NLnet *Labs*

DNSSEC in 2026:
What Keeps TLDs Up at Night

Insights from 16 TLD Operators on Trust, Continuity, and Resilience

We expected a talk about tools, features and standards.

Instead, they talked trust, continuity, and accountability.

The world changed. DNSSEC ops didn't.

REGULATION   GEOPOLITICS   OPS MATURITY

The world today expects resilience.
Not hero ops.

NLnet *Labs*

What Actually Keeps TLDs Up at Night

PAIN POINT	MENTIONS	SUPPORTING QUOTES
Reliance on key individuals	9	"If they leave, we have a problem."
Fallback or recovery unclear	8	"We needed something we could transfer."
No clear support model	7	"We don't have a contract, just people we know."
Validation depends on manual tools	7	"We script around all zone file validators we can find."
Observability between steps lacking	6	"We don't know what's happening until it breaks."

5 Operator Patterns (And What They Really Mean)

1. "It works — but don't touch it."

2. "Support is no longer optional."

3. "We don't see what's going wrong."

4. "We inherited this mess."

5. "We need to prove we're in control."

NLnet *Labs*

Resilience Self-Check

Can You Say Yes to These?

✔ Can a new engineer take over today?

✔ Can you test each part in isolation?

✔ Do you know how it fails — and how it recovers?

✔ Is SLA-backed support baked in or bolted on?

✔ Can you prove resilience to an auditor tomorrow?

NLnet *Labs*

You deserve resilience, not hero ops.

blog.nlnetlabs.nl