

UTO AIMS TO GIVE AGENTS BETTER DEAL

by JONATHAN HART

FLANDERS travel agency group United Touring Organisation (UTO) is looking for more travel agents to join its expanding network before the end of this year.

The newly-formed UTO group already comprises four partners with 25 outlets and a combined annual turnover of FB 300 million.

In addition, a new representative office has just been opened at Bld. M. Lemonnier 28 in Brussels.

Purpose of UTO, whose current partners are Apollo Reizen, Europareizen, Fiestareizen and Reis-Center, is to provide a powerful collective purchase body to negotiate with wholesalers.

And combined commercial management is aimed at providing uniform administration and high individual productivity. Joint advertising and selection of products and suppliers is to be put into effect.

Quality

A UTO spokesman said this week that formation of the group provided the only satisfactory means of obtaining the travel product of the right quality and price for the client.

Centralised administration would ease financial limitations of individual members, he said.

With the evolution of mass tourism the share of each individual travel agent had become almost insignificant, said the UTO spokesman.

If a travel agent was no longer capable of exerting influence on his suppliers he could not improve the travel product for the client.

Respect

Joint selection of travel products by a powerful group would win both the respect of the suppliers and help to improve product quality, he said.

UTO claimed to have already won the respect of members of the Association of Belgian Tour Operators (ABTO).

ABTO initially took a negative approach to the travel group but quickly realised the advantages of a well-organised distribution system, claimed UTO.

This had led to closer cooperation between tour operators and agents.