions in science overall.

## 2.2 Supersymmetry

One of the strongest candidate framework theories that can offer solutions to SM deficiencies is Supersymmetry (SUSY) [12]. SUSY is a spacetime symmetry that

name	spin	particles
squarks	0	$\tilde{d}_L, \tilde{u}_L, \tilde{s}_L, \tilde{c}_L, \tilde{b}_1, \tilde{t}_1, \tilde{d}_R, \tilde{u}_R, \tilde{s}_R, \tilde{c}_R, \tilde{b}_2, \tilde{t}_2$
sleptons	0	$\tilde{e}_L, \tilde{\nu}_{eL}, \tilde{\mu}_L, \tilde{\nu}_{\mu L}, \tilde{\tau}_1, \tilde{\nu}_{\tau L}, \tilde{e}_R, \tilde{\mu}_R, \tilde{\tau}_2$
charginos	1/2	$\tilde{\chi}_1^\pm, \tilde{\chi}_2^\pm$
neutralinos	1/2	$\tilde{\chi}_1^0, \tilde{\chi}_2^0, \tilde{\chi}_3^0, \tilde{\chi}_4^0$
gluino	1/2	$\tilde{g}$
Higgs	0	$h^0, H^0, A^0, H^\pm$

Table 2.2: SUSY particles in MSSM where subscript  $R$  denotes right-handed particles and  $L$  - left-handed ones.  $H^0$  Higgs boson also exists in SM.

equates fermionic and bosonic degrees of freedom. Among several theories that are based on SUSY principles, the Minimal Supersymmetric Standard Model (MSSM) offers the simplest extention of SM. MSSM postulates that each SM particle has a supersymmetric partner which is different only in spin by one-half unit (see Table 2.2), while all other quantum numbers stay the same. The superpartners of quarks,

leptons, and neutrinos are called squarks, sleptons and sneutrinos. For gauge bosons the superpartners are gluinos, photino, winos and binos, collectively named gauginos. The latter two are superpartners of the B and three W bosons of the elecroweak interaction before electroweak symmetry breaking. It follows naturally since SUSY is invoked before the electroweak symmetry breaking. The Higgs sector in SUSY has five superpartners - two charged ( $H^\pm$ ) sparticles and three neutral ones ( $h^0, H^0, A^0$ ). They are known collectively as Higgsinos. Mixing between winos, binos and Higgsinos results in charginos and neutralinos. Their mass eigenstates are referred to as  $\tilde{\chi}_i^\pm$  ( $i = 1,2$ ) and  $\tilde{\chi}_i^0$  ( $i = 1,2,3,4$ ) in order fo increasing mass.

MSSM belongs to a class of theories that all share the same requirement - a quantity known as R-parity has to be conserved in interactions. The mathematical description of R-parity is beyond the scope of this paper. However, one important consequence of R-parity conservation is that if supersymmetric particles were to be produced in collisions, they will be created in pairs. Then they decay through various possible scenarios with the lightest supersymmetric particle (LSP) emerging in the final state and escaping undetected. The LSP is stable and provides a possible candidate for the dark matter particle.

The MSSM imposes 105 free parameters and it is one of its major issues, since

any analysis will be addled with enormous complexity. There are various simplified models that reduce the number of free parameters to manageable values through various theoretically and experimentally motivated constraints. One them is the phenomenological Minimal Supersymmetric Standard Model (pMSSM) that contains only 19 free parameters and it will be used in this thesis' analysis.

Supersymmetry is an

### 2.3 The ATLAS detector

The ATLAS experiment is a multi-purpose particle detector with cylindrical geometry and has a nominal forward-backward symmetry [13]. The dimensions of the detector are 25 m in height and 44 m in length and the overall weight of the detector is approximately 7000 tonnes. It can detect particles with almost  $4\pi$  coverage in solid angle around the collision point, which covers almost all of the spherical area around the center.

Proton bunches are accelerated in the underground ring that is 27 km in diameter and are directed to collide inside the detectors. The collisions happen at 40 MHz bunch crossing rate, with an average 25 interactions per bunch crossing. The LHC is designed to operate at  $\sqrt{s}=14$  TeV and instantaneous luminosity  $\mathcal{L} = 10^{34} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$  in proton-proton collision mode. Instantaneous luminosity is defined as follows

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{\sigma} \frac{dN}{dt} \quad (2.1)$$

Where  $\sigma$  is the interaction cross-section, and  $N$  is the number of detected events during time  $t$ . Integrated luminosity  $\int \mathcal{L} dt$  is a quantity that expresses the amount of total data gathered during the time  $t$  of running the LHC. The analysis presented in this paper uses the dataset recorded at  $3.2 \text{ fb}^{-1}$  of integrated luminosity throughout run-II during 2015.

The Cartesian coordinate system used at ATLAS has its origin at the nominal point of interaction with  $z$  axis extending along the particle beam longitudinally, positive  $x$  axis pointing towards the center of the ring, and positive  $y$  axis pointing upwards. The geometry of the detector makes the use of cylindrical coordinate system especially convenient. In it,  $z$  axis stays the same, the polar angle  $\theta$  is the angle from  $z$ -axis, and the azimuthal angle  $\phi$  encircles  $z$  axis in the transverse plane. However, instead of  $\theta$  it is more convenient to use pseudorapidity  $\eta$ , due to the fact that differences in pseudorapidity are close to invariant under boosts along the  $z$  axis

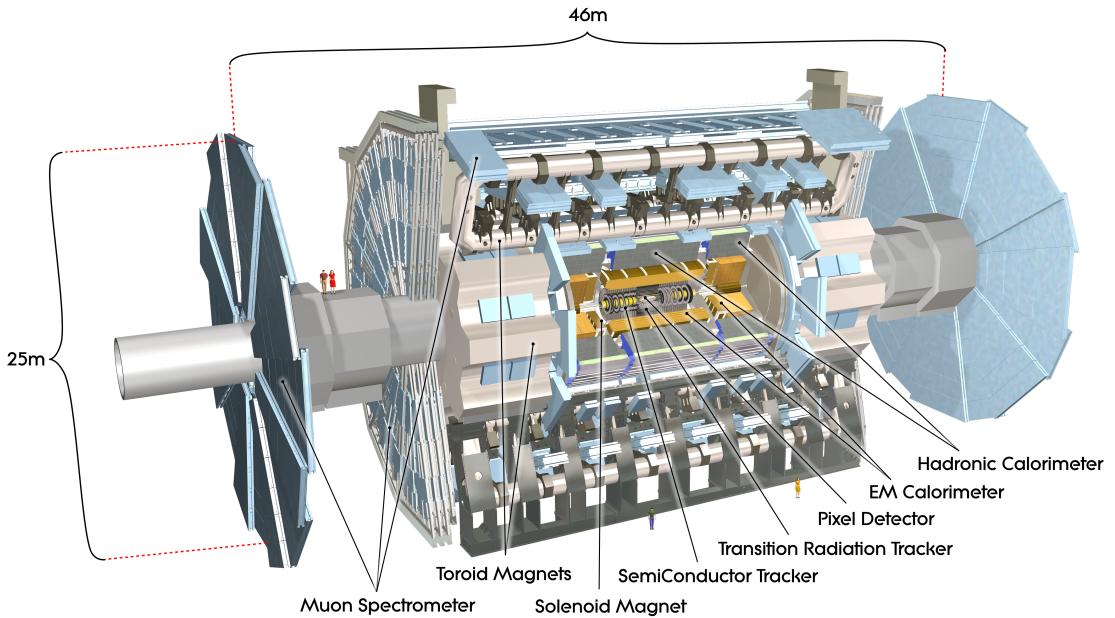


Figure 2.2: Cut-away view of the ATLAS detector (people are included for scale comparison) [13].

(fully invariant for real rapidity).  $\eta$  is defined as follows

$$\eta = -\ln\left(\tan \frac{\theta}{2}\right) \quad (2.2)$$

Within  $x$ - $y$  plane the transverse energy  $E_T$  and transverse momenta  $p_T$  are defined.

### 2.3.1 The ATLAS sub-detectors and trigger systems

The ATLAS detector consists of subdetector layers that are particularly sensitive to a designated type of particles produced in proton-proton collisions (see Fig. 2.3). The Inner Detector is closest to the collision point and covers  $|\eta| < 2.5$  in pseudo-rapidity. It has high granularity as it is exposed to the highest density of particle interaction. It was designed to provide a transverse momentum resolution and a transverse impact parameter resolution [14]. The detector itself consists of three separate subsystems. The main components of the Inner Detector are: silicon pixel detector, semiconductor tracker, and transition radiation tracker. The three layers are all immersed in a 2 T magnetic field, created by the thin superconducting solenoidal magnet. This field is parallel to the beam axis and bends trajectories of charged par-

ticles allowing their charge and momentum identification based on the characteristic bending of their trajectories.

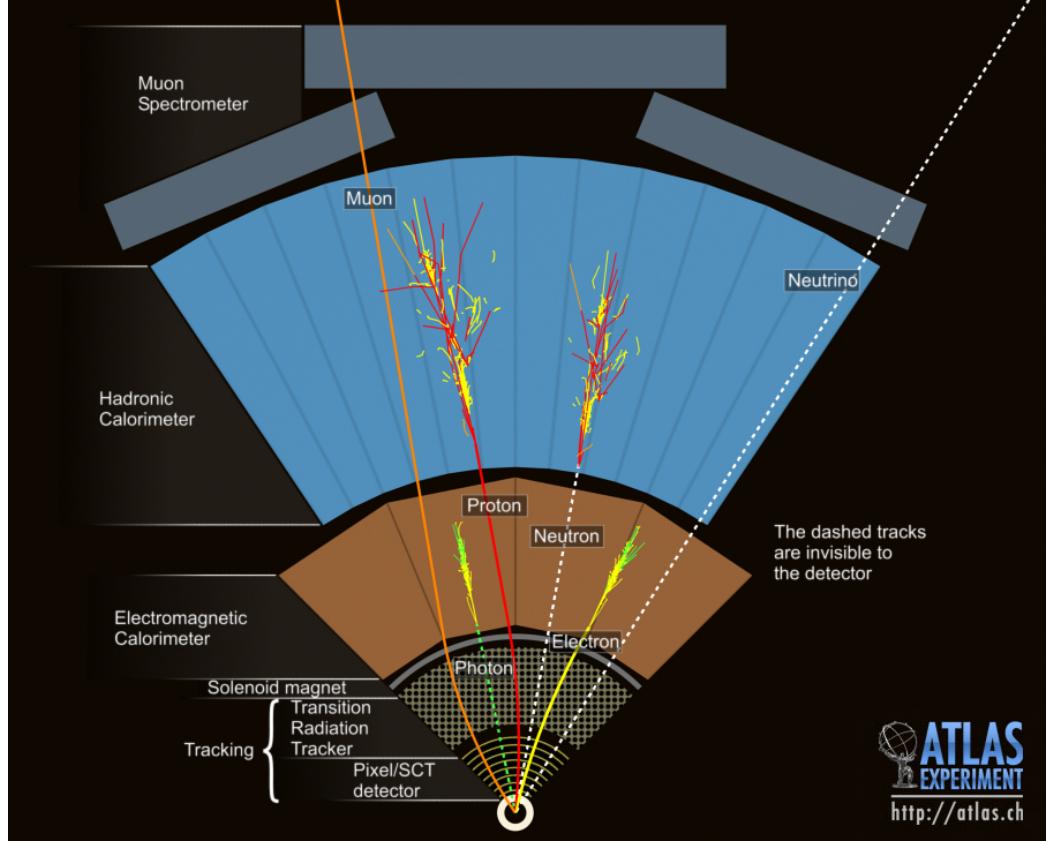


Figure 2.3: Event in the transverse plane, a computer generated image of the ATLAS detector [15].

The next two layers are the two calorimeters that measure energies of specific type of particles. The particles travel through the detectors and lose their energy through interaction with its layers leaving energy deposits as they move through the material. The first one is the high-granularity Electromagnetic Calorimeter (EmCal) and it measures energies of electrons and photons. Colored particles (gluons and quarks) travel further into Hadronic calorimeter (HCal) where they continue their decays and also deposit their available energy. Both calorimeters are designed to provide good quality measurements of momentum and energy and cover the region  $|\eta| < 4.9$ .

The final detecting layer is the Muon spectrometer, which tracks and measures charged particles, specifically muons. It is immersed into a large toroidal magnet, that provides a magnetic field throughout the spectrometer and bends the trajectories of charged muons, which makes it possible to detect their charge and momentum. Any particles that are not covered by the described sub-detectors will escape undetected.

These include neutrinos and, possibly, the LSP.

Triggers are used to select events by identifying signatures of various particles as well as using global event signatures, such as missing transverse energy [16]. A three-level trigger system is used at ATLAS to select events that are of interest to further offline analysis. The first level is hardware-based and uses information from the calorimeters and muon spectrometer, the second and third levels are software-based and use information from all sub-detectors. Because the data at LHC is produced in staggering amounts employing efficient trigger systems is crucial to be able to extract information that is relevant for further analysis. At  $\sqrt{s}=13$  TeV the spacing between bunches crossing is 25 ns and the collision rate is 40 MHz. This rate has to be reduced to  $O(500$  Hz) to keep data in permanent memory devices [17].

Ideally, a trigger should be able to retain maximum number of events that are interesting for physics analysis and reject as many background events as possible. In this regard the concept of trigger efficiency is very important, and this efficiency varies depending on the particular process that is being investigated. The overall goal is to reduce data from the raw amount to the size at which data can be stored permanently and at the same time keep as many relevant events as possible.

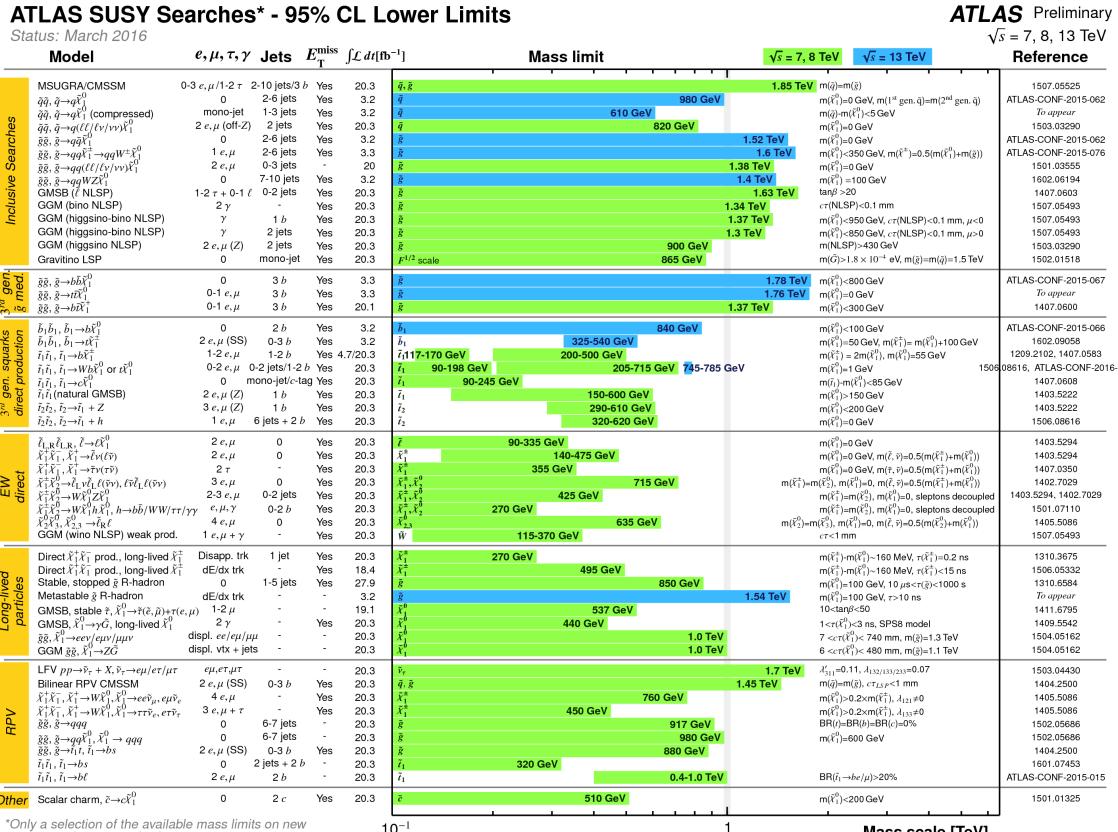
## CHAPTER III

# Search for supersymmetry at LHC

### 3.1 Introduction

Searches for various BSM theories including SUSY have been performed at LHC alongside searching for the Higgs and performing different SM analyses. Many SUSY searches were conducted targeting the production of squarks and gluinos. This was motivated by a larger theoretical cross-section and therefore higher probability of producing coloured superpartners [18]. Up to this moment no statistically significant excess over SM has been detected and exclusion limits were placed on masses of SUSY particles. Figure 3.1 shows the latest data on the masses that have been excluded for supersymmetric particles in various production scenarios. The lower limits on the masses of most squarks and gluinos in different searches significantly exceed 1 TeV [19]. As a consequence, if their production occurs, it is either extremely rare at present energies or requires higher energy of collision to leave an identifiable signature.

This thesis's research will focus on the electroweak production as one of the possible SUSY particle production scenario. Sleptons and gauginos are produced in electroweak production processes and are not affected by the strong force. They have smaller cross-sections compared to squarks and gluinos, so their theoretical production rate is smaller. However, if their masses are small compared to the strongly interacting sparticles, SUSY production will likely be dominated by electroweak production where sparticles have smaller mass and current energy might be enough to produce them in quantities that would allow their detection [20].



So far searches in the electroweak region have been unable to find evidence of supersymmetric particles. Limits on their masses according to various decay scenarios have been obtained and can be seen in Fig 3.2.

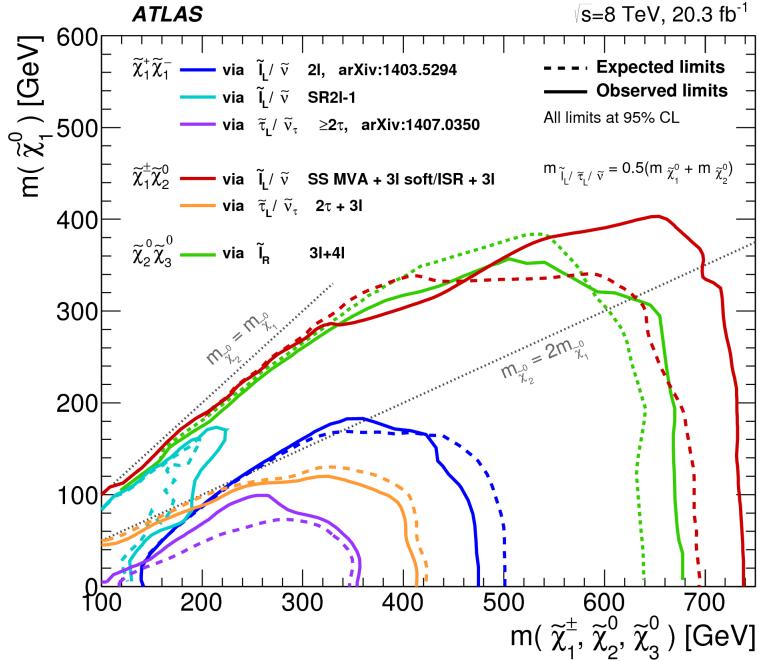


Figure 3.2: The 95% CL exclusion limits on  $\chi_1^+\chi_1^-$ ,  $\chi_1^\pm\chi_2^0$  and  $\chi_2^0\chi_3^0$  production with  $l$ -mediated decays, as a function of the  $\chi_1^\pm$ ,  $\chi_2^0$  and  $\chi_3^0$  masses [20].

These results are taken from [22] analysis performed at  $\sqrt{s} = 8$  TeV and integrated luminosity of  $20.3 \text{ fb}^{-1}$ . This search was performed based on various scenarios of the pMSSM, involving electroweak production of charginos and neutralinos. The turquoise and blue lines represent decay scenarios that are relevant for this paper as they show information on slepton-mediated decays of a chargino pair. In particular, the production of  $\tilde{\chi}_1^+\tilde{\chi}_1^-$  pair decaying through a slepton ( $\tilde{l}$ ) with final states containing two opposite sign leptons will be considered (see Fig. 3.3).

In the nomenclature used at LHC and in this thesis, electrons and muons are called "light leptons". Taus are considered separately as they decay very promptly and therefore are very difficult to reconstruct. This thesis only focuses on final states containing electrons and muons and the designation "lepton" only refers to these particles.

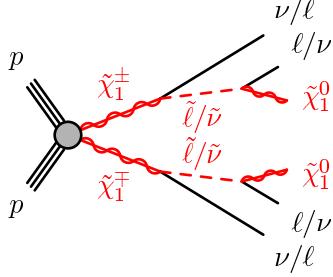


Figure 3.3: Electroweak chargino pair production in proton-proton collisions with intermediate slepton in the decay process.

### 3.1.1 Search methods

Detecting new physics events at LHC requires using computational and statistical methods that can deal with the type of information a particle accelerator produces. The data is initially collected using triggers corresponding to the type of events under analysis. Each event has a large number of physical characteristics such as momentum, energy, mass, multiplicities, etc. The numbers representing them are all stored in a data structure which then can be accessed, modified and analysed using software tools.

The cornerstone of all accelerator physics analyses is the correct estimation of background events. All background events represent physics that is already known and that has some similar or identical features with the processes we wish to study. For instance, this thesis focusses on the reactions that have precisely two oppositely charged leptons in their final states. A number of processes well described by the standard model share this characteristic and therefore will form the background.

The presence or absence of a new particle also can reveal itself in a number of ways. The case that is the easiest to detect is when there is an abnormality in mass distribution, such as the case with Higgs particle discovery. The peak in mass distribution of diphoton events constituted a significant excess over SM predictions.

The overall goal is to have a procedure that loops over all events and selects those that are of interest for further analysis.

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