

The following is a transcription of the ALIS Channel Talk interview. You can read the interview in the July issue of ALIS magazine (original in Italian): [link](#)

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## **MIDDLE EAST AND UKRAINE: THE EFFECTS ON THE ITALIAN ECONOMY**

First Eastern Europe, then the Middle East. The war scenarios are heavily impacting global balances. In the first quarter of 2024, there was a significant decrease of 42.9% in ships passing through the Suez Canal due to fears of attacks by the Houthis, and the effects on the economies of the countries bordering the Mediterranean are more than evident. Four representatives from companies associated with ALIS analyze the repercussions and study countermeasures to face the new scenarios. The show, hosted by ALIS Channel director Roberto d'Antonio, featured Stefania Gilli, country manager for IOT Vodafone Business and president of the ALIS Commission for Digitalization; Daniele Canè, executive at Adecco; Maurizio Fumarola, manager at WeUnit; and Nicolò Calabrese, country manager for Italy at CargoON, the Trans.eu Group.

**D'ANTONIO:** "Are these events really impacting your companies' activities and programs?"

**GILLI:** "These events certainly cannot avoid having an impact on the real economy, and this conflict is causing significant tensions, particularly in terms of governance and security."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Regarding cybersecurity, Vodafone as a company is directly involved. Have you noticed increased concerns from your clients?"

**GILLI:** "Initially, we strengthened our internal policies because it is crucial that we are robust with the services we provide. As for our clients, there is a greater demand for more secure services."

**D'ANTONIO: "Has Adecco also increased its defenses? Have companies changed their security policies?"**

**CANÈ:** "Dealing with sensitive data of clients and candidates, we have undoubtedly had to enhance our security levels, particularly from an IT perspective, by establishing a department that manages the security of our systems."

**D'ANTONIO: "Speaking of logistics platforms, is the Trans.eu Group affected by what's happening in the Red Sea? Are there any repercussions?"**

**CALABRESE:** "We are being impacted, yes. The situation is significantly increasing freight rates, leading to serious problems. The repercussions have already begun with the conflict in Ukraine, which has caused an incredible shock to the trucking sector, as the shortage of drivers, most of whom are Ukrainians, forced to return home to fight, has reduced transport capacity, affecting companies' finances and inevitably the pockets of end consumers."

**D'ANTONIO: "Regarding credit mediation, has WeUnit's programming policy changed? Are long-term projects becoming less frequent? Is it more about living day-to-day?"**

**FUMAROLA:** "In this highly precarious conflict context, long-term planning, contrary to what one might think, is even more critical from an investment and fiscal perspective."

**D'ANTONIO: "Are you closely monitoring the moves on interest rates by the Fed and ECB?"**

**FUMAROLA:** "Well, the U.S. obviously acts independently, but in Europe, it almost seems certain that the first rate cut will come in June."

**D'ANTONIO: "Regarding the labor market, according to the latest ISTAT data, the employment rate has reached 61.9%, a figure never reached in Italy, though still lagging behind the European average. Overall, the situation seems to have improved. The data, though not yet at the EU**

**average levels, are positive, but there's a significant mismatch between supply and demand, especially in the transport and logistics sector."**

**CANÈ:** Undoubtedly, everything that happens impacts the labor market. Therefore, the data can be interpreted positively, but the reality is that today it's challenging to find a proper match between supply and demand."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Has the employment policy changed on this front? Previously, a company would call a candidate; now, is it the candidate who chooses the companies?"

**CANÈ:** "Today is quite different. Demand is undoubtedly high, and indeed the worker has a wide choice, a vast opportunity, even with a more attentive eye on the European market."

**D'ANTONIO:** "In this process, training and digitalization appear essential. Recently, Vodafone with 5G has created training moments in the Healthcare and Transport sectors. How advanced is the digitalization process in Italy?"

**GILLI:** "The implementation of the 5G network has been underway for several years, and thanks to its technological features such as very low latency and the ability to move large amounts of data, it is well-suited for the Healthcare sector. As for the Transport sector, 5G will certainly facilitate the spread of autonomous driving."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Is the ALIS world digitalized? The success of ALIS in achieving the introduction of the electronic CMR after many years speaks volumes about our association's commitment."

**GILLI:** "The ALIS world is obviously representative of the Italian reality, which in terms of digitalization is not exactly at the forefront, as materialization is often confused with digitalization. However, the introduction of the electronic letter is a fundamental first step to enable greater efficiency and timeliness in data exchange."

**D'ANTONIO: "Logistics is making giant strides in digitalization. Speaking of employment, how difficult is it to find qualified personnel in advanced sectors?"**

**CALABRESE: "The shortage of qualified personnel is a significant problem. This shortage must be compensated with technology. However, only 46% of companies see technology as a substitution tool."**

**D'ANTONIO: "Is artificial intelligence an added value from a human resources perspective, or is it seen as a destabilizing element?"**

**CALABRESE: "It is certainly a great opportunity and, like everything, it must be exploited in the best possible way. Also because behind artificial intelligence there is always the human being who must manage it."**

**D'ANTONIO: "In the credit mediation processes, how important is it to have companies that are digitally advanced?"**

**FUMAROLA: "Digitally advanced companies are generally much more open, making it easier to communicate with them. And that's the real step forward."**

**D'ANTONIO: "Internationalization is clearly essential for a company planning its market expansion. But how much desire is there to 'grow bigger'?"**

**FUMAROLA: "There is still too much caution because expanding abroad is not yet undertaken lightly by companies, even though there are all the tools to accompany them in this process."**

**D'ANTONIO: "Is the transport and logistics sector ahead in this regard, or is it in line with the Italian average?"**

**FUMAROLA: "As mentioned, ALIS is a reflection of the Italian reality, and there are excellences that are strongly projected towards the global economy."**

**D'ANTONIO: "We talk a lot about digitalization and the difficulty of finding personnel, but according to the latest news, in the next 15-20 years, 50% of**

**professions will change. In this vision, how does a company like Adecco, which recruits personnel, move? What are the new roles of the future?"**

**CANÈ:** "We have been researching the market and forecasting its current and future needs for several years. New roles will progressively emerge that will change the scenarios. What we do is anticipate to train candidates for the new roles that will emerge in the next 5 years."

**D'ANTONIO:** "So Adecco is the guarantor of what will happen in the labor market in five years. Because if you don't think about it now, we won't find the necessary resources?"

**CANÈ:** "Absolutely yes, all this entails significant training. We start from universities and technical institutes to address what might be the roles required in five years."

**D'ANTONIO:** "How much does ALIS help in this process in the transport and logistics sector during various transition phases?"

**GILLI:** "I believe so. ALIS has given the Italian system an extra step. ALIS for me is the benchmark of the sector because it has the ability to bring together the various actors of the ecosystem, both in the private world and in public, through its contacts with institutions and vocational schools. And I think ALIS is exemplary compared to other associations I see because it has the ability to aggregate."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Dr. Calabrese, did you imagine that ALIS would lead you to a direct dialogue with the political world?"

**CALABRESE:** "What struck me most about ALIS is undoubtedly its concreteness. The logistics and transport world is a concrete world; we need concrete people to do important things to make the system work. Logistics and transport are also too fast, and ALIS manages to follow processes by acting concretely on the market and the players."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Looking at the world of finance and investments, is there excitement in the sector?"

**FUMAROLA:** "The future is bright, especially for ALIS companies, as they can look a little further ahead. It's true that there is some tightening of credit due to rising rates, but Italian companies are among the best in the world."

**D'ANTONIO:** "There's a lot of talk about the gap between Europe and the business realities of China and the United States. Does this also apply to the telecommunications sector?"

**GILLI:** "Europe can be an example; the European telecommunications system is very regulated compared to other markets. Let me give an example in two numbers: in Europe, there are 45 telephony operators for 600 million inhabitants, in the United States there are 8, and in China there are 4. Therefore, the European system must protect operators who should be seen as strategic assets."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Is it worth working in Europe?"

**CANÈ:** "Absolutely yes. The European and Italian work structure is extremely secure and promising, so my opinion is to invest in one's role, personal development, and internal training."

**D'ANTONIO:** "Let's go back to where we started. Will all Mediterranean ports and logistics investments face setbacks with what's happening globally?"

**CALABRESE:** "There will certainly be some setbacks; more cohesion is needed from European states and between European ports. We should start thinking as a single country, not as many countries. In short, European Union, not disunion."