

U.S. Gives Financial Aid to 96% of All Countries

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According to the federal government, for fiscal year 2012, “The United States remained the world’s largest bilateral donor, obligating approximately \$48.4 billion—\$31.2 billion in economic assistance and \$17.2 billion in military assistance.” However, “obligated” funds are not the same as “dispersed.”

The U.S. disbursed \$33.2 billion—\$19 billion in economic assistance to 184 countries and \$14.2 billion in military assistance to 142 countries. Out of the top six U.S. foreign aid recipients, five of them were Muslim countries. And yet it seems the U.S. can’t buy good press in the Middle East.

The UN boasts 193 members, and the U.S. provided economic assistance to 184 of them, or 96% of the countries in the world. To be sure, the amount of assistance drops significantly after the top 10 countries or so, but still... Of course, State Department officials might claim that some of that money is to help the poor. But China has the second largest economy in the world—and is a major buyer of U.S. debt. So we borrow money from China in order to give them financial assistance?

—Merrill Matthews, Institute for Policy Innovation

Zut Alors! French Judge Censors Restaurant Critic

A French judge has ordered blogger Caroline Doudet to pay 2,500 euros to a restaurant she gave a bad review to and ordered her to change the title of that blog post. The judge said the review showed up too high in Google’s search results for the restaurant. The judge also expressed concern that her blog had too many followers.

—Charles Oliver, *Reason*

Europe Challenges U.S. on Immigration and Innovation

Many of our nation’s greatest tech enterprises have been built by immigrants. Google’s Sergey Brin, eBay’s Pierre Omidyar and Yahoo’s Jerry Yang each immigrated to the U.S. to peruse the American Dream and accomplish greatness. Yet our country’s next great tech venture may never be realized if our politicians refuse to proactively address our outdated immigration policies. While Congress avoids meaningful debates about immigration reform, other nations, especially in the European Union, are taking advantage of our self-defeating policies.

The Dutch government recently launched an “Ambitious Entrepreneurship” Action Plan to encourage startup companies to plant roots in the Netherlands. Among the more than 30 concrete

proposals included in the plan is a startup visa for foreign entrepreneurs that gives immigrants one year to work on developing their businesses before applying for two-year residence permits.

The U.K. is expanding its immigration policy to attract more foreign startups, especially tech-focused businesses. One out of seven British companies is now owned by an immigrant, thanks in large part to the United Kingdom's Entrepreneur Visa program. And in March, the U.K. expanded its Exceptional Talent visa program, enabling businesses to employ skilled international workers for longer stretches of time.

Additionally, Spain has improved its entrepreneurship laws, expanding options for immigrant startups and investors. France recently laid out plans to attract foreign talent, including a one-stop shop for visa paperwork and incentives for startups. And Italy has announced a startup visa specifically designed to attract foreign entrepreneurs—the government promises the entire application process will take no longer than four weeks to complete.

While European countries find ways to encourage foreign entrepreneurship, the U.S. continues to enforce backward immigration laws that keep the best and brightest from starting businesses here.

—Gary Shapiro, president and CEO, Consumer Electronics Association, *Investor's Business Daily*