Yes. If by **"use the capital from Horizon EU"** you mean *build the company specifically so that Horizon Europe/EIC funding finances the R&D and early commercialisation*, then I would change the strategy slightly.

The strongest structure is:

> **Your IT experience → deep-tech company → proprietary AI infrastructure technology → UK/European pilots → Horizon Europe/EIC grant → potentially EIC equity → private investment → international scale.**

Horizon Europe is the EU's main research and innovation programme, and the EIC is its principal instrument for high-risk, high-impact breakthrough companies. The 2026 EIC programme has more than **€2.125bn** available overall. European Innov… +1

1. The specific funding route

For the company we discussed, I would target:

EIC Accelerator Open — Horizon Europe

This is much more appropriate than trying to fit the company into an arbitrary research programme.

The 2026 EIC Accelerator provides:

- **grant funding below €2.5m**
- **investment/equity of €0.5m–€10m**
- potential larger funding through STEP Scale Up at later stages
- support for breakthrough technologies with significant market potential.
  European Innov… +1

EIC Accelerator — official programme

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2. Your company should be designed around the funding requirements

This is the crucial change.

Don't build a normal IT company and **then** ask:

> "Can Horizon give me money?"

Instead build a genuine R&D programme where Horizon/EIC funding makes sense.

Proposed project

AI-Native Autonomous Enterprise Infrastructure Platform

Working concept:

> An AI-driven autonomous infrastructure system capable of continuously discovering, modelling, predicting, securing and safely remediating complex enterprise IT environments.

That's potentially much more interesting to EIC than:

> "We provide AI-powered IT support."

The first is **deep-tech R&D**.

The second is largely **software services**.

---

3. What Horizon/EIC money would actually pay for

Suppose the project eventually has a **€3.0m development programme**.

A conceptual structure could look like:

Workstream	Example budget
AI/agent architecture R&D	€450k
Autonomous reasoning engine	€400k
Cybersecurity engine	€350k
Infrastructure digital-twin/model	€300k
Automated remediation system	€300k
Distributed telemetry/edge agents	€250k
Research personnel	€500k
European pilot deployments	€200k
Testing/validation/certification	€150k
IP/security/commercialisation	€100k

Workstream	Example budget
Total	**€3.0m**

These are **planning figures**, not an eligible-cost determination.

The point is that you are not asking the EU to pay for your ordinary business operations.

You're asking it to finance the **high-risk technological development that could create a new commercial product**.

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4. The €2.5m grant becomes extremely powerful

Imagine you eventually obtain:

€2.5m EIC grant

and contribute/raise:

€500k private/company capital

You suddenly have approximately:

€3m R&D programme

without having personally financed €3m.

Then the company develops:

- prototype
- proprietary AI engine
- infrastructure knowledge graph
- autonomous diagnostic technology
- remediation technology
- cybersecurity technology
- real-world validation
- patents/IP where justified
- commercial pilots

That is exactly the kind of leverage you're looking for.

The EIC explicitly supports companies from technology development through commercialisation and scale-up. European Innov… +1

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5. And potentially there is a second layer: EIC investment

This is where things get considerably more interesting.

The EIC Accelerator can combine:

Grant

up to €2.5m

PLUS

EIC Fund investment

currently €0.5m–€10m according to the 2026 programme. European Inno…

So, conceptually, a successful company could potentially have:

€2.5m grant

-

€5m EIC investment

=

€7.5m Horizon/EIC-backed financing

The actual amount, structure and eligibility would be determined through the EIC evaluation/investment process. It isn't automatic.

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6. Your UK position is important

There is a significant 2026 development here.

The UK is associated with Horizon Europe, but historically was excluded from the EIC Fund equity instrument.

The 2026 transitional arrangements have changed the situation.

The EIC's current FAQ says UK entities are being treated as associated-country entities for the EIC Fund for 2026 award procedures, **but investment decisions remain conditional on the UK association agreement being amended to include the EIC Fund at the time the investment decision is made.** European Innov… +1

So:

UK company + Horizon Europe grant

Yes, potentially.

UK company + EIC equity

Potentially, under the 2026 transitional arrangements, but conditional.

This is precisely why I would **not restructure the company or move it to Poland purely for funding purposes without first obtaining professional/EIC/UKRI advice.**

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7. Your Polish connection could nevertheless become strategically useful

This is an interesting part of your situation.

You have the possibility of building a **UK–EU innovation structure**, but we would need to structure it legitimately rather than simply creating an artificial EU company to access money.

For example:

UK

Founder + headquarters + commercial operations

↓

Poland / EU

R&D / university / engineering partner

↓

Other European countries

pilot customers + research partners

↓

Horizon Europe

European R&D funding

That could give the project a genuinely European dimension.

And Poland is specifically among the countries covered by the EIC Pre-Accelerator widening group in 2026, although that particular instrument has its own eligibility rules and

isn't simply an alternative EIC Accelerator route. European Inno...

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8. The company needs to reach approximately TRL 5

This is one of the most important technical requirements.

EIC Accelerator expects the innovation to have reached at least the equivalent of:

TRL 5 — validated in a relevant environment

The EIC FAQ explicitly states that the applicant should demonstrate that at least activities for TRL 5 have been achieved. European Inno...

That means I wouldn't submit an application saying:

> "I have an idea for an AI IT system."

Instead:

> "We have developed prototype X, tested it against real infrastructure, demonstrated Y% diagnostic accuracy, detected Z classes of infrastructure failures, and validated autonomous remediation under controlled conditions."

That's a completely different proposition.

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9. Therefore your development path becomes

Stage 0 — NOW

Your existing knowledge.

22+ years IT experience

↓

Stage 1

Build the initial technology.

AI Infrastructure Diagnostic Engine

↓

Stage 2

Test it against real systems.

3–10 pilot organisations

↓

Stage 3

Reach meaningful **TRL 5**

↓

Stage 4

Submit:

EIC Accelerator Open

↓

Stage 5

Potentially obtain:

up to €2.5m grant

↓

Stage 6

Develop full autonomous platform.

↓

Stage 7

Potentially attract:

EIC Fund + VC + strategic investors

↓

Stage 8

International commercialisation.

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10. What makes the proposal potentially fundable

The EIC isn't interested merely because something uses AI.

You need **technological novelty**.

I'd therefore deliberately build the R&D around five difficult problems.

A. Infrastructure reasoning

Create an AI representation of the entire infrastructure.

Not merely:

> "Server X has high CPU."

But:

> "Server X → SQL cluster → application Y → 43 users → revenue-critical process."

That's a much more sophisticated infrastructure model.

B. Autonomous diagnosis

The system correlates:

hardware + operating system + network + identity + application + security + historical telemetry

to determine the probable root cause.

C. Predictive infrastructure

Instead of:

> "Your SSD is failing."

the system predicts:

> "This device has an 82% probability of storage failure within the next 30 days."

D. Safe autonomous remediation

This is potentially one of the strongest differentiators.

The system determines:

problem → solution → risk → rollback → approval → execution

and maintains an auditable record.

E. Infrastructure digital twin

Eventually create a continuously updated:

digital twin of the organisation's IT environment

That could become a significant proprietary asset.

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11. Then the commercial story becomes very strong

Imagine an SME with 300 endpoints.

Today it may require:

- MSP
- IT support
- cybersecurity provider
- Microsoft specialists
- network engineer
- backup specialist

Your system becomes an intelligent layer coordinating much of this.

The proposition becomes:

> **"Your organisation gets an always-on AI infrastructure engineering team."**

That is considerably easier to communicate than:

> "AI-powered IT monitoring."

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12. The funding strategy I would use

I would structure your capital stack like this:

£/€ Stage 1

Your own resources

€10k–€30k

↓

Stage 2

Customer-funded pilots

€20k–€100k

↓

Stage 3

UK innovation funding

potentially hundreds of thousands

↓

Stage 4

Horizon Europe / EIC

up to €2.5m grant

↓

Stage 5

EIC investment / private investment

potentially €0.5m–€10m+

↓

Stage 6

European/global expansion

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13. Do NOT make Horizon the only source of money

This is important.

If the company is:

> **"A Horizon-funded project looking for a business."**

that's dangerous.

Instead:

> **"A commercial company solving an enormous problem, where Horizon funding accelerates the difficult R&D."**

Much stronger.

The EIC itself expects proposals to address commercialisation and market activity, including grant-only applications. European Inno…

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14. Your first funding target

I'd therefore set:

Target A

€50–100k

to build and validate MVP.

Then:

Target B

€500k–€1m

to take the technology through serious pilot/R&D development.

Then:

Target C

EIC Accelerator

Potentially:

up to €2.5m grant

plus potentially:

EIC investment

depending on eligibility, evaluation and investment conditions. European Innov… +1

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15. Timing — this is actually urgent

The 2026 EIC Accelerator Open call currently lists remaining full-proposal batching dates of:

2 September 2026

and

4 November 2026. European Inno…

But I **would not submit a weak proposal simply because September is close**.

The EIC recommends submitting the short proposal sufficiently ahead of the full-proposal deadline, because the short proposal is assessed first and a successful applicant can then receive coaching support. European Inno…

So the rational approach is:

August–September 2026

Company + MVP + customer validation + EIC eligibility check.

September–November 2026

Prepare the strongest possible EIC application.

2027

Execute R&D + European pilots + commercial expansion.

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16. One more potentially powerful angle: dual-use

Since June 2026, the EIC Accelerator has also been opened to **dual-use technologies**.

AI, robotics, quantum and other technologies can now have credible civilian and defence applications under the relevant rules. European Innov… +1

I would **not artificially turn the project into defence technology** just to obtain funding.

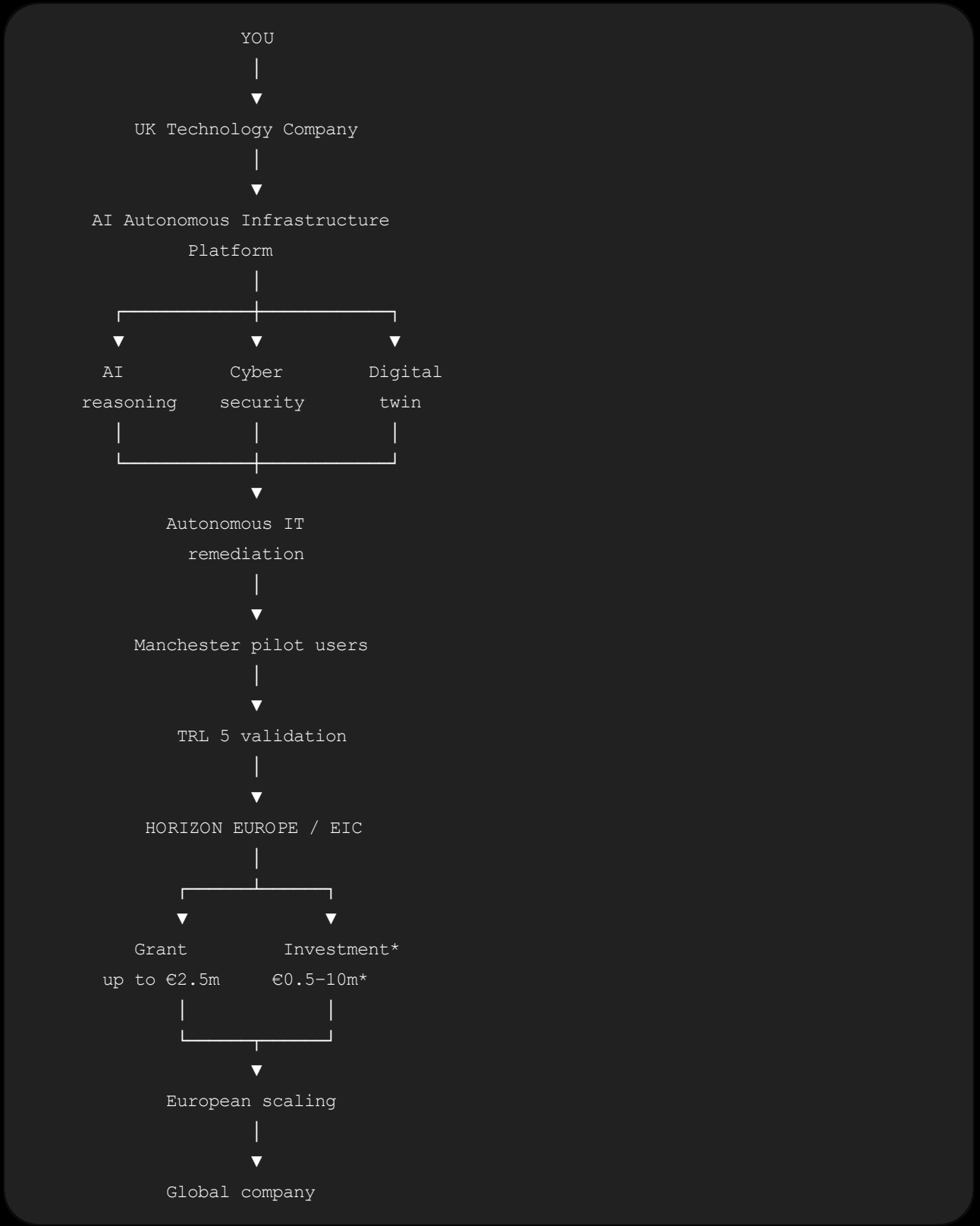
But autonomous infrastructure/cybersecurity naturally has possible:

civilian + critical infrastructure + government + defence

applications.

If that is genuinely supported by the technology and market, it could materially enlarge the addressable market.

The final structure I'd aim for



*Subject to the EIC's evaluation, eligibility and, for UK entities, the applicable 2026 transitional conditions. European Innov… +1

The key strategic change

I would therefore **not treat Horizon Europe as a source of money to start an IT business**.

I would make Horizon/EIC part of the **capital architecture of a deep-tech company**.

Your personal contribution is primarily:

experience + technical insight + founder leadership + problem selection.

The company's contribution is:

IP + prototype + validation + customers.

Horizon/EIC's potential contribution is:

non-dilutive R&D funding and potentially investment capital.

Private investors' contribution later is:

scale capital.

That is the structure I think gives you the best chance of turning your accumulated experience into an actual **asset rather than another 10–15 years of employment**.

Horizon Europe — European Commission

EIC Accelerator 2026

EIC 2026 Work Programme

UKRI Horizon Europe support