ABSTRACT: Economic Intelligence (EI) may be a solution in knowledge management as involves collecting, evaluating, processing, analysis and dissemination of economic data within organizations. The ultimate goal of economic intelligence (EI) is to take advantage of this opportunity to develop and improve methods for identifying relevant information sources, analysis of information collected and manipulation, to give the user all the necessary decisions. Scope of the Economic Intelligence focused on information available outside the organization, covering wide areas from technology to market or legal issues. Economic Intelligence (EI) is closely related to other approaches to information management, and knowledge management and business intelligence, excelling in the use of software tools.

KEY-WORDS: economic, intelligence, organisation, knowledge, management.

1. INTRODUCTION.

The notion of intelligence is defined here, in a more general sense, as “the ability to apprehend the interrelationships of presented facts in such a way as to guide action towards a desired goal.” H.L. Wilensky defines the “organizational intelligence” as “the problem of gathering, processing, interpreting, and communicating of the information needed in decision-making processes” [1].

Most of the existing data warehouse systems were designed using the user model based on his profession [2]. Whereas this model was not complete since each user reacts differently according to his needs and his working habits. For instance, a user/decision maker may have a need that is specific to him (in terms of his personality traits, cognitive style, preferences etc.) [3] that was not treated in the base. We are trying to respond to a the following question: “what are the parameters that should be added to a user model or which data are to be included in the data warehouse or the data marts that will help the system respond better to his informational needs?”.

The different characteristics of economic intelligence that we have previously presented have highlighted several dimensions of its approach. The inclusion of one or more of these dimensions allows the design of various models used for the analysis (conceptual and practical) of economic intelligence [4]. The AFDIE (Association Française pour le Développement de l’Intelligence Economique) model outlined five basic principles of economic intelligence leading to sustainable performance [5] :

1. The integration and taking into account of the environments in anticipation logic ;
2. The organization design based on collective intelligence ;
3. An organization built around systems and networks ;
4. A combination of a managerial logic and entrepreneurial logic ;

Many authors [6], the reference portals like INIST and BNF [7] have developed directories and repositories that are relatively exhaustive, with software tools useful for an informational watcher. EI mainly addresses users that want up to date information to make the best decisions in a framework of a defined strategy. It is also of interest to policy makers who create the context for other’s strategies or, more generally, to support creativity processes.

Our research shows that the uptake of Economic Intelligence methods and tools in Europe is on the increase but has so far been slow, and we believe this is a hindrance to innovation. This applies particularly in the case of small and medium sized companies, presenting an obstacle to their competitiveness.

EI should therefore be of interest to those involved in the promotion of innovation, providing them with a more focused approach for themselves and the companies they support. It should also be useful to technology, economy, market-oriented and intermediate service providers supporting SMEs and should help policy makers and politicians too.
The concept of intelligence comes from military circles and dates back to Roman times. Throughout the history of civilised society there has been a requirement to research information, and the question of the protection of sensitive information against undesirable disclosure has been ever present.

Globalisation, the spread of information and communication technologies, the construction of formal and informal networks, the acceleration of economic change, the evolution of relationships between the makers of finished products and their suppliers, the introduction of Customer Relationship Management, and the shortening of product life cycles, among other things, has lead to permanent changes in the day-to-day management of the enterprises. These challenges are the same for a large company as for an SME. The breadth of the fields of investigation are more or less the same and the responses must be the same. But for an SME - the resources are not. There are several orders of magnitude difference between the resources available to a large company and those of an SME in terms of finance, number and skills of people and equipment.

Today, the figure is said to be between 2 to 5 billion pages. The French analyst IDC expects some 8 billion of html pages to be accessible at the end of 2002 [8]. We have adopted the user’s perspective, utilising the user’s growing understanding as follows [9]:

Data: Raw, unconnected figures, words, events, existing without a conceptual framework of reference. With the context missing, there is little or no meaning at all in the data. Information: Where there is an understanding of the relationships between data, or between pieces of data and other information, but not providing a foundation for why the data is what it is, nor an indication as to how the data is likely to change over time.

Knowledge: When a pattern relation exists in the data and information, the pattern has the potential to represent knowledge, provided that the user is able to realise and understand the patterns and their implications. The pattern tends to create its own context rather than being context dependent, providing a high level of reliability or predictability as to how the pattern will evolve over time.

Intelligence (or wisdom) arises when the user understands the principles responsible for the patterns representing knowledge. Economic Intelligence, concerns the set of concepts, methods and tools which unify all the co-ordinated actions of research, acquisition, treatment, storage and diffusion of information, relevant to individual or clustered enterprises and organisations in the framework of a strategy [10].

The development of information technology and the existence of software tools covering various fields and facilitating information processing [11] are providing a strong impetus to the dissemination of Intelligence disciplines, at the moment mainly amongst large companies. However, it must be stressed that the human factor is pivotal in the process of creating Intelligence in any kind of company or organisation.

2. SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF ACTIVITIES, METHODS AND INFORMATIONAL TOOLS OF ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE.

The stages of this process [12] can be defined as follows:

1) Identification of the problems to solve in terms of threat, risk and danger;
2) Transformation of decision-problem into information search problem;
3) Identification of relevant information sources;
4) Validation of the information sources;
5) Collection and validation of information;
6) Processing the collected information; for the calculation of indicators;
7) Interpretation of the indicators;
8) Decision-making for the resolution of the problem;
9) Protection of informational patrimony throughout the entire process.

Decision maker is the individual in the organization that is capable of identifying and posing a problem to solve in terms of danger, risk or threat that weighs on the organization. In Economic Intelligence process, there is a well established flow from raw data, to the highest level of information quality. Finally, the decision-maker applies this knowledge to a particular situation to create intelligence. End user: this is the final user of the system; it can be either of the previously mentioned users or neither of the two.

This user can be identified depending on which layer of the Economic Intelligence system he interacts with. In order to avoid wasting time and resources making the wrong choice, it is best to initiate the process with an organizational diagnosis [13].

This should analyze both the hard elements (strategic-structural: law, politics and economic aspects of the working environment or functional: planning, comparing results with efforts, role and task distribution) and soft elements (organizational climate, motivation, various levels of communication, leadership style, problem-solving capability and distribution of power) with the aim of discerning the way they function with respect to the organization mission and objectives.

One of the most recommended tools is thereby economic intelligence: It is a system composed of three main components:
3. CONCLUSIONS.

Economic intelligence as a response to these concerns is now at the heart of issues for the future of business and management in general.

Economic Intelligence concerns the set of concepts, methods and tools which unify all the coordinated actions of research, acquisition, treatment, storage and diffusion of information, relevant to individual or organization in the framework of a strategy.

These processes are coherent, permanent and interactive and can induce real changes in decision-making mechanisms. The development of Economic Intelligence in enterprises can affect all the dimensions of the business. Economic Intelligence, based on a set of structured methods and tools, will bring about important changes in individual and collective behaviour.

The Economic Intelligence process is a continuous, interactive and iterative process allowing fast and efficient changes. When strategy and organization change, the EI process needs to be assessed and changed accordingly.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY.