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# **European Union's attitude towards reproductive rights: clear policy or double standards approach?**

Author: Grazia Redolfi  
Supervisor: Lotta Lerwall

## **Abstract**

Reproductive rights have only recently, and not unanimously, been recognized in the international arena, as a legitimate application of the human rights discourse to reproduction and sexuality. The international conferences held in Cairo and Beijing contributed to the formalisation of this concept and supported the shift towards a paradigm that considers reproduction as an autonomous choice.

The scope of this dissertation has been to analyse how reproductive rights have been approached by the European Union in its relations with the Member States and with Third countries, in order to evaluate the extent of coherence between these two approaches.

While on health protection, the EU clearly lacks a competence to act; in terms of human rights, a number of existing provisions could potentially be applied to reproduction, but this process will depend from the interpretative work of the European Courts. The EU's cautious approach within its borders has been counterbalanced by an assertive endorsement of reproductive rights as human rights in its external policies, through the adoption of a number of instruments and through the translation of this commitment into its development policy. An outline of the potential consequences of this double standards approach in terms of human rights protection will be provided, to support the necessity of a more coherent EU's action.

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