

# NDNSSEC: Namespace Management in NDN with DNSSEC

Pouyan Fotouhi Tehrani  
Weizenbaum Institute /  
Fraunhofer FOKUS  
pft@acm.org

Luca Keidel  
Freie Universität Berlin  
luca.keidel@fu-berlin.de

Eric Osterweil  
George Mason University  
eoster@gmu.edu

Jochen H. Schiller  
Freie Universität Berlin  
jochen.schiller@fu-berlin.de

Thomas C. Schmidt  
HAW Hamburg  
t.schmidt@haw-hamburg.de

Matthias Wählisch  
Freie Universität Berlin  
m.waehlich@fu-berlin.de

## ABSTRACT

In this demo, we showcase NDNSSEC. NDNSSEC provides a namespace management solution for named-data networking (NDN) based on the DNS ecosystem and its security extensions. Our prototype allows content consumers to verify the name ownership in commonly used NDN software.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Networks** → **Naming and addressing**; **Naming and addressing**; *Application layer protocols*;

## KEYWORDS

Namespace Management, Data Origin Authentication, ICN, NDN, DNS, DNSSEC

### ACM Reference Format:

Pouyan Fotouhi Tehrani, Luca Keidel, Eric Osterweil, Jochen H. Schiller, Thomas C. Schmidt, and Matthias Wählisch. 2019. NDNSSEC: Namespace Management in NDN with DNSSEC. In *6th ACM Conference on Information-Centric Networking (ICN '19)*, September 24–26, 2019, Macao, China. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 2 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3357150.3357417>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Naming serves the goal of uniquely identifying things. We refer to the set of all possible names in a given context as a *namespace* [2, §8], and define namespace management as the task of partitioning a namespace into smaller management units, *i.e.*, *zones* [3] and allocating these to *zone owners*. Both technical as well as non-technical aspects are integral to namespace management. On the one hand, technical means are to be provided to establish and authenticate owners of names. On the other hand, conflicting interests of different stakeholders, *e.g.*, trademark infringements, have to be attended.

Although names constitute the cornerstone of ICN, namespace management in ICN has widely been ignored or limited to merely technical solutions [5]. By comparing the historical development of the Internet and the integral role that the DNS played, we argue that namespace management in ICN is also an enabler which can

Permission to make digital or hard copies of part or all of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the owner/author(s).  
*ICN '19, September 24–26, 2019, Macao, China*  
© 2019 Copyright held by the owner/author(s).  
ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-6970-1/19/09.  
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3357150.3357417>

boost its deployment beyond experimental and research settings. If ICN is to reach the popularity and ubiquity of the Internet, without having to go through similar technical and legal challenges, we can rely on the existing and approved global infrastructure of DNS and ICANN.

Inherent to any ICN approach is the binding between names and data. Effective namespace management in ICN presupposes four bindings: (i) name to zone, (ii) name to producer, (iii) producer to zone, and (iv) zone to zone owner. The rationale behind these binding is to verify whether a producer is authorized by a zone owner to publish data under its managed zone. In this demo, we present an implementation that implements all four bindings.

## 2 NDNSSEC PRIMER

NDNSSEC [5] leverages the already existing mappings between (digital) names and (real-world) owners provided by DNS, integrates the trust management framework of DNS security extensions (DNSSEC), and finally realizes a custom naming scheme for NDN [7] as the basis for securing names. In detail, it implements the following bindings:

- (i) **Name to Zone** This binding is transitively authenticated by verifying name to producer and then producer to zone bindings.
- (ii) **Name to Producer** A data packet in NDN already can bind its names to a producer through a digital signature.
- (iii) **Producer to Zone** Using DNS, the zone owner authorizes producers by enlisting their public keys as DNSKEYs in its authoritative name server.
- (iv) **Zone to Zone Owner** Using DNS zone delegation mechanisms to map a zone to its owner.

Before a producer can publish data under a specific zone apex, it requires authorization by the zone owner. For example if one wants to publish under `/com/example/about`, the owner of `/com/example` or respectively `example.com` must first authorize the publisher by enlisting its public key in its authoritative name server as a DNSKEY record. An authorized publisher in turn prefixes its content names with *ndnfied* [1] DNS zone apexes and signs them with the respective private key. A consumer can in turn authenticate data packets by retrieving the public key of the producer over DNS. To enable authentication, signed data packets in NDN contain the name of the publisher's certificate in the KeyLocator field of the packet. The syntax looks as follows [6]:

```
/<SubjectName>/KEY/[KeyId]/[IssuerId]/[Ver]
```

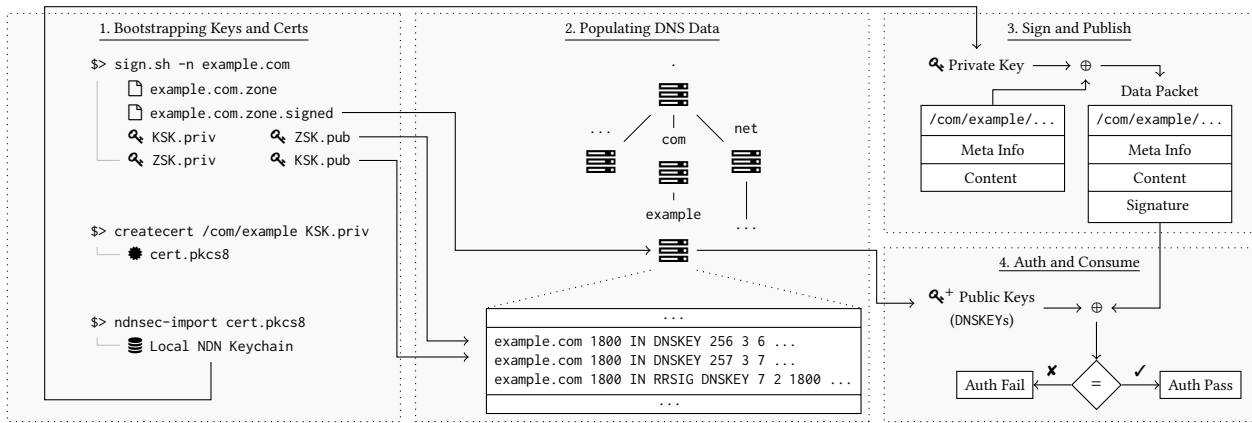


Figure 1: Simplified Overview of NDNSSec Workflow – From Bootstrapping to Authentication

Certificate names in NDNSSec follow the same convention with two constraints: (i) SubjectName must denote the zone apex, and (ii) KeyId must be the digest of the producer’s public key calculated the same way DNSKEY digests are determined for DNS DS records [4, §5]. The former allows distinction between the zone apex and the rest of the NDN name. The latter enables a consumer to fetch the correct key among possible DNSKEY candidates from the authoritative name server.

An extended NDN consumer software authenticates packets by first making sure that the content name is prefixed with a zone apex matching the SubjectName segment of its KeyLocator. If not, the packet is discarded as unauthorized. Next, the DNSKEYs of authorized producers for that zone apex are fetched over DNS, their digests are computed, and finally compared with the KeyId to find the matching public key. If no key matches, the packet is discarded as unauthorized, otherwise the matching key is used to verify the signature. To simplify the key retrieval process, each domain can provide a logical public key resolver (similar to a DNS stub resolver) that proxies the DNS related tasks and is trusted by users within that domain. The resolver returns matching public keys for a given zone apex and KeyId, or an explicit NACK if none is found. A domain-local resolver can also be leveraged to manage *private zones*: zone apexes which are explicitly used for internal purposes (cf., *internal top-level domains*).

### 3 SHOWCASE

We demonstrate<sup>1</sup> our implementation, covering the complete cycle of configuring and deploying NDNSSec in four phases: 1. bootstrapping keys and certificates, 2. populating DNS data, 3. signing and publishing a packet, and 4. authenticating and consuming the packet as summarized in Figure 1.

In the bootstrapping phase, two asymmetric key pairs, a *zone signing key* (ZSK) and a *key signing key* (KSK), are generated and are used to create and sign a DNS zone file using a single script `sign.sh`. The KSK is further utilized to create an NDN certificate through a standalone application, `createcert`. The certificate is then imported in NDN local KeyChain through `ndnsec-import` tool provided by the NDN toolchain and library. Eventually, the

certificate is used by the producer to sign its content. Note that for the sake of simplicity the zone owner and the producer are the same entity in our demo. In the data publication phase, the producer registers for the names or name prefixes under which it is authorized to publish and signs all data packets using the previously imported private key generated in the bootstrapping phase prior to dispatching them. Finally, a consumer dispatches an interest and authenticates the results served by the producer using NDNSSec. Two scenarios are identified for this phase: (i) authenticating valid data, and (ii) failing to authenticate invalid data either while the packet is signed by unauthorized key or because it is published under a not allocated zone. The latter case is realized through *authenticated denial of existence* of DNSSEC.

We illustrate the message exchange during the publication as well as consumption and authentication phases in Figure 1.

### 4 FUTURE WORK

Our future work evolves around two main objectives: (i) to integrate our approach into existing NDN-specific approaches, e.g., NDNS [1], and (ii) develop a method to access public DNS(SEC) data without having to use the DNS-specific transport mechanisms.

**Acknowledgments.** This work was supported in parts by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the projects *I3* and *Deutsches Internet-Institut* (grant no. 16DII111).

### REFERENCES

- [1] Alexander Afanasyev. 2013. *Addressing Operational Challenges in Named Data Networking Through NDNS Distributed Database*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of California Los Angeles.
- [2] J. Day. 2007. *Patterns in Network Architecture: A Return to Fundamentals*. Pearson Education.
- [3] Robert Elz and Randy Bush. 1997. Clarifications to the DNS Specification. RFC 2181.
- [4] Scott Rose, Matt Larson, Dan Massey, Rob Austein, and Roy Arends. 2005. Resource Records for the DNS Security Extensions. RFC 4034.
- [5] Pouyan Fotouhi Tehrani, Eric Osterweil, Jochen Schiller, Thomas C. Schmidt, and Matthias Wählisch. 2019. The Missing Piece: On Namespace Management in NDN and How DNSSEC Might Help. In *Proc. of 6th ACM ICN*. ACM.
- [6] Yingdi Yu. 2015. *Public Key Management in Named Data Networking*. Technical Report. UCLA. 1–8 pages.
- [7] Lixia Zhang, Alexander Afanasyev, Jeffrey Burke, Van Jacobson, Kc Claffy, Patrick Crowley, Christos Papadopoulos, Lan Wang, and Beichuan Zhang. 2014. Named data networking. *ACM SIGCOMM Computer Communication Review* 44, 3 (jul 2014), 66–73.

<sup>1</sup>Source code available under <https://gitlab.com/ndnssec>