Technical professions in a playful way

While mum/dad is at work, the children can learn about technical professions in a playful way at a summer camp organized by the workplace. This is the concept behind the week-long programs organized by the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology of the University of Pécs, which offer skill-building and unforgettable experiences for the children of Faculty staff and students, from kindergarten to high school age. The little ones built a house out of Lego, while the older ones could decorate their model rooms with 3D-printed objects. In August, the older ones - secondary school pupils - will be invited to thematic days to learn about different fields of engineering. For example, they can see how ethical hackers work by tapping into IP phone networks, program robots or communicate with artificial intelligence, but also learn how healthy drinking water is made and how to design roads and railways in 3D.

In the Lego and Cubes creative camp for young schoolchildren, among the many craft activities, children carved swords and toys using industrial design training, and folded a model of Mimike, the raccoon adopted by the faculty at the Pécs Zoo, to strengthen their 3D vision. A design and build camp on sustainability - this camp was organized for upper school children in the spirit of architecture, so as well as building the Eiffel Tower out of Lego, the children also made models of their own homes and rooms. During their visit to the university's 3D Center, they not only learned how 3D printers work, but also had the room furniture they needed printed out for their mock-up. In an interactive session on environmental awareness, they made jewellery from a computer keyboard and moulded the parts themselves in the faculty workshop, giving them an insight into the work of the engineers. "The children really enjoy the programmes, and every day they go home with a sense of achievement. They asked a lot of questions to the professional leaders of the programs, our university teaching colleagues, who put the subject created in the session into a broader context. They told us about architectural design or showed us how a tool or instrument works, and in the 3D Centre we were given a guided tour," says Barbara Murai-de Carvalho, one of the camp leaders, summing up the professional programs.
"We organized the camps for the first time last year in the spirit of the UP for Families program, adapting them to the summer working schedule of our staff. We conducted a survey beforehand to see how many of our employees would have problems with summer childcare, and we developed an age-appropriate theme. The UP's social benefits include subsidies for children's summer camps, so we offer our staff a discounted rate. The camps are mainly for the children of our own colleagues and students, but we have also received campers from other faculties of the university. There was a significant oversubscription for some weeks, which also proves the success of the idea," says Brigitta Balogh, Faculty Director of the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology of the UP.

When designing the programs, it was also important to provide the children with activities that would ensure the development of their various competences, and as a Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, the themes were tailored to local conditions, of course taking into account the cognitive level of the different age groups.