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Turkish teen takes home the second \$50,000 *Scientific American* Science in Action Award, powered by the Google Science Fair

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On Thursday, June 27, Elif Bilgin, 16, from Turkey, was declared the winner of the second annual *Scientific American* **Science in Action Award**, powered by the Google Science Fair. Bilgin won for her project, **[Going Bananas! Using Banana Peels in the Production of Bio-Plastic as a Replacement for Traditional Petroleum-Based Plastic](#)**. In addition to the \$50,000 prize, Bilgin will have access to a year's mentorship and is invited to Google's California headquarters in September to compete in the 15-to-16-year-old age category in the overall Google Science Fair.

"My project makes it possible to use banana peels, a waste material which is thrown away almost every day, in the electrical insulation of cables," says Bilgin. "This is both an extremely nature-friendly and cheap process, which has the potential to decrease the amount of pollution created due to the use of plastics, which contain petroleum derivatives."

Scientific American's independent **[judging panel](#)** elected Bilgin from a pool of 15 *Scientific American* Science in Action Award finalists who were culled from thousands of submissions from more than 120 countries for the 2013 Google Science Fair. "Thomas Edison famously said, 'Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration,'" says Mariette DiChristina, editor in chief of *Scientific American* and chief Google Science Fair judge. "He would have found a kindred spirit in Elif Bilgin who spent two years toiling away on her project to develop a bioplastic from discarded banana skins. We admire her persistence and her wonderful work."

Science in Action Award finalist Ann Makosinski, 16, from Canada, is also a Google Science Fair finalist in the 15-to-16-year-old age category. For her project, Makosinski created a flashlight that runs solely on the heat of the human hand.

In September Bilgin and Makosinski will travel to Google's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif., to present their projects to an international panel of **[finalist judges](#)**, including science luminaries, technology innovators and Nobel laureates. They will compete for **[prizes](#)** that include: \$100,000 in scholarship funds; real-life experiences at CERN, Google or the LEGO Group; a trip to the Galápagos Islands courtesy of National Geographic Expeditions; and a \$10,000 grant to the Grand Prize winner's school. The winners will be announced at a gala on September 23, which will be streamed live on the fair's **[YouTube channel](#)**.

Scientific American has been a partner with the Google Science Fair, an annual international online competition, since it launched in 2011. The *Scientific American* **[Science in Action Award](#)** was created to recognize a project that can make a practical difference by addressing an environmental, health or resources challenge. The winning *Scientific American* Science in Action project in 2012 was the **[Unique Simplified Hydroponic Method](#)**, developed by 14-year-old Sakhiwe Shongwe and Bonkhe Mahlalela of Swaziland.

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For more information about the Google Science Fair and *Scientific American*'s Science in Action Award, please visit:

Scientific American Science in Action Award landing page: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/science-in-action/>

Google Science Fair 2012: www.google.com/events/sciencefair

Educator resources: www.google.com/events/sciencefair/educators.html

Bridge to Science: <http://www.nature.com/bridgetoscience/about/index.html>

Google Science Fair's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/GoogleScienceFair

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