

EDF SNAPSHOT SERIES

I-MARKER

In June 2023, the EC's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG-INTPA) officially launched an inequality marker (the I-marker).¹ The I-marker assesses "whether, and to what extent, inequality reduction is an objective of a donor's intervention and, therefore, how likely it will have an impact on reducing within country inequalities." The I-marker works in a broadly similar way to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) disability policy marker, but there are also some important differences in how it was developed and how it is used (Table 1).

Table 1: I-marker and the disability policy marker

	I-marker	Disability policy marker
Marker scoring system²	3-point scale (principal objective/significant objective/not targeted) ³	3-point scale (principal objective/significant objective/not targeted)
Marker created by...	DG-INTPA	OECD-DAC
Marker used by...	DG-INTPA. Other parts of the EU institutions, EU Member States and other partners are encouraged to use the marker, but it is not yet clear how far they will do so. ⁴	Used by 21 OECD-DAC members (including all DGs within the EC) ⁵

Source: author's analysis. Please note the table does not seek to be exhaustive.

² Although the two markers follow the same overall scoring system, there are some differences in the details. The I-marker uses a four-part set of criteria to guide scoring (the criteria cover analysis; objectives/activities; indicators; and evaluation). This is arguably more ambitious than the scoring guidance for the disability inclusion marker, which does not explicitly include all these elements. (For more discussion on gaps in the disability marker scoring system, see Meeks/Atlas Alliance, 2023, [Tracking disability-inclusive development: making the most of the OECD-DAC disability inclusion policy marker to promote equality and inclusion in international development and humanitarian assistance](#), pp.19-24).

³ Morabito and Niño-Zarazúa/European Commission, 2023, [The European Commission inequality marker: guidelines for the application and scoring of interventions](#), pg. 10

⁵ Source: analysis of OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System commitments data for 2021. Data downloaded in December 2023. Analysis excludes Estonia and Lithuania as they joined the OECD-DAC after 2021.

As Table 1 shows, the I-marker is not yet used widely outside DG-INTPA. But within DG-INTPA's work, the I-marker is rapidly becoming a high-profile tool.

Does the I-marker include inequalities based on disability?

The I-marker "focuses on the bottom (poorest) 40 per cent of the income/wealth distribution (or other socio-economic parameters) or socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, households or groups." This very broad approach could potentially be interpreted in different ways.

In principle, the I-marker is designed to help capture the intersection between inequalities affecting individuals (or households) and inequalities affecting groups.⁶ So in theory, the answer is yes: the I-marker could sometimes include inequalities based on disability, alongside other forms of group-based inequalities.

At the same time, it is not guaranteed that the I-marker would always include disability-based inequalities. In places, the I-marker guidance focuses on economic inequalities affecting the "bottom 40%" of individuals/households.

For example, one of the key approaches in the guidance – Distributional Impact Assessment based on an 'Equity Tool' – looks mainly at wealth-based inequalities at individual/household level.⁷ It is true that the Equity Tool can be expanded to include group-based inequalities,⁸ however, this is an optional add-on. Against this background, staff applying the I-marker may decide to focus solely on economic inequalities affecting individuals/households. Please see more discussion on this challenge in the risks section below.

To learn more about the I-marker, check out EDF's [Annual report – Towards equality: assessing EC funding for disability inclusion worldwide: Ddata from the OECD-DAC disability policy marker](#) (December 2023).

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⁶ Morabito, comments during European Parliament event on '[Tackling inequalities: paving the way for a sustainable future](#)' (event organised by S&D Group in October 2023)

⁷ Morabito and Niño-Zarazúa/European Commission, 2023, [The European Commission inequality marker: guidelines for the application and scoring of interventions](#), p.17

⁸ Morabito and Niño-Zarazúa/European Commission, 2023, [The European Commission inequality marker: guidelines for the application and scoring of interventions](#), pp.18,20