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Article

# Structure Analysis and Luminescence Properties of Octaethyl(pyrene-tetrakis(biphenyl))tetrakis(phosphonate)

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## Abstract

We present a modular building block strategy for synthesizing phosphonated polyaromatic systems as an alternative to the conventional late-stage phosphonation of prefabricated aromatic scaffolds, which often requires harsh conditions and has limited tolerance for functional groups. A monophosphonated biphenyl building block was obtained via nickel-catalyzed phosphonation of dibromobiphenyl at 170 °C for three hours. This synthesis is more economical and milder than typical high-temperature palladium systems. In parallel, a borated pyrene derivative was prepared by Suzuki-Miyaura borylation. The final palladium-catalyzed Suzuki cross-coupling reaction produced the target compound, octaethyl(pyrene-tetrakis(biphenyl))tetrakis(phosphonate), Ets-PyTPPE. Single crystal X-ray diffraction reveals a centrosymmetric molecule that crystallizes in the triclinic space group  $P\bar{1}$ , with the inversion center located at the central C–C bond of the pyrene core. The pyrene unit is essentially planar, while the biphenylphosphonate arms are highly twisted relative to the core and to each other. The crystal packing is dominated by weak intermolecular interactions, and no significant  $\pi$ – $\pi$  stacking is observed. Hirshfeld surface analysis shows that H··H (60.5%) and C··H (22.5%) contacts predominate, while O··H interactions (14.4%) with phosphoryl oxygen atoms represent the most relevant directed contacts. From photophysical investigations, Ets-PyTPPE exhibits blue fluorescence ( $\lambda_{em.} = 452$  nm) in solution and aggregation-induced red-shifted emission with nanosecond lifetimes in the solid state, confirming purely fluorescent behavior.

**Keywords:** phosphonate; pyrene; pyrenephosphonate; luminescence; Hirshfeld surface analysis

## 1. Introduction

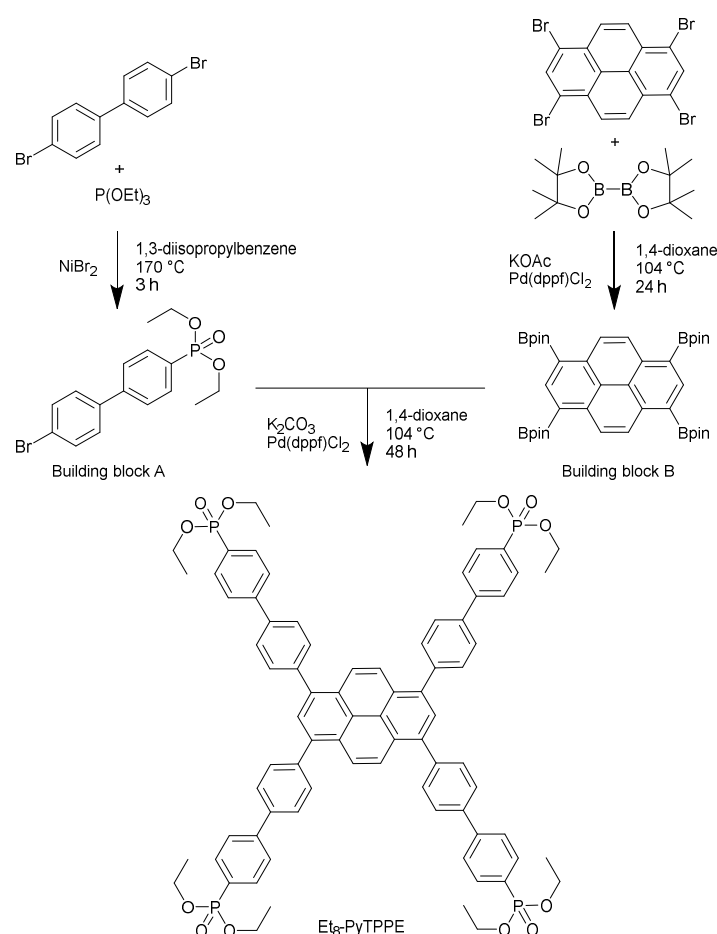
Pyrene has established itself as a versatile building block for functional materials due to its excellent luminescence properties with high fluorescence quantum yields. Its planar structure facilitates  $\pi$ – $\pi$  stacking interactions, which lead to high charge carrier mobilities and is therefore advantageous for thin-film devices [1–5]. Substitution on the pyrene molecule has led to advanced materials that are of great interest in the fields of optoelectronics [6–10], photocatalysis [11–20], and sensor technology [21–25]. Substituted pyrene compounds exhibit interesting properties such as room-temperature phosphorescence [26], temperature-dependent emission [27,28], and mechanochromism [29,30]. Porous photoactive materials, such as MOFs, HOFs, and COFs, are of current interest but have problems in the area of stability [31–38] as they are susceptible to hydrolytic decomposition processes. In addition, their long-term stability under UV irradiation can be a problem, which is crucial for applications in the fields of photovoltaics or photocatalysis [39–42]. Growing interest in durable and sustainable organic materials as well as the increasing demand for stable, application-specific, and tailor-made compounds and materials are driving these areas of research forward.

The introduction of phosphonate groups allows the production of stable organic compounds whose electronic and optical properties can be specifically influenced as required. The simplest synthesis method for phosphonates is the Michaelis-Arbuzov reaction. The P–C and P–O bonds formed through this reaction are thermally and light-stable, as well as hydrolysis-resistant, making them attractive compounds for materials such as sensors, photocatalysts, or organic photovoltaic cells [43–45].

In this context, arylphosphonate compounds are of particular interest for various applications due to their aromatic  $\pi$  systems. The phosphonate groups are capable of forming extremely stable bonds with metallic surfaces. This allows the specific electronic and optical properties of the aromatic systems to be transferred in a targeted manner to application-oriented materials, for example for use in sensors or organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs) or organic photovoltaics [46–49].

The attachment of phosphonate groups to pyrene should lead to compounds that exhibit both good luminescence and conductivity through the pyrene core and enable improved stability in the area of porous materials [50,51]. Through catalytic phosphonation of a pyrene core followed by deprotection, the compound pyrene tetraphosphonic acid was synthesized and investigated by Venkatramaiah et al. [52]. This compound and some MOF structures based on it with this deprotonated linker exhibit special properties such as photocatalytic activity or proton conductivity [53–57]. Using *p*-dimethylphosphonatophenylboronic acid, Schütrumpf et al. were able to synthesize a pyrene tetrakis(phenyl)tetrakisphosphonate [58].

In this paper, we describe the crystal structure and luminescent properties of the compound octaethyl(pyrene-1,3,6,8-tetrayltetrakis((1,1'-biphenyl)-4',4-diyl))tetrakis(phosphonate) (Ets-PyTPPE), which we were able to produce in a sustainable three-step organic synthesis (Scheme 1). To the best of our knowledge, Ets-PyTPPE has not been described in the literature to date.



**Scheme 1.** Synthesis scheme of Ets-PyTPPE using the two building blocks A and B.

## 2. Materials and Methods

All chemicals were purchased from commercial suppliers and used without further purification (see Supplementary Material, SM, Section S1 for details). Solvents used in reactions were p. A. grade. Analytical thin-layer chromatography (TLC) was performed on Macherey-Nagel silica gel aluminium plates (Macherey-Nagel GmbH & Co. Kg, Düren, Germany) with F-254 indicator, visualized by irradiation with UV light ( $\lambda_{\text{exc}} = 254$  or 360 nm). Solvents for column chromatography for the preparative purification of synthesis products were technical grade and distilled prior to use. Column chromatography was performed using silica gel Merck 60 (particle size 0.063 – 0.2 mm, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany). Solvent mixtures are given as volume/volume ratio.  $^1\text{H-NMR}$ ,  $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$ , and  $^{31}\text{P-NMR}$  were recorded on a Bruker Avance III 300 MHz NMR spectrometer in  $\text{CDCl}_3$  (Bruker, Billerica, MA, USA). NMR data are reported as chemical shift ( $\delta$ ) in ppm.  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  chemical shifts are referenced to the residual proton solvent signal versus TMS ( $\delta(\text{CHCl}_3) = 7.26$  ppm).  $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$  chemical shifts are referenced to the carbon solvent signal versus TMS ( $\delta(\text{CHCl}_3) = 77.2$  ppm). ESI-MS was measured on a Bruker Daltonics UHR-QTOF maXis 4G (Bruker Daltonics GmbH & Co. KG, Bremen, Germany). All MS measurements were done in positive ion mode. Single crystal X-ray diffraction data were collected on a Rigaku XtaLAB Synergy S diffractometer (Rigaku, Tokyo, Japan) equipped with a PhotonJet Cu  $K\alpha$  radiation source ( $\lambda = 1.54184 \text{ \AA}$ ) and a hybrid pixel array detector. Suitable single crystals were selected under a polarized-light Leica M80 microscope (Leica, Wetzlar, Germany) and mounted in oil on a cryo-loop. Data processing—including unit-cell refinement, data reduction, and absorption correction—was carried out with CrysAlisPro [59]. Structures were solved and refined in Olex2 using SHELXT and SHELXL, respectively [60–62]. Molecular graphics were generated using the Diamond 5 software [63]. Optical measurements were carried out using a reflective setup on a FS5 photoluminescence spectrometer (Edinburgh Instruments, Livingston, UK) equipped with a 450 W Xe arc lamp. For this purpose, the solid sample was placed in a brass sample holder. All measurements were performed in ambient air.

### 2.1. Synthesis of diethyl(4'-bromo-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-yl)phosphonate (building block A)

In a two-neck round bottom flask, 4,4'-dibromo-1,1'-biphenyl (4.0 g, 12.8 mmol) and  $\text{NiBr}_2$  (600 mg, 2.75 mmol) were suspended in 20 mL of 1,3-diisopropylbenzene under a nitrogen atmosphere. The suspension was heated under stirring to 170 °C. Triethyl phosphite,  $\text{P}(\text{OEt})_3$  (2.5 mL, 14.6 mmol) was added over a period of 2 hours. The reaction mixture was stirred for a further hour at 170 °C, then cooled to room temperature and excess of triethyl phosphite and solvent were removed under reduced pressure. The crude product was purified by column chromatography using ethyl acetate as eluent. The product obtained was a colorless oil, which turned into a colorless solid after one day (yield 2.1 g, 5.68 mmol, 44%).  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  (300 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  7.91–7.83 (m, 2H), 7.66–7.60 (m, 2H), 7.60–7.55 (m, 2H), 7.48–7.44 (m, 2H), 4.25–4.04 (m, 4H), 1.34 (t,  $J = 7.1$  Hz, 6H) (Figure S1).

### 2.2. Synthesis of 1,3,6,8-tetrakis(4,4,5,5-tetramethyl-1,3,2-dioxaborolan-2-yl)pyrene (building block B)

Under a nitrogen atmosphere, 1,3,6,8-tetrabromopyrene (1.0 g, 1.93 mmol, 1 eq.) and bis(pinacolato)diboron (3.5 g, 13.7 mmol, 7 eq.) were placed in a 100 ml two-neck flask. KOAc (2.0 g, 20.3 mmol, 10 eq.),  $\text{Pd}(\text{dppf})\text{Cl}_2$  (70 mg, 0.09 mmol, 0.05 eq.) and 50 mL of degassed 1,4-dioxane were added to the flask. The reaction mixture was heated to 104 °C for 24 h. After 24 h the reaction was cooled to room temperature. To the crude product 50 mL of ethyl acetate was added and the organic phase was washed with 50 mL water and 50 mL of brine. The organic phase was dried of magnesium sulphate, concentrated and purified by column chromatography using dichloromethane and cyclohexane (5:1 v:v) as eluent. The resulting product was a pale-yellow powder (yield 980 mg, 72%).  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  (300 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  9.16 (s, 4H), 8.99 (s, 2H), 1.50 (s, 48H) (Figure S2).

### 2.3. Synthesis of octaethyl(pyrene-1,3,6,8-tetrayltetrakis([1,1'-biphenyl]-4',4'-diyl))tetrakis(phosphonate) (Ets-PyTPPE)

Under a nitrogen atmosphere, diethyl(4'-bromo-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-yl)phosphonate (1.25 g, 3.39 mmol, building block A), 1,3,6,8-tetrakis(4,4,5,5-tetramethyl-1,3,2-dioxaborolan-2-yl)pyrene (400 mg, 0.57 mmol, building block B), potassium carbonate (630 mg, 4.56 mmol), and Pd(dppf)Cl<sub>2</sub> (40 mg, 0.05 mmol) were dissolved in 50 mL of degassed 1,4-dioxane. The reaction mixture was heated to 104 °C for 48 h. The reaction mixture was then cooled to room temperature, mixed with 50 mL of ethyl acetate and washed twice with 50 mL water. The organic phase was dried over magnesium sulphate and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude product was purified by column chromatography using a mixture of ethyl acetate and methanol (10:1 v:v) as eluent. The resulting product was a yellow to orange powder (364 mg, 0.27 mmol, 47%). <sup>1</sup>H-NMR (300 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.29 (s, 4H), 8.12 (s, 3H), 7.98–7.91 (m, 8H), 7.83–7.79 (m, 24H), 4.25–4.10 (m, 16H), 1.37 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 24H) (Figure S3). <sup>13</sup>C-NMR (75 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 144.7 (d, J = 3.1 Hz), 140.9, 139.1, 136.9, 132.5 (d, J = 10.3 Hz), 129.5, 129.2 (d, J = 315.7 Hz), 128.5, 128.4, 127.4 (d, J = 4.3 Hz), 127.1, 126.1, 126.0, 125.6, 62.3 (d, J = 5.4 Hz), 16.5 (d, J = 6.5 Hz) (Figure S4). <sup>31</sup>P-NMR (121 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 18.8 (s) (Figure S5). MALDI-TOF MS: [M]<sup>+</sup> 1354.68 (Figure S6). HR-ESI-MS: obs. 678.2307, calc. 678.2295 [M+2H]<sup>2+</sup> (Figure S7).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Synthesis

The classical approach to the synthesis of phosphonated aromatic compounds is usually based on the successive construction of the aromatic skeleton, followed by late functionalization through halogenation and subsequent phosphonation (Supplementary Materials, Scheme S1). Although this approach is widely used, it is often associated with significant synthetic limitations. In particular, problems arise with regard to the targeted functionalization of complex molecules and the tolerance of different functional groups to the harsh conditions of phosphonation [64–67]. These difficult synthetic requirements significantly limit the reproducibility and scalability of the syntheses. Against this background, the present work pursued a modular synthesis approach based on the targeted preparation of two independent functionalized building blocks (Scheme 1). This strategy allows the individual functionalization steps to be decoupled from each other and the building blocks to be selectively combined into the target molecule in a final coupling reaction. The two central synthesis steps comprise a C–P bond formation (phosphonation, building block A, Scheme 1) and a C–B bond formation (boration, building block B, Scheme 1). Dibromobiphenyl was used as the starting compound for the phosphonation. According to the literature, aromatic phosphonations to form C–P bonds usually require high reaction temperatures and the use of transition metal catalysts. Temperatures between 160 and 250 °C are standard. Palladium or nickel catalysts are often used for this purpose often with high loadings of expensive palladium catalysts and temperatures above 200 °C with reaction times ranging from several hours to several days [68–70]. To the contrary, this work was able to achieve a more economical and at the same time milder reaction with nickel bromide as catalyst. Under these conditions, the desired monophosphonated biphenyl was obtained after only 3 hours of reaction time at 170 °C (Scheme 1, building block A). The moderate yield of 44% is due to the partial further reaction to diphosphonated biphenyl, so that the isolated product can be regarded as a reactive intermediate within the phosphonation sequence.

In parallel, a Suzuki–Miyaura borylation was carried out, in which 1,3,6,8-tetrabromopyrene was reacted with bis(pinacolato)diboron (B<sub>2</sub>pin<sub>2</sub>) (Scheme 1, building block B). The resulting boronated pyrene derivative, which is also commercially available, acts as the second key building block in the synthesis route presented here and allows efficient further functionalization of the pyrene core. The final assembly of the two building blocks was then carried out via a palladium-catalyzed Suzuki cross-coupling, which led to the successful formation of the target molecule Ets-PyTPPE in the form of a yellow solid (Figure S18a). In addition to the NMR and MS analyses (Figure S3–Figure

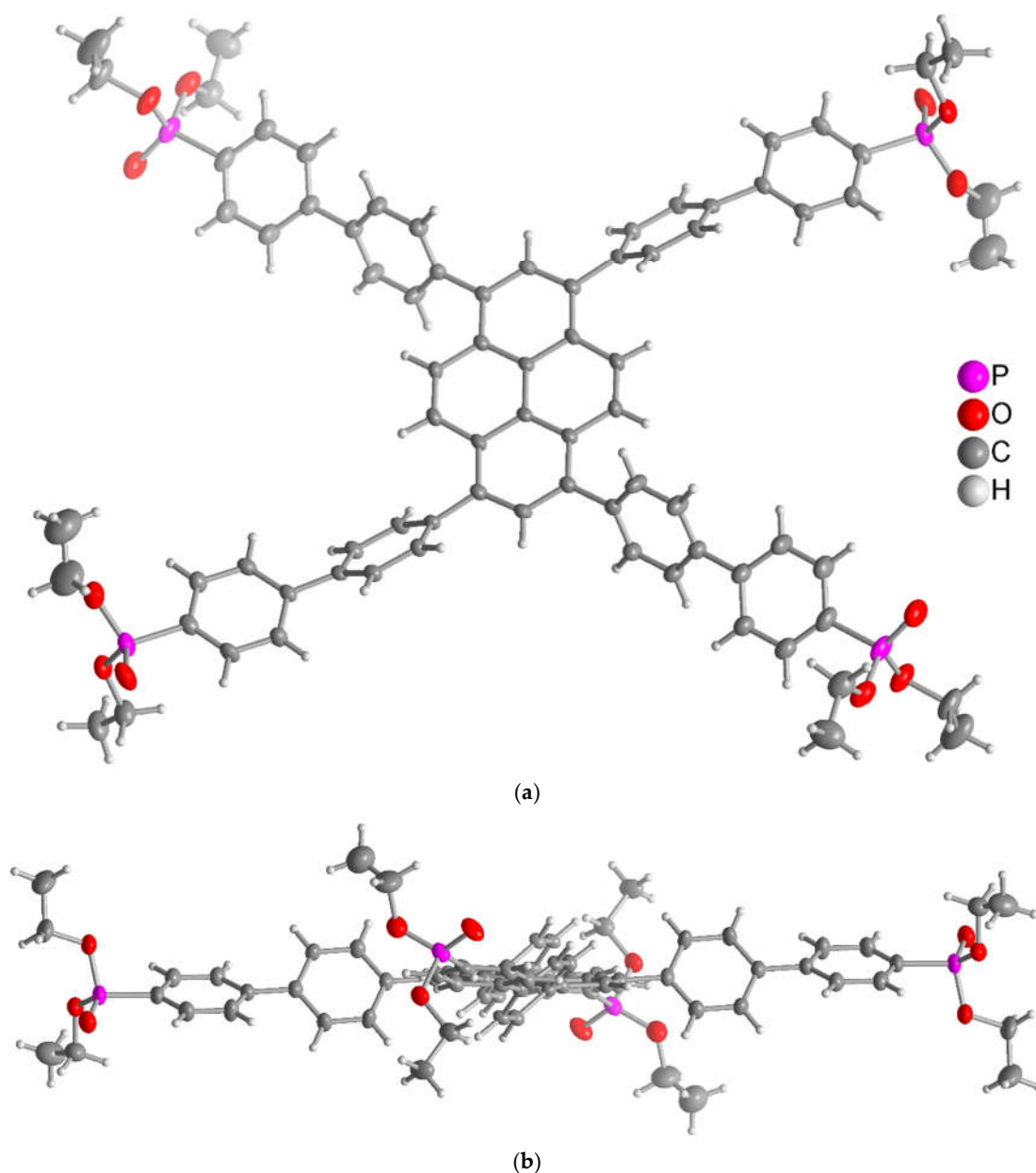
S7), we were able to crystallize the product Ets-PyTPPE from chloroform and n-hexane. Single-crystal X-ray structural determination confirms the molecular constitution (Figure 1).

A comparison of the synthesis route presented here with that of Schüttrumpf et al. highlights the advantages of the building block-based approach which we used [58]. The targeted combination of two functionalized reaction partners, each carrying a crucial functional group (building block A = phosphonate, building block B = boronate) for the final coupling, can in future work open up the access to a significantly expanded structural diversity. The biphenyl bromophosphonated intermediate (building block A) synthesized in this work is not limited to Suzuki coupling, but is also suitable in principle for other transition metal-catalyzed cross-couplings such as the Stille, Negishi, or Kumada reactions. Conversely, the use of boronated pyrene derivatives enables the attachment of a wide variety of phosphonated halogenated aromatics to the pyrene core, making a multitude of differently substituted pyrene structures accessible.

In addition to the expanded structural diversity, the synthesis strategy which we presented offers another decisive advantage in terms of occupational safety and sustainability. While Schüttrumpf et al. use highly toxic organic tin compounds in combination with the radical initiator azobisisobutyronitrile (AIBN) for the synthesis of p-dimethylphosphonatophenylboronic acid [58], this hazard could be completely avoided in the present work. The functional separation into two independent building blocks opens up a synthetically flexible and, at the same time, toxicologically less problematic route, which is particularly advantageous for future scaling and material chemistry applications.

### 3.2. Crystal structure

The compound Ets-PyTPPE crystallizes in the centrosymmetric triclinic space group P-1 and the midpoint of the central C-C bond of the pyrene core coincides with the inversion center in this space group. Thus, the asymmetric unit consists of only half the molecule and the opposite [1,1'-biphenyl]-4',4'-diylphosphonate arms are related by symmetry (Figure S8). The pyrene core is essentially planar with the largest deviations from the average ring plane of 0.072(4) Å and 0.065(4) Å for the two carbon atoms which bind the biphenylphosphonate groups. The biphenyl ring planes are tilted with respect to the pyrene core and towards each other (Figure 1b). Interplanar angles are 60.0(2)° and 44.7(2)° for the phenyl-pyrene ring planes and 38.3(2)° and 42.9(2)° for the biphenyl ring planes in the two symmetry independent [1,1'-biphenyl]-4',4'-diylphosphonate arms (see Table S2 for specific angle assignments).

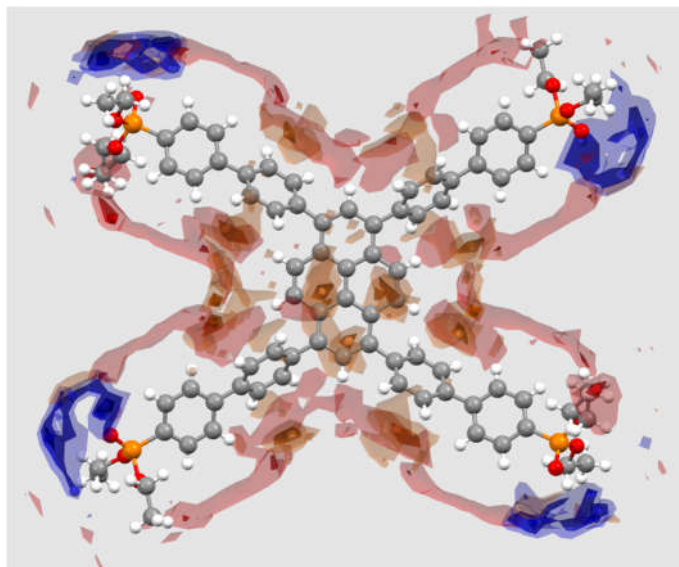


**Figure 1.** Molecular structure of Ets-PyTPPE in the crystal (50% thermal ellipsoids; H atoms with arbitrary radii). A slight disorder in one of the ethyl groups is not shown. For a figure with atom labelling see Figure S8, Section S4. (a) View approximately perpendicular to the pyrene core, (b) view parallel to the pyrene core to better visualize the dihedral angles and the up-and-down orientation of the ethoxy groups on the phosphonate groups (see Table S2 for dihedral angles).

There are no significant  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking and only weak C-H $\cdots$  $\pi$  interactions between the Ets-PyTPPE molecules. Relevant  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking interactions require centroid-centroid contacts of less than 3.8 Å, near parallel ring planes, small slip angles and small vertical displacements (slippage <1.5 Å) which would translate into a sizable overlap of the aryl-plane areas [71,72]. In the packing of Ets-PyTPPE the shortest centroid-centroid contact is 3.97 Å (ring C21-C26 to C21-C26 with symmetry relation 1-x, 1-y, 1-z) with parallel ring planes but large slip angles and a large slippage of 1.95 Å. Significant intermolecular C-H $\cdots$  $\pi$  contacts are below 2.7 Å for the (C-)H $\cdots$ ring centroid distances with H-perp also below 2.6-2.7 Å and C-H $\cdots$ centroid > 145° [73,74]. In the structure of Ets-PyTPPE the shortest (C-)H $\cdots$ ring centroid distance is 2.79 Å with H-perp 2.71 Å and C-H $\cdots$ centroid 146° (Table S3, Figure S10, Figure S11).

### 3.3. Full Interaction Map (FIM)

To analyze the Ets-PyTPPE molecule further in terms of its possible interactions with other molecules, a Full Interaction Map analysis was employed using the program Mercury [75] to visualize the interaction preferences of the molecule as presented in Figure 2.



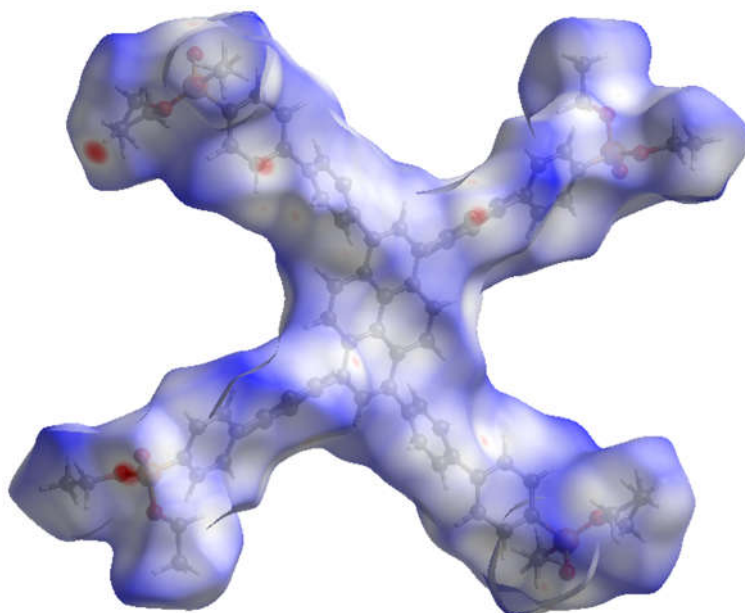
**Figure 2.** Full Interaction Map (FIM) of Ets-PyTPPE calculated using the program Mercury. The map was generated with default probe settings (uncharged NH nitrogen, carbonyl oxygen, and aromatic CH carbon). Colored isosurfaces indicate the areas for uncharged NH nitrogen as hydrogen bond donors (blue) and carbonyl oxygen as hydrogen bond acceptors (red) to interact with Ets-PyTPPE and for aromatic CH carbon to enter in hydrophobic interactions (brown) with Ets-PyTPPE.

The blue isosurfaces, representing the probability for hydrogen bond donor positioning, are concentrated around the electron-rich phosphoryl oxygen atoms. This highlights the propensity of the oxygen atoms to serve as hydrogen bond acceptors. Conversely, the red isosurfaces show the preferred regions for hydrogen bond acceptors. These regions indicate the ethyl and aromatic C–H groups as weak hydrogen bond donors. Finally, the brown isosurfaces indicate regions favorable for hydrophobic interactions. As illustrated in Figure 2, the latter surfaces are pronounced around the pyrene core, highlighting a probability of van der Waals interactions or  $\pi$ - $\pi$ -stacking within the crystal lattice.

### 3.4. Hirshfeld Analysis

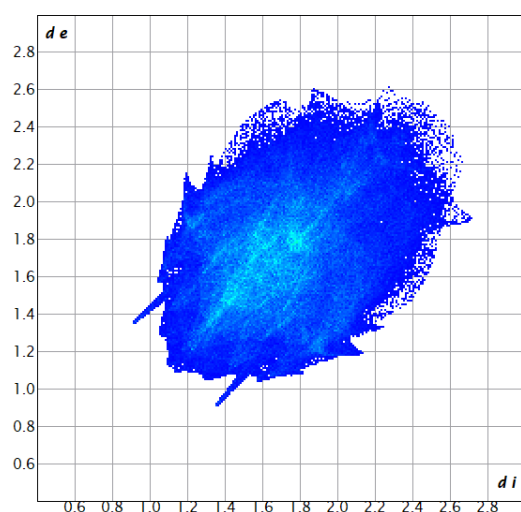
Hirshfeld surface analysis and corresponding fingerprint plots were generated to visualize intermolecular interactions using the *CrystalExplorer* [76] software. The strength of the interactions was evaluated using the normalized contact distance ( $d_{\text{norm}}$ ), which compares the distances to the nearest internal ( $d_{\text{i}}$ ) and external ( $d_{\text{e}}$ ) atoms with their respective van der Waals radii [77,78]. This mapping highlights regions of significant intermolecular contacts that are less than the sum of the van der Waals radii, visualized as red regions on the surface, while contacts longer than the sum are colored in blue [79].

The 3D Hirshfeld surface analysis of the compound in Figure 3 reveals characteristic red spots around aromatic C–H atoms and the P–O group, indicating intermolecular contacts.



**Figure 3.** 3D Hirshfeld surface representation of Et<sub>8</sub>-PyTPPE plotted over  $d_{\text{norm}}$ . ( $d_{\text{norm}} < 0$ , red regions, indicating strong attractive interactions to an adjacent molecule;  $d_{\text{norm}} > 0$ , blue regions, indicate interactions weaker than the van der Waals interactions).

Intermolecular contacts were further visualized using 2D Hirshfeld fingerprint plots, represented as a mapping of  $d_e$  against  $d_i$  (Figure 4, Figure S12–Figure S15). The fingerprint plot exhibits characteristic spikes directed towards the lower-left corner, which are indicative of P–O···H bonds (see also Figure S12). Quantitative analysis reveals that these spikes extend to approximately  $(d_i, d_e) \approx (0.9, 1.4)$  Å and correspond to O···H contacts. These interactions represent a significant contribution to the molecular packing, accounting for 14.4% of the total Hirshfeld surface area. To further delineate the individual contributions, individual sub-plots for O···H, C···H, H···H, and C···C interactions are provided in the Supplementary Materials, Section S5 as Figure S12–Figure S15. The remaining 85.6% of the surface is dominated by weaker van der Waals forces: H···H contacts constitute the largest fraction at 60.5% (Figure S13), followed by C···H interactions at 22.5% (Figure S15), whereas C···C interactions contribute only marginally at 2.7% (Figure S15).

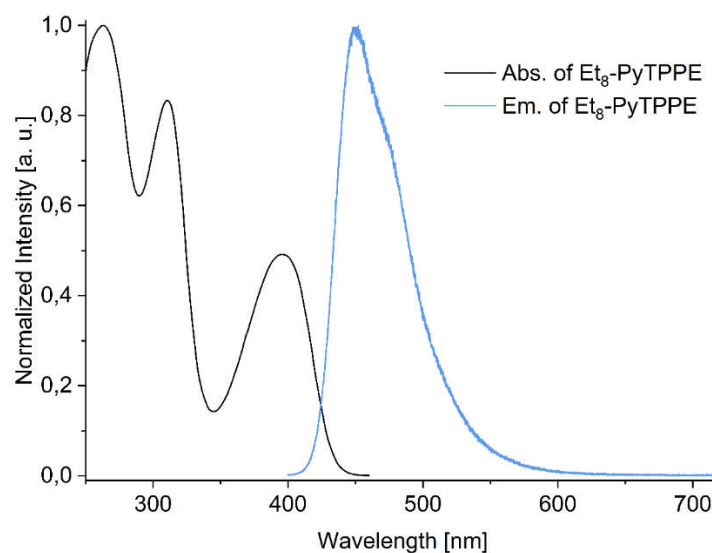


contact	contribution
O···H	14.4
C···H	22.5
H···H	60.5
C···C	2.7

**Figure 4.** 2D fingerprint plot and contribution of the specific non-covalent atomic contacts (O···H, C···H, H···H, and C···C) to the Hirshfeld surface of Et<sub>8</sub>-PyTPPE. The spikes represent the shortest intermolecular distance and correspond to the P–O···H(-C) hydrogen bonds.

### 3.5. Luminescence

First, the optical properties of the newly synthesized Ets-PyTPPE were investigated in both solid form and in chloroform ( $\text{CHCl}_3$ ), as well as in a 1 wt% Poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) polymer film. In chloroform, an absorption spectrum was recorded that showed three distinct bands in the blue (395 nm) and UV ranges (310 nm and 262 nm) (Figure 5, Table 1). The solution had a concentration of 10 mg/L ( $7.37 \times 10^{-6}$  mol/L), resulting in a molar absorption coefficient of  $52453 \text{ L mol}^{-1} \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (further absorption coefficients can be found in Table 1).



**Figure 5.** Absorption and emission spectra ( $\lambda_{\text{exc.}} = 375 \text{ nm}$ ) of Ets-PyTPPE in  $\text{CHCl}_3$  at a concentration of  $7.37 \times 10^{-6} \text{ mol/L}$ .

Steady-state emission measurements show a maximum emission at 452 nm for Ets-PyTPPE in solution with a weak shoulder at 476 nm (Figure 5). By changing the concentration, we were unable to detect any change in the respective emission bands (Figure S16). Emission measurements under excitation at the respective absorption maxima also do not result in a shift of the emission band, but only in a change in emission intensity (Figure S17). This behavior can be explained by excitation into higher energy electronic states.

Based on the absorption and emission spectra, the 0–0 transition, the Stokes shift, and the full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the emission band could be determined. The 0–0 transition was defined as the intersection of the normalized absorption and emission spectra and lies at a wavelength of 424 nm, corresponding to an energy of 2.92 eV. The respective absorption and emission maxima result in a Stokes shift of 57 nm. The emission band has a FWHM of 57 nm (or  $2686.5 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) at 298 K.

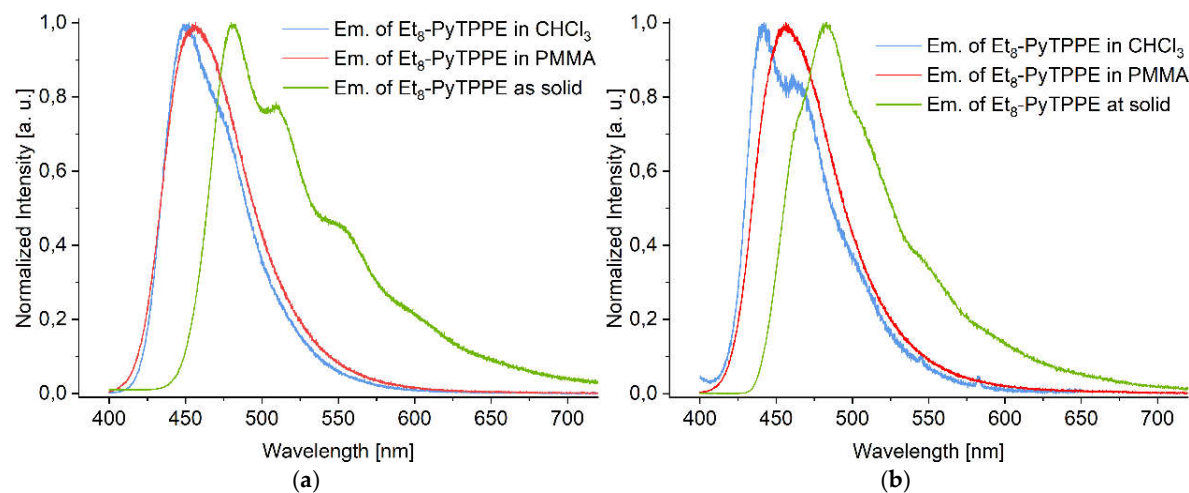
**Table 1.** Spectroscopic parameters of Ets-PyTPPE at different conditions.

Parameters	$\text{CHCl}_3$ solution	PMMA film	Solid
1st $\lambda_{\text{abs. max}}$ [nm]	395	-	-
2nd $\lambda_{\text{abs. max}}$ [nm]	310	-	-
3rd $\lambda_{\text{abs. max}}$ [nm]	262	-	-
1st $\epsilon_{\text{max}}$ [ $\text{L mol}^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$ ]	52453	-	-
2nd $\epsilon_{\text{max}}$ [ $\text{L mol}^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$ ]	88913	-	-
3rd $\epsilon_{\text{max}}$ [ $\text{L mol}^{-1}\text{cm}^{-1}$ ]	106940	-	-
1st $\lambda_{\text{em. max}}$ [nm] <sup>a</sup>	452	456	480
1st $\lambda_{\text{em. shoulder}}$ [nm] <sup>a</sup>	476	-	512
2nd $\lambda_{\text{em. shoulder}}$ [nm] <sup>a</sup>	-	-	550
Stokes shift [nm]	57	-	-

FWHM [nm]	57	61	69
1st $\lambda_{em. max}$ [nm] <sup>b</sup>	442	456	482
1st $\lambda_{em. shoulder}$ [nm] <sup>b</sup>	462	-	465
2nd $\lambda_{em. shoulder}$ [nm] <sup>b</sup>	-	-	512
3rd $\lambda_{em. shoulder}$ [nm] <sup>b</sup>	-	-	550
$\tau_{fl}$ [ns] <sup>a</sup>	1.5	2.2	1.1
$\tau_{fl}$ [ns] <sup>b</sup>	1.4	2	1.1

<sup>a</sup> Measured at 298 K. <sup>b</sup> Measured at 79 K.

In the PMMA polymer film, there is a slight bathochromic shift of the emission maximum by 4 nm to 456 nm compared to the solution. However, no significant change in the FWHM was observed (see Table 1). The emission behavior in the neat solid is significantly different. Ets-PyTPPE appears yellow in the solid state and exhibits turquoise luminescence under UV excitation (Figure S18). The emission spectrum at 298 K has a maximum at 480 nm, pronounced shoulders at 512 nm, and a weaker shoulder at 550 nm (Figure 6a). Both the shift in the emission maximum and the formation of several shoulders can be attributed to energetic or aggregation phenomena in the solid, which lead to the formation of different luminescent species.



**Figure 6.** Emission spectra of Ets-PyTPPE in CHCl<sub>3</sub> solution (blue), Ets-PyTPPE in PMMA polymer film (red), and Ets-PyTPPE as a solid (green) at (a) 298 K and (b) at 79 K.  $\lambda_{exc.} = 375$  nm for all spectra.

Cooling to 79 K resulted in significant changes in the emission spectra in both solution and solid (Figure 6b). While the emission maximum of the solution shifts hypsochromically by about 10 nm, the emission maximum of the solid remains almost unchanged. The previously weak shoulder in solution becomes significantly more intense at 79 K and forms a separate maximum at 462 nm. This splitting and shift is well known for organic dyes and can be attributed to reduced molecular dynamics and the altered microscopic environment at low temperatures. In the solid, however, the shoulders observed at 298 K decrease in intensity, while a new shoulder forms at the higher energy side at 465 nm. These changes can be explained by temperature-dependent processes such as the suppression of vibronic relaxations (for a direct overlay and comparison of the spectra at 298 K and 79 K, see Figures S19 and S20).

In contrast, the polymer film shows no change in band shape or emission maximum, suggesting a rigid environment at both 298 K and 79 K. Due to the low loading of 1 wt%, aggregation of the dye is also largely suppressed (overlay in Figure S21).

Lifetime measurements at 298 K and at 79 K yield fluorescence lifetimes in the range of 1–2 ns for all three states (solution, polymer film, and solid). A significant prolongation of the lifetime, which would indicate phosphorescence, could not be detected with the measurement methods used, neither at 298 K nor at 79 K (for lifetime measurements, see Figures S22–S27). It can be seen that the decay

curves in both solution and polymer film can be described by a first-order monoexponential fit, both at 298 K and at 79 K. This indicates the presence of a dominant emitting species in each case. In contrast, the time-resolved emission behavior of the solid can only be adequately described by a tri-exponential fit. This result suggests the presence of several luminescent species or different emission centers in the solid, which is consistent with the aggregation effects discussed above.

## 4. Conclusions

In summary, we presented a modular and synthetically flexible approach to synthesize the phosphonated pyrene compound Ets-PyTPPE by employing a building block concept that utilizes the formation of C–P and C–B bonds in two separate building blocks. This strategy overcomes the significant limitations of conventional late-stage phosphonation, enabling milder and more economical reaction conditions, as well as improved compatibility of different functional groups. Nickel-catalyzed phosphonation of dibromobiphenyl provides rapid and easy access to a versatile phosphonated intermediate. The complementary borated pyrene building block enables convergent assembly via Suzuki cross-coupling. Both intermediates are broadly applicable synthons for various transition metal-catalyzed coupling reactions. This significantly expands the structural variability of phosphonated aromatic materials.

Single-crystal X-ray diffraction showed that the pyrene skeleton in Ets-PyTPPE is essentially planar. Yet, the twisting of the biphenylphosphonate arms and the up-and-down orientation of the ethoxy groups at the phosphonate moiety suppress efficient  $\pi$ – $\pi$  stacking, resulting in a packing motif primarily determined by weak intermolecular interactions. Hirshfeld surface and fingerprint analyses demonstrate that the crystal packing is dominated by H···H and C···H contacts, while O···H interactions with the phosphoryl oxygen atoms represent minor directional contributions. Photophysical studies reveal environment-dependent emission behavior, including structured blue fluorescence in solution and aggregation-influenced, bathochromically shifted emission in the solid state. Nanosecond lifetimes confirm purely fluorescent decays. Together, the safer, tin-free synthesis approach and the structural and optical properties of the synthesized Ets-PyTPPE could open up interesting possibilities and applications for this phosphonated organic materials.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at website of this paper posted on Preprints.org, Section S1: Sources of chemicals; Section S2: Conventional synthetic route of aromatic phosphonates; S3: NMR spectra; Section S4: MS spectra; Section S5: X-ray structure of compound Ets-PyTPPE; Section S6.  $\pi$ – $\pi$  stacking and C–H··· $\pi$  interactions; Section S7: 2D Hirshfeld plots; Section S8: Luminescence and lifetime; Section S9: References. Reference [80] is cited in the Supplementary Materials.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author. The CCDC number 2472477 for compound Ets-PyTPPE contains the supplementary crystallographic data reported in this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge from the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Center via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif) (accessed on 14 January 2026).

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