

Table 1. Qualitative comparison between Baytouch and REACHCentrum tools, 20 Oct 2011****

	Baytouch	REACHCentrum
Name of the tool	REACHSuite (all-in-one)	Three tools: - Document management platform, - LoA e-shop, and - SIEF communication tool (LINKinSIEF)
Contact person	Malcolm Pollard CEO	Leo Appelman Manager Director
Overall communication	Sometimes difficult/complex	Smooth
Availability of PMC's required interface	Not before 2013, and still more complicated than other available tools	Immediate
User-friendliness*	Very low, very rigid/non-flexible interface, needs a lot of training and support from Baytouch	Very high, tailor-made, no need for <i>ad hoc</i> and/or continuous training and support
Data recovery	Possible but very complex as data is stored in multiple layers of the tool	Possible and simple, data storage more similar to a hard disk interface
LoA**	Good	Very good; totally managed by REACHCentrum both from communication and management standpoints as well as from an accounting viewpoint
Contract***	Sep 2008-Sep 2012	Could start in Jan 2012 till Dec 2014
Cost	25000 €/year	15000 €/year
Cost calculation	Lump sum based on tool needs, maintenance and number of substances and SIEFs	Lump sum based on tool needs, maintenance and number of substances and SIEFs
Reduced uses/fees	Requires discussion with Baytouch as to how lump sum can be reduced if some segments of REACHsuite are no longer necessary	Requires discussion with REACHCentrum as to how lump sum can be reduced if some of the three tools are no longer necessary (only maintenance fees)

* The difference in user-friendliness is related to the timing of release of the tools; whereas REACHsuite exists since 2007 and was designed as a very comprehensive tool for Consortium and SIEF management, the REACHCentrum tools have been developed in late 2010 following the lack of success of the REACHLink tools and having identified the key areas of relevance for consortia managers.

** Although both tools include a LoA section, when using REACHsuite all payments and reimbursements among other tedious tasks still had to be managed by PMC secretariat. REACHCentrum's e-shop service is a much more complete service where PMC secretariat would be relieved from all the invoicing and accounting aspects of selling LoA for no additional cost. Some may question how transparent REACHCentrum's work in this regard may be though.

*** Need to consider contract termination conditions with Baytouch (three months' notice) and agreement proposed by REACHCentrum (both have been sent to A. Palmers for review), but in any case REACHCentrum tools seem of more added value for PMC than REACHsuite and can be up and running in less than three months.

**** Other sharepoint tools are available but serve as data storage and management tools and do not include SIEF communication or LoA-related features. Hence PMC should select among REACHSuite and REACHCentrum's tools.