

Statement to the interruption of the EIC AI Platform by EISMEA

We have discovered, along with the EIC Accelerator applicants, on 2 June 2023, that the EISMEA has decided to revoke all access to the EIC AI Platform without notice.

Since then, EISMEA published a new submission date and new templates. Applicants have to redesign and rewrite their proposals in less than three weeks.

Such a situation could have been avoided, as it is technically possible to restructure the data from proposals being prepared on the EIC AI Platform into any new template validated by EISMEA.

As innovators, we stand with applicants, as we also did with previous EISMEA's choices and ambition.

The EIC AI platform fully reflects EISMEA's choices and ambition, aligned with the EIC workprogramme objectives. It was developed in record time and has addressed a massive productivity load (+33,000 users to date).

Like any other product, the EIC AI platform must evolve. Our repeated requests to EISMEA to undertake a review of the platform, with transparency and in co-creation with users, remained unanswered for over a year and a half.

After a usual tender launched by EISMEA, TIL has been awarded and signed a 2-year contract (Innospace contract) in December 2022 to respond to the EIC ambition to create a "Virtual European Silicon Valley", including the continuation and review of the EIC AI Platform.

The Innospace contract included the development of the first ever European innovation social network and marketplace supported with artificial intelligence, which was only possible thanks to the data model of the EIC AI Platform.

The Innospace project has been rapidly put on hold by EISMEA for reasons that EISMEA never precisely formulated, and which in any case never mentioned the complexity of the platform. Facing this blocking situation, The Innovation Loop has ultimately been forced to initiate the termination procedure of the Innospace contract due to EISMEA's failure to comply with its obligations, on 24 March 2023.

Consequently, it is with surprise that we have learnt that the European Commission today justifies its decision to interrupt the EIC AI Platform by a contractual dispute, and implicitly by criticisms of the initial platform expressed by the applicants and in the EIC Board statement of 21 March 2023 on the complexity of the EIC AI Platform.

On the contrary, the European Commission/ EISMEA created that dispute by putting on hold the Innospace Contract.

It is worth to notice that the EIC Board stressed in its statement:

- That “the EIC AI Platform has allowed the successful evaluation of over 8000 short proposals (Step 1) and over 5000 business plans/full proposals (Step 2) from European tech startups, which was its main objective”
- Its “support for a specific EIC Accelerator application process based on a business case rather than a traditional R&D grant proposal”
- That “the existing Commission IT tools [therefore not the EIC AI Platform] were not suitable”
- “While the EIC AI platform has achieved its primary objectives to date, it is now time for a major improvement of the platform.”

It should be noted that this EIC Board statement was adopted in particular on the basis of an external report that was poorly commanded, and based on the interviews of only 7 out of more than + 33 000 users of the platform. We replied to this report on 25th of March, highlighting its many methodological flaws. Our response and proposals following this report were never communicated by EISMEA to the EIC Board, nor to the EIC Program Committee. We however also indicated that we were of course waiting and ready to implement changes that would be requested by EISMEA, as foreseen by the Innospace contract.

As of today 9 June 2023, we can identify no other understandable reason for EISMEA’s decision than internal conflicts within the European Commission, which is beyond us as a private company.

In the end, we are still wondering about the legitimate reason for interrupting the platform, and whether EISMEA's decision was worth disrupting the programme, not respecting its contractual obligations at the risk of being forced to pay substantial financial compensation, and not delivering Innospace's objectives.