

### *Basic problems of small countries*

capita wealth than size. We made a simple comparison of public health in Liechtenstein and Luxembourg, in terms of life expectancy. In Luxembourg life expectancy was 71 years for men and 78 years for women. What do women do that enables them to live so much - 10 % - longer? That is a major question for social policy and the financing of retirement pensions, since women often work longer and harder than men. In Liechtenstein men have a life expectancy of 67 and women of 75. In Iceland the corresponding numbers are 75 for men and 80 for women. The many health policy and economics studies carried out in the United States have established that very complicated relationships exist between health and medical inputs and outputs (results).

But can one be healthier in a small country than in a large one, such as the former Soviet Union? There, the health of the Estonian population was the best among the former Soviet Republics. The Estonians have pursued medical advances dilligently, particularly in cardiac, orthopedic and neurosurgery, and they export this service to Finland and Sweden. Even Ukrainians used to come to Estonia rather than to Moscow to have their surgical operations. What was the source of this medical superiority, in a small state of some one million Estonians within a large state (the former Soviet Union) of 250 million? We do not understand it exactly, but from at least this example we know that it is possible to have better health in a small state than in a much larger one with (then) similar government and economy. We also know that small state medical superiority is possible in even not very rich small states, because Estonia is poor compared to Switzerland, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein.

How secure can small countries be made against war, epidemics of disease and environmental catastrophe? Small countries are as a rule quite dependent on their neighbors. That also applies to national security policy and under certain circumstances works to the disadvantage of a small country's policy of independence. Concerning security from war and military aggression, small countries have had to balance the risks and advantages of alliances (risk of being drawn into another country's war, advantage of greater defense resources) against the risks and advantages of neutrality (risk of defense resources shortages, advantage of avoiding being drawn into an ally's war). Small countries have typically chosen among one or more of the following policy options:

- (1) armed neutrality (Finland, Sweden, Switzerland).
- (2) unarmed neutrality (Costa Rica, Estonia, possibly Austria).