Tobacco is the most common exogenous cause of human cancers, being responsible for 90% of human lung cancers. Cigarette smoking causes, worldwide, more than 4 million deaths annually, mostly from cardiovascular disease, various types of cancers, and chronic respiratory problems. It is expected that there will be more than 8 million tobacco-related deaths yearly by 2020, the major increase occurring in the developing countries. It has been estimated that of the people alive today, approximately 500 million will die from tobacco-related illnesses.

Smoking is probably the most preventable cause of human death. It reduces overall survival and the impact is dose dependent. Unfortunately the prevalence of smoking is increasing in young people, particularly women. (Robbins, Basic Pathology, 2006)

When people think of cancers caused by smoking, the first one that comes to mind is always lung cancer. Most cases of lung cancer death, close to 90% in men, and 80% in women are caused by cigarette smoking. There are several other forms of cancer attributed to smoking as well, and they include cancer of the oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, bladder, stomach, cervix, kidney and pancreas, and acute myeloid leukemia. (about.com - cancer statistics, smoking and cancer in U.S, 2005).

In this thesis I will try to put my emphasis on lung cancer. I will look if there are any differences in smoking habits across Europe, and if the pattern is changing. Also, I will take a further look at the smoking ban that has been introduced in some countries now and see if there has been an effect on lowering the rate of smoking among their population.